

CHILEAN EDUCATION & A RADICAL ATMOSPHERE OF CHANGE

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Socs 461, 462

Senior Project

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Spring, 2011

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1. RESEARCH PROPOSAL

For my senior project, I will explore the topic of education in Latin America. According to several reports, Latin American nations are lagging far behind other developing nations in terms of education. Public schools are the most problematic. Teachers are paid low wages, and fewer hours are spent in the classroom than at private schools. Students also have trouble graduating at all levels of schooling. According to the Inter-American Development Bank, for example, only one in three Latin American students are able to complete secondary school (“Latin America Gets Poor Marks”). Even when students are able to graduate, the quality of education that they receive is often inadequate. With an average of only 4.5% of the GDP in Latin America going to education, this is no surprise (“Latin America Gets Poor Marks”).

In the first section of my senior project, I would like to present an overview of the aforementioned issues concerning Latin American education. I will examine the importance of education—and how education can serve as a tool to bring people out of poverty. Then, I would like to bring forth two case studies. The first case study will center on Costa Rica. According to Central American standards, Costa Rica does well in terms of education. It is one of three other Latin American nations that allocate 6%—above the average of 4.5%—of its GDP to education (“Latin America Gets Poor Marks”). Despite this statistic, Costa Rica deals with a host of educational issues. One major issue I’d like to explore is the discrepancy between public and private school education at the secondary school level.

In my second case study, I’d like to explore higher education in Chile. A particular problem of interest is the prevalence of strikes at the state university level.

Since Chile became a democratic nation in 1990, there have been numerous marches and sit-ins among students and teachers. On May 30, 2006, for example, 600,000 student and teachers embarked upon a five-day strike (“Schools Out; Chile” 35). The strike was a response to record-high prices for copper, Chile’s main export. Academics asked that more of the money stemming from this crop be put toward education. In my senior project, I’d like to look at the Chilean history of educational protest in greater depth. I will do this by examining the worldview of Chileans’ that leads to an atmosphere of educational unrest. I’d also like to contrast Chile with the United States in terms of this issue. Why are American university students much less likely to protest? Could it be the longer-standing democratic history in the United States, which stands in contrast to Chile’s young democracy?

For both Costa Rica and Chile, I’d also like to explore the topic of English language learning. Since business professionals are using English as their main language in an increasingly globalized economy, English acquisition is incredibly important to bringing Latin American nations out of poverty. Since I’d like to teach English in one of these countries upon graduation, this topic is of special interest to me. I will research the percentage of citizens who speak English, when in the educational system English is apprehended, and what the obstacles to learning the language are.

Finally, I’d like to sum up my senior project by looking at current efforts for educational improvement. I will explore the prevalence of teacher’s unions—which are very strong in many Latin American countries—as well as new programs that are producing change. One particular program I will research is Chile’s English Open Doors, which was instituted by the United Nations. Finally, I’d like to conclude my senior

project by suggesting new ways to approach educational challenges and by looking into what the future holds for Latin American students.

2. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Thesis: I will conduct a comparative analysis of recent student protests in Chile and the United States regarding educational reform. In my section on the United States, I will focus on how budget cuts have affected the cost of tuition for university students and the protests it has produced. I will then focus on educational reform movements that have occurred in post-dictatorial Chile.

I have incorporated my thesis in my research by reviewing journal articles, books, and newspaper articles. I found information on each country's general system of higher education, their prospective histories of educational reform, detailed descriptions of corresponding protests, and analyses of the student organizations involved.

Bousquet, Marc. "Occupy and Escalate." *Academe* 96.1 (2010): 28-31. *Academic Search Elite*. Web. 17 Feb. 2011
<<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=afh&AN=47932467&site=ehost-live>>.

A member of the American Association of University Professors put forth this article. It addresses two 2009 protests that were staged to combat tuition hikes, wage cuts, and furloughs at California University campuses. The first protest was a traditional march of 5,000 students at UC Berkeley, and the other protest was an "occupation" of the Graduate Student Commons at UC Santa Cruz. The article discusses the traditional vs. creative approach used by the organizers of each of these events. It then notes several organizations that support these uprisings, such as the California Defend Our Action Coalition and the University of Maryland Student Power Action Mob. The author used current news headlines, several protest organizing websites (the article even includes a link to the "Occupy California" student group), blogs displaying voices for change, and lobbying material from the American Association of University Professors to write the article. This article is explicitly biased; it ends with a very critical analysis of how university students and employees are being taken advantage of and a plea for organized action by the American Association of University Professors. This article is extremely useful to my senior project because it supplies a strong perspective and an analysis of the bigger picture. It also provides several links to organizers websites that I plan to assess.

Franklin, Jonathon. "Protests Paralyze Chile's Education System". *The Guardian* 7 June 2006. 15 Feb. 2011
<<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:fTRcyiG7cxwJ:www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/jun/07/chile.schoolsworldwide+social+protest+chile&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&source=www.google.com>>.

This article focuses on an educational protest that occurred in Chile in 2006. The strike was formally known as the "Coordinating Assembly of Grade School Students" and informally as the "March of the Penguins." The article was published six days after the protest began. It summarizes a 10-hour riot that occurred in Santiago, which resulted in the arrest of 370 people and the use of tear gas and water cannons by police forces. It also summarizes the reasons for the protest, which range from students' desire for free public transport to and from school, a voice in national education policy, and lower fees for college entrance exams. The article goes further to analyze the protest in light of the

recent election of Michelle Bachelet, the first female president of Chile. The author also notes what makes the protest unique. For example, an interesting aspect of the strike is that it involves a blurring of class lines—poor students at state schools participated alongside wealthy private school students. The author most likely wrote the article using current media sources, but it is not explicitly stated. The Guardian is an online, UK-based news and information source that strives for editorial and political independence. It gives an English rather than American perspective, and was written in a very informational tone. I did not perceive any explicit bias. The article is pertinent to my senior project because it provides a good starting point. After reading it, I planned to look up details of the “March of the Penguins” and education under President Michelle Bachelet.

Godoy-Anativia, Marcial. "Chilean Students Take on the 'Neoliberal University'." *NACLA Report on the Americas* 31.2 (1997): 42. *Academic Search Elite*. Web. 2 Feb. 2011. <http://find.galegroup.com/gtx/infomark.do?&contentSet=IAC-Documents&type=retrieve&tabID=T007&prodId=EAIM&docId=A20290030&source=gale&srcprod=EAIM&userGroupName=calpolyw_csu&version=1.0>.

This article outlines the 1997 7-week educational protests of Chile. These protests marked the first large-scale upheaval regarding education after a democracy was instated in 1990. It was organized under the “Confederation of Chilean University Students” with 26 student federations. Protesters fought for the following goals regarding higher education: more governmental funding, a more democratic decision making process, and an end to faulty modernization efforts. Negotiations at the end of the strike did not grant students as much as they desired, but did serve as an important turning point. It allowed students in the newly democratized nation to realize that they *could* receive results through concentrated effort. The article is peer-reviewed, but it does not list where the author found the information. She most likely found it from current periodical sources. The article is derived from the NACLA, or “North American Congress on Latin America” journal. NACLA is a non-profit organization dedicated to the spread of knowledge for positive change and less oppression in Latin American nations. The article favors the perspective and goals of the protesters, rather than the Chilean government. This article is an important addition to my bibliography because it gave me insight into the first, large-scale educational protests in Chile. Since the journal is from 1997, however, I would like to look at more recent articles analyzing the protest.

