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Student Political Expression under Institutional Violence: An Ethnography in Santiago, Chile

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Abstract

In 2011, Chilean university students continued a history of radical student organizing in massive nation-wide marches with aims to achieve public, free, and high quality higher education given the country's neoliberal legacy. But the academic discussion surrounding these mobilizations not only assumes homogeneity of participating students' political ideologies, but also lacks nuanced understandings of the dynamic university climates in Santiago, Chile from which these students have mobilized. During August–December 2015, I investigated how politically engaged students create and perform university politics and navigate institutional constraints. My results analyze how the university's clashing political factions create forms of violence between students and manifest opposing demands on the institution itself. I also focus on how the insurgent Left creates meaning in a university space rife with the wounds of its nation's history, aiming to reconcile the university's past, disrupt the present, and reclaim the university for the future. A rich understanding of university political climates demystifies a seemingly apathetic, homogeneously conservative university in the context of Chile's recent legacy of student mobilization. This work illuminates the Left's acts of resistance as a means to use the university as a platform of direct influence on national politics and larger populist social change.

Medha Asthana's project was born out of her desire to conduct international ethnographic research. She talked to Professor Murphy, and they designed a project she could carry out during a six-month study abroad program in Chile. Through her immersion in her fieldwork, Medha gained wide exposure to grassroots political movements and youth engagement with university politics, larger community politics, and national politics. After graduation, Medha embarked on a career path towards political advocacy and community organizing. Medha was awarded the 2016 Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research from the School of Social Sciences in recognition of her passionate dedication to her project.

Key Terms

- ♦ Chile
- ♦ Chilean Student Movement
- ♦ Institutional Violence
- ♦ Leftist
- ♦ Neoliberalism
- ♦ Pontifical Catholic University of Chile
- ♦ University Politics

Faculty Mentor



Medha's project is centered on an ethnographic exploration of how the social and institutional environments at a Chilean University contribute to students' ideas about political participation and help shape why individual students choose or do not choose to join up with emergent political causes—and when they do join up, how they “become political” in their college lives. Medha conducted fieldwork at the levels we expect of our doctoral students in Anthropology, and she fully committed herself to the research process in ways that I have never seen from undergraduates at UCI. Working with her was a wonderful experience for me, because it was one of the only opportunities I've had at UCI to work with an undergraduate on such a rigorous and important project.

Keith Murphy

School of Social Sciences

Introduction

During the years 2011–2013, thousands of university students across Chile protested the historically privatized and commodified Chilean education system in a collection of demonstrations called the 2011 Chilean Student Movement. The leaders of the movement asserted demands for the government to address longstanding social and economic inequalities, and brought further attention to the profit made off the education system, advocating for “*fin al lucro*” (end to profiteering) which included the extremely high costs of university tuition, overpriced loan system, segregation of students by socioeconomic status, and school selection discrimination processes (Bellei et al. 2013) (Mayol 2011). Since 2011, signalling the explosion of this intersectional movement involving coalitions with the feminist, labor, environmental, and indigenous rights movements, Chile and the rest of the world has taken notice of the movement’s powerful effects: stronger citizen consciousness of—and a resulting critique/distrust of—the country’s neoliberal model, a more populist and anti-institutional public discourse, and a deeper public awareness of the ability to imagine and subsequently demand a new Chile instead of the one they had inherited.

This rise in very effective student social movements in Chile over the past ten years has been widely studied and researched, with a focus on the movement’s significance in the larger political situation in Chile, the historical context of the country’s military dictatorship and political repression ending less than 25 years before, and the movement’s critiques of the country’s neoliberal system and the legacy it has left today. Particularly, the research conducted on the Chilean Student Movement often highlights the mobilization of university students and reasons why it occurred, as well as insight on tactical and organizational insights about how the movements themselves worked (Cabalin 2012).