“How to Make Them Better.” *Economist* 381.8498 (2006): 44. *EBESCOhost*. Web. 1 Feb. 2011. <<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?hid=7&sid=23288803-d431-436f-8f72-8f6d0ad804f8%40sessionmgr14&vid=1&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=afh&AN=22646566>>.

This article addresses educational issues that have sparked protests in Chile. It reports on the 2006 March of the Penguins protest—which lasted three weeks and was led by Chile’s secondary school students. Before the protest, the price of copper—one of Chile’s major exports—reached an all time high. This sparked unrest, since only a small amount of Chile’s flourishing economy was being allocated to education. The article proceeds to

give statistics about the amount of money spent on education and the poor quality of many Chilean teachers. Although not explicitly stated, the author likely reported his findings from current news sources. The article was published in the *Economist*, which often contains a conservative bias towards deregulation. The article is important for my senior project because it sites concrete statistics concerning Chile's place in the competitive economy and its placement in terms of education in comparison with other Latin American nations.

Johnson, Jenna and Daniel de Vise. "Student Protest Cuts to Higher Education Funds." *The Washington Post* 4 March 2010. 15 Feb. 2011 <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/04/AR2010030401307.html>>.

This article addresses cuts in funding to higher education in the United States. It resulted in higher tuition for students in several states, such as Maryland, Virginia, and especially California—where cuts have been the most severe. The article describes several student protests that occurred upon news of the cuts. Many of these protests happened on March 4, 2010, which was declared the Day of Action to Defend Public Education in California. Students at several university campuses blocked roads, intimidated employees, and marched across their schools. California students hoped that their activism would spread to universities in other states. The article mentions one protest at the University of Maryland, where four-dozen people marched to an academic building with posters. Sadly, the same day, a riot over a Maryland vs. Duke sports game overshadowed the protest. This detail of the article caused me to consider the size of the protests in the United States in comparison with the huge and powerful educational strikes in Chile. The Washington Post staff writers receive "hundreds of news tips from community and business leaders, government workers [...]" and average citizens for their news stories. The article on student protests was likely formed upon these "tips." The Washington Post is scrutinized for having a liberal bias and for publishing too many favorable articles on then-candidate for President Barack Obama. The "Student Protest" article seemed to have a bias in favor of student activists. The source is important to my project because it gives clear statistics concerning budget cuts and noteworthy descriptions of several protests.

Klien, Alyson. "Recession's Toll on Education Budgets Proves Both Widespread and Uneven." *Education Week* 30.16 (2011): 16-19. *Academic Search Elite*. Web. 30 Jan. 2011 <<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?hid=13&sid=5c4f7ac4-5ffa-4d3c-b438-612def8f13de%40sessionmgr15&vid=1&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=afh&AN=57468161>>.

This article assesses the recession during the years of 2007-2009 and the budget cuts of each American state. The author affirms that the recession was felt differentially in each state, with public service cuts being more prominent in some states more than others. For example, the situation has been especially dire in Arizona, California, Florida, and Nevada—where foreclosures are linked to educational funding. Cuts have been less severe in lowly populated, energy-based economies like those in Alaska and Montana. The article also outlines the federal budget for education. Several stimulus packages have been issued over the last three years, but with Congress now being largely Republican,

prospects for another package are unlikely. Of all areas of public service, higher education has faced the sharpest cuts. The author likely used census data, federal documents, statistics gathered from credible studies, and current news sources to write the article. Since it was published in *Education Week*—a weekly newspaper devoted to providing news to the teachers and employees of elementary and secondary schools—it likely contains a slant favoring educators. This article is useful for my senior project because it contains information about the factors leading to protest: the recession and forced budget cuts. It provides decent statistics and concrete details concerning legislation and stimulus packages as well.

Mcksweeny, Terry. “Protesters removed from building at UC Berkeley.” ABC 7: San Francisco 11 Dec. 2009. 5 Feb. 2011
<http://abclocal.go.com/kgo/story?section=news/local/east_bay&id=7165271&rss=rss-kgo-article-7165271>.

This article includes a local San Francisco news station video and corresponding article that reports on a weeklong tuition protest at UC Berkeley. It resulted in the arrest of dozens of protesters who staged a peaceful occupation of Wheeler Hall with the permission of university administration. On Friday, at 4:30AM, police invaded and arrested 66 students because of a suspicious publicity poster. The poster announced a concert that would raise awareness about tuition hikes. It displayed an image of Wheeler Hall in flames, which police took as grounds for arrest. The author likely used information gathered at the protest, police reports, and information garnered from interviews with UC Berkeley personnel as well as the general public. ABC news and bay area reporters have a liberal bias, but the article itself seemed to report merely the facts and a representation of people who opposed and were in favor of the arrests. This article is useful to my senior project because I plan to research two protests in depth: one in Chile and the Berkeley protest that this article reports on. I find this protest particularly interesting because of the disputed arrests that resulted from it. According to a student organizer’s website that I previously came across, the issue is being brought to the Supreme Court because the arrests may have violated the Civil Rights Act.

Melis, Rolando. “Schooling in Chile.” *Going to School in Latin America*. Ed. Silvina Gvirtz and Jason Beech. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008. 77-95.

This book is separated into different chapters, each of which focuses on an educational system in a particular Latin American country. I read the chapter on Chile for my senior project. It outlines Chile’s educational history from colonial times to present. It speaks of former dictator Pinochet, and how he revised the educational system during his rule. Two of the main changes he made were the decentralization of education and the implementation of the Organic Constitutional Law of Education. In 1996, a democracy was reinstated in Chile. Several changes were made in regard to education, such as efforts for better quality and more autonomy given to schools, but some aspects of education remained the same. For example, the Organic Constitutional Law of Education was kept in place. This law was later the core of a 2006 two-month protest by Chilean secondary school students. The information of the chapter on Chile was obtained through books on

Chilean history, articles in Chilean newspapers, magazines, and academic journals, as well as several WebPages such as the “Chilean Ministry of Education electronic review.” The underlying philosophy of this book is that educational systems need to be understood in the context of each culture, rather than viewed ethnocentrically in the perspective of the United States. The authors of this book made a deliberate effort to uphold this philosophy; for example, each chapter entails a “day in the life” section, which describes the school day of a child in each country. This gives a firsthand glimpse of what their education is really like. The book is very pertinent to my senior project because it outlines important dates and concrete details regarding Chile’s educational history, such as specific laws and the rulers that instated them.

Olavarria, Margot. “Student Activism in Chile's Universities.” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 33.4 (2000): 28. *Academic Search Elite*. Web. 2 Feb. 2011
 <http://find.galegroup.com/gtx/infomark.do?&contentSet=IAC-Documents&type=retrieve&tabID=T007&prodId=EAIM&docId=A59647321&source=gale&srcprod=EAIM&userGroupName=calpolyw_csu&version=1.0>.

This article provides an overview of the educational protests in Chile from 1995-1999. Author Margot Olvarria describes the legacy that Chile’s dictatorship left on the university system: an undemocratic decision making processes, a policy of university “self-financing” that leaves many Chilean students in heavy debt, and proposed neoliberal laws such as the “Framing Law”—which limits students voices at their universities. The author describes how students have fought these unfavorable policies. She also notes the growing strength of student groups such as The Student Federation of Chile—which is becoming more focused and organized. Strikes that this organization has helped to put on have been successful; for example, student activists defeated the Framing Law and achieved new democratic councils in Chilean universities. Margot Olavarria, the author of this article, is a doctoral candidate who conducts fieldwork on social movements in Chile. She used a handful of news and book sources published by Chilean authors. The article was published in NACLA, or the “North American Congress on Latin America,” which is a non-profit organization dedicated to the spread of knowledge for positive change and less oppression in Latin America. The article favors the perspective and goals of the protesters, rather than the Chilean government. This article is very useful for my senior project. It gives concrete details about student groups and their protest goals and results. Although the article introduces Framing Law and the Confederation of Student Federations of Chile, I would like to investigate these subjects to a further degree.

“Protests of tuition increase continue on California campuses.” *CNN U.S.* 20 Nov. 2009. 5 Feb. 2011 <http://articles.cnn.com/2009-11-20/us/california.tuition.protests_1_tuition-hike-tuition-increase-tuition-and-fees?_s=PM:US>.

This article was published in 2009, and sites some of the first student activist responses to university tuition hikes in California. It describes one protest at UC Berkeley—where 100 students were arrested for trespassing while demonstrating against a 32% tuition increase. The article mentions two interesting points. First of all, it mentions that the tuition hikes

affect social classes by keeping the poorest Americans from obtaining a college degree. It also discusses the standpoint of teachers in the budget cut debate. At UC Berkeley, for example, many teachers were also worried by the layoffs and furloughs that the budget cuts have caused and many took to the picket sides alongside students. Unspecified staff writers likely used current CNN news information to complete the article. CNN is known to have a conservative bias. The article presents both sides of the issue of tuition hike, although there seem to be more viewpoints that defend tuition hikes than any other articles I have read thus far. The article is pertinent to my senior project because it brought up two perspectives that I would like to look into further: that of university teachers and that of those in favor of tuition increases. The article is also useful because it points out that higher tuition will keep poorer students out of college. Since it lacks more detail on this issue, I plan to further investigate how cuts in education are contributing to a more stratified society.

“Students on Edge Over Rising Tuition.” CBSNews 2 Feb.2010. 16 Feb. 2011.
<<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/02/02/national/main6164634.shtml>>.

This article gives concrete statistics on budget cuts and tuition hikes. For example, a study by the College Board specifies that each American student paid on average \$172 to \$1,096 more in tuition and fees in 2010. In California, the budget cuts have been unprecedented—and have led to tuition costs that are 32% higher than in Fall of 2009 and three times as high as students paid 10 years ago. The article also outlines Schwarzenegger’s budget proposal, which was instated for 2010-2011, which has been raising fees steadily by 10 percent. The article proceeds to compare California statistics with those in other states, which are remarkably high but not as astronomical as those concerning California. Although the sources of the article are not listed, the authors likely derived their information from current CBS News sources. CBS tends to have a liberal perspective. The article itself was not incredibly biased; it is informational in tone with little critique and analysis. It is useful for my senior project because it presents concrete statistics concerning tuition hikes. It lacks information on the public’s response to the hikes.

3. OUTLINE

I. Introduction

A. Introductory paragraph stating the problem

- i. Introduce paper with descriptive account of a 2006 March of the Penguins protest scene
- ii. Describe atmosphere of protest from Pinochet's dictatorship--now
 1. Remark on the legacy he left on education
- iii. Thesis: As a result of Pinochet's legacy and a too-slow process of reform in the nineties, students initiated vigorous protests in subsequent years that have resulted in constructive changes for Chile's educational system.

B. Overview of how my paper will be set up

- i. Formed through a literature review
- ii. Chile in comparison to other Latin American nations
- iii. Analysis of three major waves of protest
- iv. Results of protests & Chile's education today and tomorrow
- v. Purpose/ closing of my paper
 1. As an American college student well aware of the problems plaguing my university as well as universities across the nation, I was shocked/inspired upon reading about the 1997 Chilean student protest scene described above. The degree of protests here are nothing like those that I've read about in Chile, and I was left intrigued to find out more/ see what the history of educational problems and protest in Chile can offer as a lesson to students of my own nation...

II. Background

A. Education in Latin America (overview, background)

- i. All of Latin America
 1. Taken from my senior project proposal: According to several reports, Latin American nations are lagging far behind other developing nations in terms of education. Public schools are the most problematic. Teachers are paid low wages, and fewer hours are spent in the classroom than at private schools. Students also have trouble graduating at all levels of schooling. According to the Inter-American Development Bank, for example, only one in three Latin American students are able to complete secondary school (Interpress World News Agency). Even when students are able to graduate, the quality of education that they receive is often inadequate. With an average of only 4.5% of the GDP in Latin America going to education, this is no surprise (Interpress World News Agency).
 2. Majority of GDP (double-triple of GDP spent on education) goes to the military

3. Other problems: school desertion, high quality of private school education (comparable to industrialized nations) but public schooling lackluster
- ii. Chile—in relation to Latin America
 1. Shares similar tradition of colonization by Spain, but economy based not only on ag/mining (like most of Latin America) but on manufacturing. This allowed more urbanized/ industrialized culture/ better economic conditions w/ a growing middle class
 - 1a. Also has less military corruption/coups/ that are characteristic of most Latin American nations—except for Pinochet 1973-1990
 2. Resultantly, Chilean education system renown among Latin American nations—educational enrollment is very high (89% of primary age school kids attend—much higher than total Latin America which is 1 in 3), literacy rate of 95.7% (“Chile-Education”)
 3. Does share many of Latin America’s educational problems—mainly privatization vs. public schools and limited spending on education
 - 3a. only 3.7% GDP allocated toward education 1999 (“Chile-Education”)
 - 3b. <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/chile/public-spending-on-education-total-percent-of-gdp-wb-data.html>
Above: graph that shows waivering of GDP between 2-4% allocated toward education over they ears
 - 3c. Lower than average of all of Latin America—object of protest
- B. Overview of educational system in Chile
- i. Structured on 19th-century French/German example
 1. Formed in 1965—reform program that modernized the educational system—including teacher training, educational planning/management, new textbooks for all grades (“Chile-Education”)
 - ii. System & Statistics
 1. Eight years free/compulsory primary education (tradition began 1920), four years of (optional) secondary or vocational education, and varying years of higher education
 2. 1996: “89% of primary-school-age children were enrolled in school, while 72% of those eligible attended secondary school.” (“Chile-Education”)
 3. Student to teacher ratio: 30: 1 Primary school, 33:1 secondary school (1999) (“Chile-Education”)
 4. High literacy: more than 9/10ths of Chileans age 15 and over are literate (“Chile-Education”)

4a. Literacy has improved since the beginning of the 20th century: 1920: 50% illiteracy, in the year 2000 (according to UNESCO) 4.3% (“Chile-Education”)

5. Dominant private sector: run by religious groups, ethnic groups—such as the French, German, and Italians. High enrollment & costly (only affordable for the rich)

iii. Higher education

1. University of Chile (1738)—a national university-- most dominant; campuses in Santiago, Arica, Talca, and Temuco. Several technical universities (Santa Marta Technical University, the University of Santiago of Chile—German model) and Private universities: Catholic University of Chile (Santiago) University of Concepcion (just a few examples)

Many follow Roman Catholic tradition

2. Higher education enrollment: 380,603 in 1997, compared with 145,497 in 1980

II. Chilean Education: Body of the paper

A. Pinochet’s Dictatorship 1973-1990 and his legacy on education

i. 1973: Efforts for a shrinking level of state commitment to education

1. Pinochet gave more responsibility to private investors

ex. 1980s: private funds transferred to schools based on number of students that attend & ability to recruit and retain students

2. Decentralization: making education more dependent on consumer choice

ex. 1981-1986: enrollments in private subsidized institutions doubled

3. Policy of “self-financing”

Little state funding/ help for financial aid for students.