Anthropology of Latin America as a broader discipline also focuses on student movements, as well as issues of neoliberalism, political instability, revolutions, democracy, and citizenship, as these interconnected topics span much of the sociocultural and historical context of the continent (Oxborn 2011) (Rojas 2014) (Harvey 2005). This trend is reflected in the research of anthropology in Chile, a huge percentage of which is dedicated to understanding the fallout of the military dictatorship and its long-term impacts on contemporary Chile, as seen through the in-depth and ongoing focus on discussing the dictatorship, the Chilean neoliberal experiment, and the resulting social and class inequalities in all areas of Chilean life (Murray 2012)

(Mayol 2011& 2012) (Paley 2001 & 2004). Politics and neoliberalism also connect to research on Chile’s return to democracy, citizen participation in the political imaginary, public decision-making, and resulting broader cultural values of individualism and consumerism (Paley 2001 & 2004) (Valdivieso 2012). Chile’s diverse population and the geopolitical history have also been researched through work on various disenfranchised groups such as the *Mapuche*, *pobladores* (poor folks), and other groups (Babidge 2013) (Paerregaard 2012) (Park & Richards 2007).

Though much academic research has been conducted on the Chilean Student Movement, very little is known about the emic, or insider, perspectives of the student participants within the social movement, nor is there a discussion about the dynamics of the different political climates within these institutions of higher education in Santiago, Chile, from which these main political actors have supposedly mobilized. For example, it is common knowledge that the two most visible student leaders of the movement hail from the two most important and historically relevant universities: the public Universidad de Chile and somewhat public—though more characteristically private—Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (PUC). As is commonly known in Santiago and has been recounted to me by past students and faculty members, students of the latter university do not have a reputation of fostering a culture that is activist or mobilizing like fellow historically significant universities in the capital. We can see that the specific and controversial social, historical, and political context of the prestigious Catholic university—especially due to its active role in allying with the creation and maintenance of Chile’s military dictatorship - to this day maintains the conditions of this university to be a conservative stronghold in which Leftist resistance is thought to be ineffective. With aims to bring intensive ethnographic attention to the political dynamics and expression of Leftist university students within complex university spaces, I conducted fieldwork in Santiago, Chile between June–December 2015 for a semester while on an exchange program in Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. During fieldwork conducted mainly during the university election season of October–November 2016, I attempted to capture the true political climate behind the elite reputation and hegemonic conservatism at PUC, focusing particularly on how the Left engages in resisting the university space given the institutional history and violence inflicted on its students, and through doing so, actively participates in Chile’s national political imaginary.

Ethnographic Methods

My ethnographic methods consisted of mainly participant observation and interviews. Upon first arriving in Chile, I gained background information about the country's political landscape by speaking casually with students, professionals, and other Chileans. I also began chatting with at least one politically involved PUC student from each of the four political movements on campus, most of whom would later become my main informants. As I explain in further depth below, PUC features four main student political organizations called *movimientos políticos* that adhere to Right-wing, center-Right, center-Left, and Left-wing political ideologies, and I spent time with individuals from each organization, interviewing two to five members of each movement—some in positions of representation, and others without. Due to the focus of my research, I spent the most time with members of MG (Movimiento Gremial) and Crecer. My informants from these two movements invited me to weekly events, exclusive meetings, and the critical pre-election night convenings. As the general elections progressed, I also attended multiple student government meetings in which all PUC faculty-specific delegates and representatives convened to discuss issues. I also attended capital-wide marches, political ceremonies, election debates, forums, and other political and social events.

Through the period of my fieldwork, I slowly found myself breaking down barriers between outsider and insider, though this process did not come without obstacles. In the beginning, especially, I found visible barriers to integrating myself into the somewhat closed, elite realm of student government—my contacts often forgot to inform or update me about meetings, or larger groups took time to accept me and my foreign Otherness compared to their insular, elite circles, etc. For example, though many organization-specific meetings—*plenos*—were usually exclusive and open only to members, through increased relationships with informants and introduction to their larger political circles, I was invited to many crucial meetings with the Leftist movement after having built rapport with many central *militantes* (members) that built my credibility. Thus, on a structural level, though I found that integrating myself into the PUC political scene—especially as a new student and a foreigner—could often be imposing, complicated, intimidating, and difficult, my strengths in language and fluency acquisition, dogged interpersonal relations, and ambition and initiative made fieldwork both effective and enjoyable.