Forces university students into high debt

4. Quote: President of FECH Alvaro Cabrera (1999) Pinochet “doesn’t consider education to be a right” and he has a lack of vision for universities (Olavarria 28).

ii. Effects on teachers

1. Made teachers pay based on length of service rather than performance (“How to Make Them Better” 44).

2. Long length of service, teachers unable to be fired: result: old, low quality teachers (“How to Make Them Better” 44).

3. New teachers poorly trained under dictatorship.

4. Work conditions for teachers difficult: little time for class prep

iii. 1990: Ley Organica Constitucional de Educacion (organic constitutional law of education) implemented right before Pinochet left

1. Established “freedom of teaching:” private institutions could participate in educational matters with less state restraint than ever before
 2. “Objetivos Fundamentales y Contenidos Minimos Obligatorios” or “Fundamental Objectives and Minimum Obligatory Contents” – to be met by all schools (Melis 79)
 3. “ Transferred the administration of public schools from the Education Ministry to the country's 345 municipalities, and also permitted the creation of state-subsidised private schools” (Estrada).
- iv. Legacy of Social Stratification:
1. Poorest students funneled to municipal schools (which perform the worst) & many do not make it to college
 2. Richer students go to private schools where they receive better quality of education (Melis 80)
- B. Transition to Democracy & Its Effect on Education
- i. Objectives of OF-CMO kept from dictatorship
 - ii. Shrinking state still apparent:
 1. Funds toward education for state university system
DECREASED during the dictatorship: 1972—22% of GNP (Olavarria 44) 1999- .67% of GNP
 2. Total amount going to education (all forms) 1990- only 4% of GDP (Olavarria 28)
 - iii. “self financing” that forces university students into higher debt leftover from dictatorship
Ex. 1999 University of Chile—students must generate 70% of university’s funding (Olavarria 28)
 - iv. Slow process of reform
 1. 1996—more autonomy given to schools, efforts to improve quality of education
 2. Reform in school days: during dictatorship—students only spent half a day in primary and secondary school; weekly hours increased 30-38 (primary) and 30-42 (secondary) during democracy (Melis 82)
- C. The First Large Scale Protests in Democratic Chile: 1997
- i. May 23, 1997: start of nationwide protests of Chilean public universities—lasted 7 weeks
 - ii. Organizing movement of students
 1. 26 organizations under “Confederation of Chilean University Students (CONFech)”
 2. street demonstrations, teach ins, building occupations by 10s of thousands of students/ and staff
 - iii. Students fought for
 1. A more democratic decision making process: undemocratic

2. An end to new Modernization efforts: resulted in higher fees for students, a two-tier system for academic employees
3. Change Government budget: wanted more money given to higher education and policy of “self-financing” changed (students in heavy debt/ taking out private loans)
- iv. Fought the “Framing Law”
 1. Proposed legislation that would make decision making in university even more undemocratic
 2. By limiting of student voice by restricting student participation to 2 (out of 20)
- v. Response from government:
 1. protests strengthening, gov. tried to stall while negotiating to allow strikes to cool off...
 2. Protests did not weaken: ex. July 1, 1997: march to National Congress in Valparaiso, 100 arrests; 9 injured
 3. Second attempt by gov: proposed agreement for giving student’s \$60 million for universities (some of the 26 student organizations accepted it—others were angered because they originally asked for more money and did not want to let down)
- vi. Results: students gained some, but not as much as they desired
 1. Second attempt by gov worked—students gained \$35 million toward higher education (less than desired)
 2. Did gain a more democratic decision making process : Normative Councils—made up of students, professors, and administrators” to “govern the university” and make decisions (Olavarria 28)
Councils present at University of Playa Ancha, Valparaiso, Santa Maria University, and the Catholic University (Olavarria 28)
 3. Defeated the Framing Law
 4. public universities resumed operations on July 15,1997 (seven weeks after start)
- vii. Served as a TURNING point
 1. Students in the newly democratized nation realized that they COULD receive results through concentrated effort

D. State of Education 2004-2006

i. 2004

1. Total spending on education reached 7.3% of GDP, but educational standards are still low my international standards” (“How to Make Them Better” 44).

ii. 2006

1. World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report: Chile is the world’s 27th most competitive economy (far ahead the rest of Latin America) but just 76th for the overall quality of its

education and 100th for its math and science education” (Olavarria 28).

2. These studies “suggest that educational attainment in Chile [...] is below that of many countries with a similar income level elsewhere” (Olavarria 28).

E. 2006 March of the Penguins: Another Huge Wave of Post-Dictatorship Protest

i. Trigger: news about the price of copper (Chile’s main export) being at an all-time high

1. Thoughts that Chile should utilize their flourishing economy for education

2. Student banner: “Sky-high copper prices; rock-bottom education!” (Olavarria 28)

3. “Penguins”—named because of student uniforms

ii. Basics of the Protest

1. “Coordinating Assembly of Grade School Students”, informally as the “March of the Penguins”

2. Lasted three weeks; led by Chile’s secondary school students

iii. Students desires:

1. free public transport to and from school, voice in government educational policy, lower fees for college entrance exams

2. Organic Constitutional Law of Education to be revoked

3. Duration of school day diminished (too stressful/ long)...8th grader mentioned in Going to School in Latin America: leaves for school at 7am, does not get home until 6pm

4. Start of it: 10-hour riot in Santiago, resulted in the arrest of 370 people, use of tear gas and water cannons by police. Also classroom sit-ins

iv. Class lines were blurred during the strike

1. poor students from state schools/ students from rich private schools participated

v. Results of strike:

i. 2007: President Michelle Bachelet sent a project to Congress to modify the Organic Constitutional Law of Education (Melis 90)

F. 2009: Modification of Law Announced/More Protests

i. Students and teachers protest new education law passed by Chilean Parliament

1. The law is a response to 2006 protest, which demanded a replacement to the Organic Constitutional Law of Education

2. Originally, “banned for-profit schools/ student selection process” left by Organic Law (Estrada)

2a. Instead, was altered due to conservative pressure & moved away from its fight against privatization/decentralization

3. Article 46: most disputed

3a. allows university graduates without any teaching credentials to teach subjects related to their degree in secondary schools for five years (temporary, makes up for lack of teachers in certain subjects)

4. Positive points of law

4a. Provides a better definition of the right to education

4b. Sets out stricter conditions for the owners of state-subsidized private schools

4c. Creates agency to oversee quality of education

ii. Details of the protest

1. High number of Teachers from the National Teachers Association, university, and secondary students started in the Plaza de Armas in Santiago and marched to the Ministry of Education building to deliver a letter

2. Involved some violence: six carabineros (military police) were hurt because people threw bottles at them

3. 47 arrested, 2 teachers (Estrada)

iii. Transition to Educational Analysis Section

1. Quote from Garcia-Huidobro (from the education advisory council): the law makes "small advances, but the core problems of Chilean education, that is to say, its deep inequality and increasing social segregation, remain untouched and unsolved" (Estrada)

G. Analysis of Education Today, and Prospects for the Future

i. Social Inequality: exasperated by the divide between private & subsidized schools vs. public schools

1. Private and subsidized schools have increased: doubled its faculty since 2000 (Reynoso-Palley)

2. Quality differences: teachers/ quality of learning

2a. 48.5% of public school teachers are above 50, only 22% are in private and subsidized schools (Reynoso-Palley)

worries that their teaching methodology is out of date.

3. Better private schools are only accessible to the rich

3a. Fees charged by private schools are 10x as much as public ("Blackboard Battle") keeps poor students out.