Terms

I refer to the university in a number of ways, often following the informants' colloquialisms. These include abbreviations

such as PUC, La UC, and La Católica. The four political organizations of the university are also abbreviated as delineated below. My informants, student members belonging to these entities, have all been given pseudonyms to protect their identity, an especially important aspect considering the sensitive and/or controversial nature of some of the topics discussed in this paper.

Significance of Conclusions

What we learn from history and this ethnographic fieldwork in PUC is the importance of institutional as well as historical and structural factors that affect the stereotype of depoliticization and apathy within the campus. The long-held power of the *Gremialista* movement in PUC is intertwined with the history and political background of the institution that shape its role in the military dictatorship and Chile's neoliberal reality. My conclusions show that the well-known MG stronghold and Right-wing sentiment does not compel the university to be apolitical or a homogeneous nest of conservatism; it instead ensures very distinctive political diversity which fosters fierce territoriality and dirty political tactics. It is this warring environment in which varying politics embodied by individuals and by political organizations create meaning and act upon the differing standards of violence each endures because of their political expression. MG and Crecer, when faced with the institution's characteristics of decision-making and violent history, create two radically distinct reactions and political proposals from the movements. While the Left aims to resist the institution and reconcile the harm of its institutional history, the Right aims to maintain and preserve institutional autonomy through breaking social barriers and addressing the prejudices they face. My analysis shows that the university exists as a microcosm in which national and institutional history plays a very active role in influencing everyday university politics. The Left particularly, in this space of meaning and violence, recognizes and reconciles wounds of the past, resists and disrupts violence in the present, and reclaims the university for the future.

This work is significant because it connects heavily studied historical Chilean issues with an intensive ethnographic study of one of the most important universities in Chile, in which clashing political factions are not academically studied. Acknowledging the warring political movements and demystifying a seemingly apathetic, homogeneously conservative university in the context of Chile's recent mobilization has great implications on further exploring how resisting political factions attempt to change institutional violence and participate in Chile's historical and

current political imaginary through the politically charged microcosm of the institutional space.

Chile's Inheritance: The Shadows of a 17-Year Dictatorship and Neoliberal Legacy

Comprehensive understanding of this research depends on a proper understanding of the social, political, economic, and historical elements which created current Chile. One of the most crucial turning points in Chile's history is its 17-year military dictatorship. On September 11, 1973, then-General Augusto Pinochet and the Chilean military organized a coup d'état, bombing the federal government building, La Moneda, and overthrowing democratically elected socialist President Salvador Allende. Coup leaders claimed to be acting for the people's own good in order to revitalize the economy, but records and evidence of collaboration with then-U.S. President Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger show aims to undermine what they perceived as a communist threat (Chicago Boys 2015). It was during this regime that Pinochet brought in the Chicago Boys—Chilean students sent to the University of Chicago to study Milton Friedman's free-market ideologies—to implement huge neoliberal policy changes to the country. In doing so, they helped establish Chile as Latin America's first neoliberal experiment (Valdes 2008). The implementation of these policies provided fast-growing wealth to the country while creating some of the highest income inequality rates in the world (Achtenberg 2015). During the dictatorship, the military also committed many human rights violations—including detentions, torture, disappearances, and murder—against Leftist political activists, unaffiliated shantytown residents, poor indigenous *Mapuche* communities, and others, with goals of demonstrating social control over marginalized groups.

This time of political repression and traumatic violence reverberated across the country, causing a deep fracture in the national identity of the Chilean “imagined community” between the supporters of the dictatorship and those affected by the human rights violations (Larrain 2006). The coup drew enormous criticism and attention from across the world, leading to an increased focus on human rights activism (Kelly 2013). In 1990, a historic democratic plebiscite finally forced Pinochet to step down, signaling “the return to democracy,” although many academics, human rights activists, and Chilean residents argue that the harsh political climate of the dictatorship continued to impact the country, especially through post-dictatorship repression in the form of erasing the collective memory of the existence of detained, disappeared, and tortured Chilean residents (ibid). Surveys conducted in 2002 show that surviving

Chilean residents living in democracy were still affected by “feelings of oppression, pessimism and social withdrawal,” a trauma that often limits residents' politics to this day.

Beyond the social reverberations of a repressive military regime, the dictatorship brought about the long-lasting proliferation of an infamous neoliberal system that introduced reforms incorporating the free market in education. These structural changes to both private and public school systems intensified systemized social inequalities, plunging middle class Chilean families into debt and privileging a small social class over much of the majority. Pinochet adopted Milton Friedman's principles of a completely free market without government intervention, with motives to foster westernized notions of economic development and advanced progress in Chile. This introduction of neoliberalism aligned with the global trend of marketization in education at that time, though Friedman's policies had never been implemented with the extremity that they were in Chile under Pinochet's authoritarian rule. This led to the country's enormous wealth accumulation and subsequent crippling wealth disparity (Cabalin 2012). Sociologist Alberto Mayol, of the University of Chile, has conducted prolific research into Chilean neoliberalism, and in his renowned book, *El Derrumbe del modelo*, provides profound depth to the numerous consequences borne of Chile's neoliberalism, including its implications on systemized inequalities in education, health, and housing (Mayol et al. 2011; Mayol 2012).

After more than 25 years of democracy since 1990, the reigning fear of the coup has been replaced by Chileans' faith in entrepreneurship, consumerism, and exceptionalism from other Latin American countries due to their conflated ideals of economic development, progress, and happiness (Kelly 2013). A vocal conservative Pinochet-supporting demographic (*pinochetistas*) to this day continues to justify and/or ignore the human rights violations under the military regime by instead claiming the successful economic development that Chile experienced during this era. Thus, multiple vestiges from this era in the form of societal trauma, neoliberal policies, and a politically divided populace make the dictatorship a difficult period to forget.

Recent Mobilizations: 2006 Penguin Movement and 2011 Chilean Student Movement

After a period of political and artistic stagnation during the military regime, the first incidence of revitalized political activism since 1990 began with the “Penguin Revolution” of 2006, a social movement led by high school students that paved the way for many more critiques of Chile's neoliberal model and fresh “democracy” status. The main objective

of these 2006 protests was to criticize the “free-market fundamentalism” that had arisen from the 1980s and plagued Chile’s educational landscape with systemized elitism (Cabalin 2012). Students of the newer generation, born after the military regime, were not instilled with the fear, apathy, and self-censorship of their political opinions as their parents had been, and instead positioned themselves as “protagonists in the public arena” (Larrain 2006:24). Their aims were to increase social justice and lessen free market principles in education by demanding that the government guarantee the right to education, improve quality of standards, increase grants for low-income students, and ban elitist discriminatory selection practices in primary schools (Cabalin 2012). After this initial shake-up of the complacency and latency that immediately preceded the dictatorship, this generation of students continued to make demands against the blatant inequalities that plagued not only the primary-high school system, but those which also manifested in even greater disparities in the realm of higher education, issues which would begin to mobilize the entire country in the next few years through the nationwide protests of the 2011 Student Movement.

Beginning in 2011, thousands of university students, arguably the same generation of students who previously led the Penguin Movement as high schoolers, began advancing these criticisms, which were then injected into public discourse by protesting the privatized Chilean higher education system what became the Chilean Student Movement. The leaders of the movement asserted demands for the government to address similar longstanding issues like the extremely high costs of university tuition, overpriced loan system, segregation of students in universities by socioeconomic status, and school selection discrimination processes (Bellei et al. 2013). This explosive and highly organized social movement featured university students who demanded more social justice against the neoliberal paradigm on the basic ideological premise that education be considered a human right for all—and be public, free, and of high quality: “*educacion publica, gratuita, y de calidad*” (Larrain 2006). The two charismatic faces of the movement were Camila Vallejo from Universidad de Chile and Giorgio Jackson from Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile, both of whom inspired and empowered horizontally-organized student masses to march the streets, occupy university buildings, and coordinate artistic performances and marches to protest the Chilean government (Cabalin 2012). The student movement, though propelled and initiated by university students advocating for their rights, became a movement demanding collective national justice against the entire neoliberal paradigm. Conjoined by a common vision, labor