3b. Rich students have more opportunity for a better education: "In the latest national tests the maths scores of 4th-year primary pupils from the richest fifth of the population were already about 35% better than those of the poorest fifth" ("Blackboard Battle")

ii. President Sebastián Piñera (as of March 11, 2010) & his plans for the improvement of education/lessening social stratification in Chile

1. Became President March 11, 2010 with pronounced commitment to social, health, and education reform
 - 1b. Spoke of doubling investment in ed, and giving educational subsidies to those in need
2. Put forth the “most ambitious educational reform since the 1960s”—in the form of a bill that may be approved sometime this March 2011
 - 2a. Efforts for higher quality: i.e. teachers—scholarships for those who scored well on university-entrance exam; plan to get old teachers to retire
 - 2b. More subsidies to schools and for those in need & creation 60 schools of excellence for Chilean’s poor, but bright students
3. Work of education minister, Joaquin Lavin
 - 3a. in 2011: plans for improvements in preschool, technical and higher education in 2011
 - 3b. Example: Ministry of Education is currently conducting research on problems/ways to improve preschool education
 - 3c. Already found that one problem is low attendance:
 - 62% of kids under five don’t attend preschool (Locker)

iii. Useful quotes analyzing the root of educational problems:

1. "One of the biggest errors into which the educational debate has fallen, in general, is to think that education can be improved without changing society," said Cornejo, whose perspective on the problem links it with the country's "anti-democratic constitution" and "extremely unequal income distribution."

"This is not just about the approval of a law, nor just about an educational problem. This is a problem about the way Chilean society is dealing with change. We believe that it is not possible, in a country that calls itself democratic, for only the government and parliament to be entitled to introduce draft laws," said the president of the University of Chile Students' Federation (FECH), Federico Huneeus.

"We are going to work to mobilise civil society to prepare a draft law for a model of education for the people, that President Bachelet can take and present to parliament, and that will be a proposal that has truly arisen from all of the actors involved in the educational system," he concluded.
(Estrada)

IV. Analysis/ Conclusion

A. Social Stratification in Chile

- i. General state of social stratification in Chile: the sharp divide between rich in poor (as is typical of South America)
- ii. How education is increasing it: bring back details from the body of my paper
 - 1. ex. Increasing difficulty to enter college leaves a sharp divide between rich and poor

B. Compare and contrast with U.S. higher education

- i. Similar problems
 - 1. Tuition increasing, quality diminishing due to budget cuts
 - 1a. a few statistics
 - 2. Resulting social stratification
 - 3. Educational protest have surfaced in recent years as well
 - 3a. Quick summary/ overview
- ii. Chile: Argument for more aggressive protest
 - 1. Use of pressure contacts
 - 1a. In 2000, five students went on a hunger strike at the Metropolitan University as part of a protest for a new student credit scheme offering student grants to be extended to more universities (2000: only open to 20 of 250 universities), demanding to meet with minister of education Mariana Alywin (Domencio 3).
 - 2. School boycotts
 - 2a. Gather info through interview Dr. Fagan/Soquel
- iii. Why are protests more intense?
 - 1. Chileans are more informed
 - 1a. 8th grader mentioned in Going to School in Latin America: goes home to family each night to watch the news and “talk about what is going on in Chile and the rest of the world” (Melis 95).
 - 2. U.S. citizens more apathetic?
 - 2a. U.S. : study in Social Strat about only 25% of Americans reading newspaper
 - 3. Fervor of new democracy in Chile
- iii. The Newness of Democracy in Chile
 - 1. Skepticism about democracy:
 - Many Chileans “see the Chilean political system as fundamentally undemocratic, and voicing skepticism over the idea that Chile might truly be a democratic country. (Bickford 15).
 - 2. Painful memories of authoritarian military reinvigorate passion/ fervor of the powers Chileans fought hard to obtain
- iv. Concluding paragraph
 - 1. It is clear that Chilean students have been using the rights their democracy has granted them, protesting for change—and garnering results. In the years to come—I hope that the proposed reform by President Pinera is fulfilled & and that United States citizens can

look to Chile as an example of how present problems in education can be overcome through similar means!

4. CHILEAN EDUCATION & A RADICAL ATMOSPHERE OF CHANGE:

MAIN TEXT

I. Introduction

On May 31, 2006, over half a million Chilean students occupied their secondary school buildings demanding free college entrance exams, more teachers, and the removal of the Organic Constitutional Law of Education. A portion of these students marched to the national palace in Santiago, where children as young as 13 were sprayed with tear gas and water cannons. Other students rallied outside their school buildings, where many slept overnight and were brought food from supportive parents. Although 700 protesters were arrested on May 31 alone, they were not done fighting. What newspaper headlines acclaimed as “Chile’s biggest student protest in decades” would last for a total of three weeks (“Thousands of students protest in Chile”).

This large-scale protest, which came to be known as the “March of the Penguins” for the uniforms that the students wore, is just one of several educational protests that have beset Chile since its 1990 transition to democracy. When former dictator Pinochet left office, the troubles he inflicted on Chile’s educational system remained. Chile’s newly democratic citizens were forced to grapple with a sharp divide between private and public schools, a policy of “self-financing” that left many college students in severe debt, and a population of poorly-trained, elderly teachers. As a result of his legacy and a too-slow process of reform in the nineties, students initiated vigorous protests in subsequent years that have resulted in constructive changes for Chile’s educational system.

Through an intensive review of several literature sources, I compiled an analysis of student revolt in Chile. I began by assessing Chile's educational system in contrast with other Latin American nations. I then explored three large-scale protests in Chile, the first of which began in 1997. This early wave of protests revolved around the inefficient "Framing Law" and an undemocratic decision making process. Massive rallies then picked up again in 2006 with the aforementioned "March of the Penguins" and have surfaced in recent years in objection to a flawed revision of the Organic Constitutional Law of Education. I assessed the results of each of these protests and the role they have played in shaping Chileans current educational state of affairs. Although problems such as a divide between private and public schools and the high cost of tuition for university students still remain, Chile has made outstanding progress and prospects for the future of education are even brighter.

As an American university student, I was astounded by the information I gathered through the scope of my research. What particularly shocked me was the participation of students of all ages and their willingness to occupy schools for months until the Chilean government responded with reform. Although this reform has rarely fulfilled student's every desire, the fact that Chilean protest has been vigorous enough to inspire change offers a valuable lesson to American students. We have felt the shock of cutbacks in our education and incurred heavy debt due to the rising cost of tuition, but large-scale protests have failed to last for over a day. Why has American student response to similar educational issues been nowhere near akin to the fervent reaction of Chilean students? After a thorough examination of Chile's educational past and present, I will strive to answer this question.

II. Background

A. The State of Education in Latin America

Latin America struggles with several educational issues. One problem deals with the quality of public schools. Teachers are paid low wages, and fewer hours are spent in the classroom than at private schools. Students also have trouble graduating at all levels of schooling. According to the Inter-American Development Bank, for example, only one in three Latin American students are able to complete secondary school (Interpress World News Agency). Even when students are able to graduate, the quality of education they receive is often inadequate.