unions and workers, the feminist movement, environmental sustainability movements, indigenous groups, and more became a part of the Chilean Student Movement to create a powerful, coalition-driven, popular movement that shook up the entire country (Mayol and Azócar 2011).

Historical Tradition: Students as Mobilized, Hypervisible Political Actors

Though the post 1990s-born generation is credited with sparking the fire of anti-neoliberalist sentiment and mobilization, students in Chile have long held visible and politicized roles beyond the confines of their universities. As is common knowledge among Chileans and supported by research, Universidad de Chile (La Chile) touts a strong history as a site of political activity and constant student mobilization for more than 50 years. Frank Bonilla, who writes about La Chile’s political action since the beginning of the 1900s, expands upon the historical tradition of students as mobilized political actors, explaining that “the student organization functions as an instrument of propaganda, agitation, and pressure...The weight of tradition in Chile sustains political action on this model among University youth” (Bonilla 1960).

During my fieldwork, I also noticed this tradition of students as political actors through their hypervisibility in national media sources. The elections of PUC are arguably the most publicized elections of any major university of Chile—major media sources, such as newspapers like *La Tercera*, CNN Chile, and the most prestigious, *El Mercurio*, would often cover interviews with university-level political candidates, share their opinions regarding controversial topics, and invite university candidates to debate on nationally televised, prime time air. Top politicians across the country would also often send videos of support for PUC candidates during election seasons. As the elections progressed, so did the news coverage of the most important national newspapers. This led me to realize that university politics at PUC exists under the national media’s microscope, as seen through how election updates, candidate ideologies’ points of contention, and election results are constantly covered by national news sources and are thus made visible in the national political imaginary.

On the other hand, we see that one of the most important influences in the institutional history of La Católica was its connection to the Chicago Boys, as the original members were students from the university’s Economics department. Many of the original Chicago Boys, including Ralph Luders, Ernesto Fontaine, Francisco Rosende, and others, later came back to become professors, and some of them continue to

teach departments such as economics and business, which have clear neoliberal preferences (Chicago Boys 2015). Since the coup, the military intervention in the UC led to the end of the university's ideological pluralism, and the installment of the Right-wing movement, Movimiento Gremial, as the political group collaborating with the Vice Admiral then tacting as the Rector, while other political movements had to conduct their politics clandestinely (ibid). Thus, PUC was also home to the founding of the *gremialismo* (laborer) movement founded by Jaime Guzman, one of the main architects of the military dictatorship's constitution. These influences significantly shaped the economic and political orientation of the military regime (Hunneus 2000).

Another statistic repeated to me by PUC students of all political ideologies is that more than 90% of the student population belongs to the richest 10% of the country. While students of varying socioeconomic levels and class can be found in all majors in the university, there are heavier concentrations of students from certain classes in certain majors, and thus, a certain line of political ideology. For example, Humanities and Social Sciences are some of the smallest *facultades* (departments) with the smallest majors in the university. While there are wealthy students everywhere (because they make up the majority), there is a higher than proportional representation of *becados* (students receiving financial grants/scholarships), who are usually Left-leaning, in these majors. Majors such as Education and Odontology often have a good mix of students who are often neutral or have no inclinations for political involvement. Engineering, Business, Law, and "College" are the largest schools/*facultades* in the university; these also align with the highest-paying professions and the most conservative political ideologies.