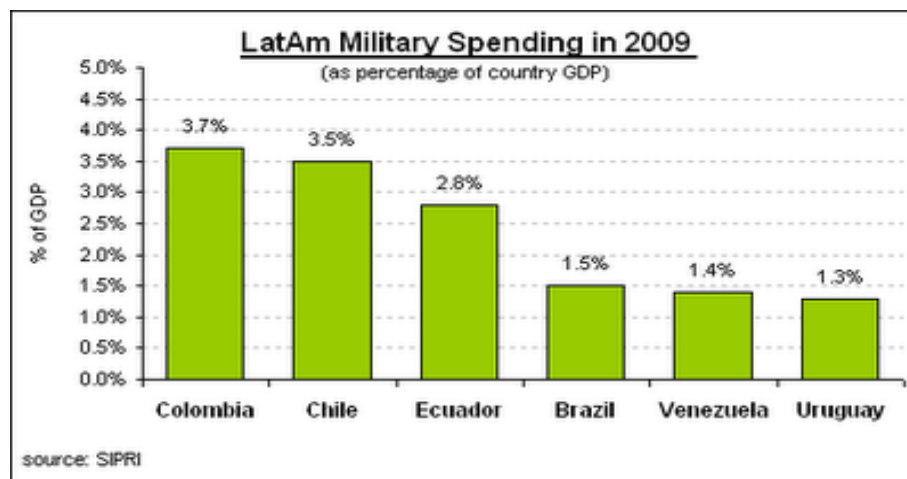
With an average of only 4.5% of the GDP in Latin America going to education, it is no surprise that their public schools fall short in many respects (Interpress World News Agency). The reason for this low level of educational spending has to do with military spending. In some instances, double to triple the amount of a Latin American nation's GDP spent on education goes to boosting their armed forces (Interpress World News Agency). One country where this is especially apparent is Columbia. Spending on defense has increased in Columbia each year since 2000, and it more than doubled to \$9 billion in 2009 from \$2.6 billion in 2001 (U.S. Dept. of State). Funding the military has taken precedence over education in Columbia.

Although public schools endure a host of problems due to a lack of national investment, private schools often reap a high quality of education. The discrepancy between public and private education is a huge problem in Latin America. Since only the wealthy students who are able to afford private school receive its ample benefits and

academic resources, they do better academically than students attending public school. This has served to widen the gap between rich and poor in Chile.

B. Chile Compared to Latin America as a Whole

Chile shares many of the educational problems that are characteristic of Latin American nations. For example, Chileans struggle with a sharp divide between the public and private sphere of education. A low level of national spending on education fuels this inequality. Like many other Latin American nations, high military spending is related to this. For example, Chile ranks 2nd of all Latin American nations in military spending while Columbia, unsurprisingly, ranks first. The following graph, which was put forth by the SIPRI, portrays this:



<http://incakolanews.blogspot.com/2010/06/military-spending-in-latin-america-2009.html>.

While military spending takes up 3.5% of Chile's GDP, only 3.7% (just .2% more) is spent on Chile's educational sector ("Chile-Education"). Military spending is remarkably high because Chile's state copper company, Codelco, directly funds it. The fact that the majority of Chile's copper profits are being used on the military, instead of education, has been one of the main seeds for protest.

Despite these issues, Chile boasts a solid educational system. The vast majority of the population attends primary school, and 95.7% of its population is literate (“Chile-Education”). Chile also has a well-developed university system. Its educational standards are high because it is one of the most technologically advanced, industrialized nations of Latin America. Chileans have been able to develop a good balance between an export-oriented economy and liberal social policy. This atmosphere has allowed Chilean politicians to enact educational reform.

The most sweeping educational reform took place in 1965. It involved teacher training, educational planning, and new textbooks for students (“Chile-Education”). These efforts helped modernize the educational system to a level that far surpasses other Latin American nations. For example, Chile now boasts a 30:1 student to teacher ratio in primary school, and a 33:1 ratio in secondary school (“Chile-Education”). Literacy rates have also improved dramatically as a result of this reform. In fact, UNESCO reported that illiteracy affected 50% of Chileans in 1920 whereas only 4.3% of Chileans are affected today (“Chile-Education”).

C. Chile’s Educational System

Chile’s educational system is structured according to a 19th century French and German model. This model involves eight years of free and compulsory primary education, four years of optional secondary or vocational education, and varying years of higher education (“Chile-Education”). Students attend either public or private institutions, but because of costly prices, only the wealthy can select the latter. Certain ethnic and religious groups dominate private education. For example, French, German,

and Italian private schools are widespread. Roman Catholic private universities are also prominent.

Higher education is expanding in Chile. In 1980, 145,497 Chileans were enrolled in universities whereas 380,603 students were enrolled in 1997 (Melis 94). Many of these students attend the national institution of the University of Chile. It has campuses in Santiago, Arica, Talca, Temuco, and several other locations. Chile also offers technical universities, such as the University of Santiago of Chile. Its private universities include the Catholic University of Chile in Santiago and the prestigious University of Concepcion.

III. The Politics of Education Before the Strikes Ensued

A. Pinochet's Dictatorship (1973-1990) & Its Legacy on Education

According to Avaro Cabrera, former President of the Confederation of Chilean University Students, former dictator Augusto Pinochet “doesn't consider education to be a right” (Olavarria 28). During his rule, he made several changes that made education less of a state commitment. For example, he worked toward the decentralization of education and gave more responsibility to private investors. He also initiated a policy of “self-financing,” which meant students were obligated to pay out of pocket for their education and financial aid was less readily available (Melis 79). Pinochet's dictatorship also affected teachers. He had their pay be based on length of service, rather than performance—which resulted in a population of elderly, low-quality teachers (“How to Make Them Better” 44). The single most significant change that Pinochet made was initiated just before he left office, and it is known as the “Organic Constitutional Law of

Education.” This law allowed private institutions to participate in educational matters with less state restraint than ever before. It did so by permitting the creation of state-subsidized private schools and transferring the administration of public schools from the Education Ministry to the country’s 345 municipalities (Estrada). The law also set forth national educational standards known as the “Fundamental Objectives and Minimum Obligatory Contents” which all Chilean schools were obligated to follow. This law, as well as the aforementioned changes that Pinochet put forth, had a lasting impact on Chilean education through the country’s transition to democracy.

B. The Transition to Democracy & Its Effect on Education

When Chile became a democracy in 1990, the impact that Pinochet made on education remained. For example, the policy of self-financing has changed little. In 1999, nearly a decade after Pinochet’s rule, students were still forced to generate 70% of the university’s funding at the University of Chile (Olavarria 28). This meant that students faced great debt upon graduation. The highly disputed objectives set forth by the Organic Constitutional Law of education also remained.

Small changes did take place in an effort to reform education, but they happened slowly. In 1996, one such change was made. More autonomy was given to schools in hopes that educational quality would improve. School days were also increased, since the dictatorship shortened school days to only half a day (Melis 82).

IV. The Protests of Democratic Chile

A. The First Large Scale Protests: 1997

After Pinochet's brutal dictatorship came to an end, Chilean students expected the face of education to change quickly. Since the new democracy did not produce immediate improvements, Chileans began to take matters into their own hands. Their first step occurred on May 23, 1997, when large-scale educational protests ensued (Olavarria 29).

The protests were organized by 26 student university organizations under the "Confederation of Chilean University Students (CONFUEch)," which is a national organization devoted to positive change in higher education (Melis 80). Students and university staff members all over the country came together for street demonstrations, building occupations, and teach-ins.

They fought the proposed "Framing Law" and the government budget regarding education. The Framing Law was a highly disputed piece of legislation that would make the decision making process of universities even more undemocratic than before. It would limit student participation to only 2 students per each 20-member decision-making board (Melis 92). Chileans also fought against several budget issues, including the policy of self-financing aforementioned and new modernization efforts that brought about higher student fees. They also demanded that more government funds be funneled into higher education.

As protests strengthened, the Chilean government attempted to cool things off by negotiating at a slow pace. Their strategy failed and fervent activism continued. For example, on July 1997, a huge march that resulted in 100 arrests and 9 injured activists took place in front of the National Congress in Valparaiso (Olavarria 28). The Chilean government made a second attempt to weaken protests by causing

divisions within the student groups. They did so by proposing \$60 million in funds for higher education, which was less than CONFech demanded. Some student groups accepted, while others were angered and refused to let down (Olavarria 27).

After 7 weeks of protest, a concession was finally made. Students ended up agreeing on funds of only \$35 million (Olavarria 27). Although this was less than they had initially desired, students did make several other gains. They were able to defeat the Framing Law, for example, and set up a new system of Normative Councils to achieve a more democratic decision making process. These councils were governing bodies of students, professors, and administrators that would have much more of a say in university decisions than in the past. The achievements that Chilean students were able to reap proved that they could achieve results through concentrated effort. The somewhat successful strikes also gave students the push they needed to strive for more change in the future.

B. March of the Penguins 2006

The next large-scale strike occurred in response to news about the price of copper. As Chile's main export, the price of copper reached an all-time high in 2006. The high price of copper helped Chile become the 27th most competitive economy according to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report (Olavarria 27). At the same time, though, education was lacking. Chile ranked only 76th for the overall quality of its education and 100th for its math and science education according to the same study (Olavarria 28). This news pushed an already frustrated group of secondary school students into action.

Students went on strike to achieve several desires, including free public transport to and from school, a more democratic educational decision making process, and lower fees for college entrance exams. They also pushed for an end to Pinochet's Organic Constitutional Law of Education. Their tactics included peaceful marches and classroom sit-ins, as well as one particularly fervent riot in Santiago. It lasted 10 hours and resulted in the use of tear gas and water cannons by Chilean police (Melis 91).

The strikes were influential in part because of the young age of the protesters. They utilized their knowledge of technology to gather protesters by the masses, and photographs like the one below made national headlines:



http://farm2.static.flickr.com/1124/529131227_97e8e6bcfb.jpg

The attention they gained helped bring education to the forefront of Michelle Bachelet's presidency. Before she took office, she declared that education was in a "deplorable state" and it was necessary to improve it for Chile to enter the developed world (Zipper 2). When she took office, though, she did not make education a priority. The "March of

the Penguins,” which the protest was nicknamed for the black and white uniforms of the children, helped force her to follow through on her words. She finally took initiative by modifying the Constitutional Law of Education in 2007 (Melis 90).

C. The Modification of the Organic Constitutional Law of Education & Continued Protests

Michelle Bachelet’s revision of the Organic Law was both acclaimed and debated. On the positive end, the modified law provided a better definition of the right to education. It also set out stricter conditions for the owners of state-subsidized private schools, and created an agency to oversee the quality of education. These steps would help Chile move away from privatization and questions of quality in their educational systems. Although these efforts were celebrated, several clauses remained that left the public dissatisfied. One of these was Article 46. It was added during Bachelet’s modification in order to combat a shortage of teachers in secondary schools. The article granted university graduates the ability to teach for up to five years without any form of training or schooling. There was also dissent over the issues of “deep inequality and increasing social segregation,” which were left unsolved by the 2007 amendment (Estrada, “Teachers,” 23).

As a result of these frustrations, a unified group of teachers and students congregated in the Plaza de Armas in Santiago to march to the Ministry of Education Building in 2009. Protesters aimed to simply deliver a letter, but their energy was overwhelming and the march took a violent turn. Several people threw bottles at six carabineros, or Chilean military police, and 47 people were arrested (Estrada, “Teachers,” 24).

D. Education Today and Prospects for the Future

As a result of the 2009 protests, Article 46 was rescinded but several other pressing issues remain today. A central problem is educational inequality, which is based in the sharp divide between private and public schools. The amount of private schools has increased and its faculty has doubled since 2000 (Reynoso-Palley 3). Public schools, on the other hand, have a faculty shortage and nearly half of their teachers are over the age of 50 (Reynoso-Palley 3). There is widespread concern that their teaching methodology is out of date and that students are not receiving as adequate of an education as they would in a private school. Statistics show that these concerns are valid. For example, national test scores reveal that the richest fifth of the population—who are able to afford expensive private school charges—performed 35% better in math than those of the poorest fifth (“Blackboard Battle”). The difference between the public and private sector reflects a wider societal issue of social stratification in Chile.

According to researcher Rodrigo Conejo at the Chilean Observatory of Educational policy, “one of the biggest errors into which the educational debate has fallen [...] is to think that education can be improved without changing society” (Estrada, “Teachers,” 4). He points to the extremely unequal income distribution in Chile as an underlying problem in education. The richest 10 percent of the country receives 39.2% of the national income, whereas the poorest 10 percent receive only 1.5%, according to the 2009 National Socio-Economic Survey (Estrada, “Inequality,” 10). Pinochet’s dictatorship is responsible for this economic discrepancy. He enacted several neoliberal policies that plunged Chile’s economy forward in an inequitable manner. He also enforced a regressive tax system that benefitted Chile’s richest populace.

The economic inequality brought forth by Pinochet has had a catastrophic impact on students. First of all, the differences between the public and private sphere produce a rigid social ladder. Chile's richest are able to afford high tuition costs, receive a premier education, and thus succeed economically later in life. This phenomenon is especially significant at the university level. Since Chilean families are forced to pay 83.9% of the cost of their child's higher education, only those who are at the top of the social ladder are able to pursue a degree (Estrada, "Inequality," 2). The system in place is not only unfair, but it completely undermines a student's personal academic potential.

Interestingly, students of all economic statuses have realized this issue and united for more equitable education. For example, the March of the Penguins involved a blurring of class lines (Melis 90). Poor students from state schools as well as students from rich private schools protested alongside each other. Their unified efforts have forced education to the top of the governmental agenda in recent years.

On March 11, 2010, President Sebastian Pinera assumed office with the most "ambitious educational reform since the 1960s" (Locker). Thus far he has initiated several reforms to produce higher quality teachers. His initiatives include an early retirement for elderly teachers as well as a scholarship for teachers who score well on university entrance exams. Pinera has also worked toward a more equitable school system. One of his most innovative efforts was his creation of 60 Schools of Excellence, which cater to Chile's poor children who have shown academic potential (Locker).

Chile's education minister, Joaquin Lavin, has also played a vital role in initiating reform. He created a plan for improvements in preschool, technical, and higher education during the 2011 academic year. The first step in the plan involves intensive research by

the Ministry of Education. Recent studies regarding preschool education have found that 62% of kids under five do not attend preschool, although it is beneficial for children (Locker). Lavin hopes to promote preschools in the coming months.

V. Concluding Thoughts: How Chile's Educational Strife Relates to the U.S.

A. Similar Issues

Through my research on Chilean educational problems, I noticed striking similarities with issues in the United States. The main similarity I perceived concerns Chile's problem of increased "self-financing" for students. In the United States, a state budget crisis has resulted from the economic recession. The majority of states have induced major cuts to public services since 2008, and higher education has been hit the hardest. A total of 43 states have made reductions in their higher education expenditures, and California has felt it the worst (Kilen 16). A student entering a UC as a freshman in fall of 2007 saw a 36% fee increase by their time of graduation in 2010, and CSU students saw one of nearly 60% (Kilen 16). CSU students faced yet another fee increase for the 2010-2011 year, and prospects for the future are not hopeful. Governor Jerry Brown just prepared a \$500 million cut to the California State University System for the coming fiscal year (Scott). These massive budget cuts have forced students to incur heavy debt as well as work more outside of school. Faculty members have also been affected by furlough days, layoffs, lack of resources, and reduced salaries.

Students and teachers alike have united in their struggle to fight a deteriorating university system. Social media has been valuable in their organizing efforts. One student-run website, known as "Occupy California" has been a fundamental source

inspiring protests in California CSU and UC systems. They helped initiate the March 4, 2010 “National Day of Action to Defend Education” protests, in which 1000s of students rallied in California as well as a few other states. One of the most notable rallies occurred on the UC Berkeley campus, which is depicted below. Students set off fire alarms in five buildings, initiated walkouts, and held a rally of nearly one-thousand people in their central plaza (“Sit in at Berkeley and Davis”). Another massive protest occurred in Davis, California, where police met impassioned UC Davis students who walked on to the freeway.