PUC's 2015 Elections Explored

Breaking the Myth of Depoliticization

The "apolitical" reputation of the UC can be demonstrated mainly through the university's overall lack of mobilization in political manifestations in strikes/occupations (*paros/tomas*), respectively, when convoked by the national coalition of Chilean universities (CONFECH). The democratic process requires voting in all the representation levels. CONFECh-convoked marches, *paros*, and *tomas* often create controversy because they require a sacrifice of one's own schooling for "the greater good." Students from La UC are commonly known for not mobilizing—not voting "*Apruebo*" (approve), because UC as a whole almost always votes *Rechazo*, or reject, to *paros*, especially the more conservative majors (and *tomas* would be unheard of in the UC). This reliance on stability of uninterrupted classes draws

many students to prefer La UC (especially in 2011 in the first explosive year of the student movement) over public universities such as La Chile. On the contrary, public universities usually engage in *paros* lasting months until their democratic vote and feature this element of "instability" in terms of the time it will take to complete one's degree. While CONFECh consistently asks for a vote of La UC for their decision on whether they approve their entire university's participation in a march, the UC seldom approves it as a whole. This is why it holds a notorious reputation for being an "apolitical" university that does not adhere to political movements led by other university students across the country. Though it is difficult to ascertain the number of people who are motivated by non-interest or explicit political affiliation in their decision to vote *rechazo*, because non-interest itself is a political decision, we see that UC students are notorious for anti-*paro/toma* sentiments and/or anti-participation.

In La UC, there are four main organizations on campus, ranging from Right to Center Right to Center Left to Left, called Movimiento Gremial, Solidaridad, Nueva Acción Universitaria, and Crecer, respectively. These are considered the primary organizations because they are able to launch their own candidate list for the presidency and the *mesa directiva* (executive table) every year for their student body government called Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad Católica (FEUC). Compared to other universities, like La Chile—where 8/9 lists are Leftist, La Católica has much more diversity in terms of its representation of a more extensive political spectrum, even in its limited number of organizations. In environments such as La Chile, the student body self-reportedly finds it difficult to distinguish among the subtleties of the Left lists, which leads to very low electoral participation and an expected failure to meet quorum. In contrast, La Católica has a much less dynamic, more stable political environment. Though some UC movements are five years old or younger, they have enough traction to be understood by the student body. Thus, the different political movements are easily distinguishable, their positions more easily understood, and there are "higher stakes" as reported by an informant, meaning that they are faced with making more drastic decisions. These factors create the interesting statistic of La PUC featuring the highest electoral participation among all universities in Chile, at a minimum of 65% every year. From the first week, I was able to see the visible deconstruction of the belief that this university was apolitical, because it was indeed, very politically active.

Movimiento Gremial

Movimiento Gremial is the most Right-wing of the political movements on campus. The campus of La Católica has an extremely long history of MG dominance. In fact, during the dictatorship, Pinochet appointed MG as the winning slate/winning government every year, stripping the right to democratic elections. La Católica is known across the country for having the largest mobilizing/organizing force of MG—more than any other campus—a fact that is known by most incoming students. MG always has what is called a large *voto duro* or hard vote—people who will vote for MG every year regardless of the performance of their campaigns. This was confirmed across all informants.

Solidaridad

Solidaridad is a center-Right movement that branched off from MG less than five years ago. Although they are not a religious movement, they do have their roots in considering faith to be part of politics. There is a Catholic influence on their policies; for example, they are against abortion in all cases, just like MG. They do a lot of mission work and volunteering—in Calcutta, in other regions in Chile outside the Santiago region—and a big focus of theirs is attaining fair housing. They often draw attention to thousands of people living in campments, and feel that it is their duty to fight for those facing housing inequity and insecurity. They share ideals with MG on certain topics such as opposition to the student movement, but have a broader view of the political issues they wish to tackle. They have never gained enough political power or numbers to win a federation, though they have won positions of Consejerx Territorial (Territorial Advisor) and this past year, the Consejera Superior (Superior Advisor).