<http://occupyca.wordpress.com/2010/10/07/october-7-2010/>

Above: A rally in front of Wheeler Hall in Berkeley, CA—where the “Day of Acton” saw some of its most vigorous student protests

Although the crisis in California and all over the U.S. is dire, recent protests have been nowhere near as fervent as those in Chile. For example, the amount of teachers and

students who have protested in the United States have been much less than in Chile. This is especially an issue at California Polytechnic State University, where budget cuts have been severe but student response has been minimal. The picture shown on the following page displays a small march to the administration building during the “National Day of Action”, which approximately 40 students attended. The small protest achieved only the attention of passerby’s. Sadly, these smaller-scale rally efforts have resulted in no significant changes all over the United States and budget cuts continue to inflict higher education.



<http://mustangdaily.net/media/2010/03/protest1.jpg>

Primary and secondary education in California has also been hit hard by the recession. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, California ranks 47th in the nation in the number of students per classroom teacher (Williams). Their school systems have also lost 40,000 employs due to staff cutbacks in the past three years, and the majority of them are teachers (Williams). During the week of May 9, 2011, the California Teachers Association hosted protests in Sacramento, resulting in several arrests. They were supporting an extension in tax increases that will support education,

and fighting against dire conditions in their schools. Although these strikes are important, secondary school youth have not gotten involved and the state of primary and secondary schools remain the same.

B. A Look at Chile: Why are Protests more Successful?

In Chile, university students are suffering from problems similar to those seen in the United States. Unlike the protests at California Polytechnic State University, though, protesters have come out in outrageously high numbers. On May 12, for example, fifteen thousand student and national leaders arrived at Santiago's Plaza Italia to rally and debate critical educational issues (Simon). Thousands of students also gathered in other cities on the same day, such as in Valparaiso as shown below:



http://photoblog.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2011/05/12/6633605-chilean-students-throw-rocks-get-blasted-by-water-cannons-while-protesting-education-system

This image goes to show that Chilean students are not only more involved, but much more aggressive. The students shown above are throwing stones at riot police, who later used powerful water hoses against them. Other Chilean protests have involved intensive

pressure tactics, such as hunger strikes, and boycotts that take students out of school for several months at a time.

What makes Chileans react so differently than Americans? One reason could be that Chileans are more informed about current events. According to Going to School in Latin America, a novel by Rolando Melis, Chilean families have a tradition of social awareness. For example, Melis interviewed an 8th grade Chilean student who spoke of watching the news and talking about “what is going on in Chile and the rest of the world” with his family (95). This awareness may be the reason for the high number of secondary school students involved in the March of the Penguins of 2006. Secondary students in the U.S., however, are yet to engage themselves in protest. This may be because Americans are less socially aware. One study cited by Harold Kerbo’s Social Stratification & Inequality indicates that only 25% of our populace read the newspaper (112). This lack of knowledge produces indifference in American society, which does little to incite protest.

Another reason U.S. and Chilean protest environments are different has to do with Chile’s university system. The president of each Chilean university is elected by fellow faculty members and staff, and students have a major role in the decision making process. This fosters a more “democratic feeling” and has led to a tradition of action among students in Chile (Fagan). This atmosphere of protest extends not only to passionate issues such as education, but to simple issues such as a lack of microwaves in student study areas (Hines). This activist mentality has produced defined protest leaders and the formally organized student federation of CONFech. In the United States, on the other hand, there is both a less democratic university system and a lack of a central student protest organization.

U.S. students also may not see protesting as worthwhile. The protests that have followed educational frustrations in past years have not produced any significant changes like it has in Chile. The United States has also been hit harder the economic recession, which may have produced a cautionary environment among students and faculty. Although angered by educational issues, they see that their jobs and future are at stake if they rebel. Thus, they choose not to. This fear may stem from the United States having more of a “police state,” where the threat of penalty is high. An example of this is the Mardi Gras controversy in San Luis Obispo, California. This university town once hosted an annual weekend-long celebration of Mardi Gras, until police cited escalating problems of violence and property damage. In 2004, a riot broke out that resulted in 200 arrests (“2008: The Party”). Because of this incident, the San Luis Obispo police force and two local universities banded together to put an end to the event. Large number of police officers, added DUI checkpoints, and triple fines for offenders are still present on MardiGras weekend to this day. This example shows the nature of policing in the United States; they are powerful, strict, and inspire fear of punishment among youth.

The fear of U.S. students, however, is not unknown for Chileans. Many arrests as well as setbacks in a student’s education have occurred due to their involvement in protests. The reason why they continue to fight may stem from Pinochet’s dictatorship, in which several Chilean students faced torture when they stood up for their rights. Since their brave acts permitted the democratic environment that Chile sees today, students do not take their freedoms for granted. Chilean police as well as citizens may also be more accustomed to protest as a means of demonstrating their frustrations. Since Chile and Latin America as a whole have a history of oppressive regimes, the people view protest

as a vital way to have their voice heard. The police may be more tolerant of protest for this reason. In the United States, a history dominated by democracy has produced a different environment. Protest is one way for U.S. citizens to enact change, but there are many other ways to express their political disapproval. For example, they can write letters to congressman or utilize phone-banking. Since these many avenues of representation have always been available, protest is less of a priority.

C. Final Thoughts

Chilean student's true dedication to educational change has become clear to me through my research. In 1990, when Chile transitioned to democracy, Pinochet left a legacy of unfair educational policies, striking social inequality, and low quality public schools. Frustrations mounted and Chileans united to fight back. The Confederation of Chilean University Students launched the first set of large-scale protests in 1997, with more following in 2006 and 2009. Their vigorous efforts have resulted in several changes in Chile's educational system. The disputed Organic Constitutional Law of Education, for one, has been modified to meet protester's demands. Today, President Sebastian Pinera and Joaquin Lavin have also obliged by producing promising educational reform.

Although Chile has come a long way since 1990, problems are still insight. The divide between the public and private sphere is sharper than ever, and self-financing at universities is still a major problem. Fortunately, Chile's tradition of activism is still very much alive. On May 16, 2011, for example, I received news from current American foreign exchange student Chris Dann who is studying in La Serena, Chile. Students at the ULS University of La Serena are currently boycotting their school because of rising tuition prices (Dann). Massive riots have arisen across the country, and unsurprisingly,

Dann is in shock. Having seen similar problems inflict his university in San Luis Obispo, California, Dann is unaccustomed to Chile's high level of response. Chilean student activists take protest to a level that many U.S. citizens have never seen. Although America may be more of a police state, and has less student representation in the university system, these are not viable excuses for our lack of activism. Chile faced a harsh police brutality under Pinochet, but that did not stop Chileans from rebelling. Chile also once featured a university system akin to the United States,' but Chilean students rebelled to achieve a system that is more democratic. They are now struggling with high tuition prices that American students are all too much familiar with, and their protests have incited like a wildfire. Their enthusiasm for change will likely only mount with time, and they will not cease to rebel until they achieve their desires. Americans need to learn from this unrelenting activism, for we will realize that we are more similar to Chileans than we may think. We both share the right to demonstrate, and we *can* establish the same tradition of action as Chile. All it takes is a look at Chilean student's enthusiasm to realize that education is a right worth fighting for, and that more equitable and affordable educational systems could easily be ahead if this fight is not forgotten.

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