Nueva Acción Universitaria

NAU (Nueva Acción Universitaria, New University Action) identifies itself as a center-Left movement, one that adheres to the student movement. It has won the federation for the past six years. It was historically important for instilling “new action” in the university as the Student Movement rose to power, but lost much power by the end of the six years and was no longer seen as the new alternative. Giorgio Jackson was an NAU *militante* (member), and many other congress members are also ex-NAU *militantes*. Many of its graduating members from the university have gone on to participate in the government. For example, Jackson created the national political party Revolución Democrática (Democratic Revolution), and many other alumni have gone on to be a part of La Nueva Mayoría (The New Majority), the current political coalition of President Michelle Bachelet. NAU’s self-proclaimed “critical collabo-

ration” with the government has drawn criticism from those across the political spectrum for being hypocritical—they adhere to the student movement, which rebukes the government’s insufficient solutions, yet they work within it. Other movements claim that they have been co-opted into the government, and the stereotype is that NAU is unstable or “yellow”—the term used to describe someone who goes with the trending tide and panders to those voters/interests. This criticism is similar to those students made of Bachelet when she ran for presidency on the premise of meeting the student movement’s demands, but instead played into the hands of her corporate donors who represent the interests against which the student movement fights.

Crecer

Crecer, a Left-wing platform, is a unique coalition of university political movements—La Union Nacional Estudiantil (The National Student Union), Acción Libertaria (Libertarian Action), Frente Estudiante Libertario (Libertarian Student Front), Trazo Comun (The Common Line), and FAS. Students can join Crecer if they belong to any of these movements, which pertain to university-level parties across the country, and/or if they are independent. Crecer’s foundation of these different movements, which can be described as a coalition of usually warring Leftist parties, as seen in other universities, is unique and very effective in combining many different Leftist ideologies into one coalition, which is self-reportedly an advantage in what is described as a “hostile” conservative environment, such as La UC. While it has strong bases in the Social Sciences and Humanities, it did not have enough strength in the school in comparison to the legacy of NAU or the huge *voto duro* of MG. In the history of its five-year-old platform, Crecer has often been viewed as militant, denunciatory, or too extreme for the neutral/apathetic students in La UC, though students from other universities report that Crecer



Figure 1
Campaign posters from all four movements (left to right): Crecer, Nueva Acción Universitaria (NAU), Solidaridad, Movimiento Gremial (MG)

is a very collaborative, dialogue-centered Left movement compared to the many anarchist or extreme Left parties in other universities like La Chile.

Figure 1 captures a scene in the Chemistry department, in which all four movements posted their printed campaign materials next to each other on the same wall. As I walked to this area for a scheduled hangout with a Crecer *militante* and representative candidate, I felt a bit nervous. There was distinct discomfort in visiting multiple booths and seeing that the people from each booth knew that you were visiting multiple booths. It was a place of territorialism, where the different political groups wanted to claim ownership over me. This point is best illustrated by a moment when I was interacting with the Crecer *militantes* in this moment, and a NAU *militante* approached the booth only to talk to me. I had barely met him the night before at the NAU meeting (where I introduced myself to the organization), but he established that explicitly: “Hey! Remember me? What did you think of the NAU meeting last night?”

There was a long awkward silence because of the obvious implication that I was playing for both teams, and what I did was sacrilegious. The two or three Crecer people sitting next to me suddenly changed their expressions and began looking anywhere but at him or me. He had established my connection to them and in order to save face in this situation, I had to say neutral things like “It was fun—I always enjoy learning new things.” He kept smiling and the awkwardness continued as the Crecer people looked away, and did not budge at all; neither did he, as he stood facing me and talking only to me. Then, after that continued for about another minute and many moments of silence, he said, “Well I’m on my way somewhere, see you later!” in a very chipper voice. I felt like I had been sabotaged. My field

notes mention language that I used to describe the event as “palpable hostility.” While I noticed it to be perfectly natural for one group (in this case, Crecer) to be whispering and gossiping about the others (Solidaridad and MG) due to their extreme differences in their political inclinations, and perhaps even about NAU, this event portrayed the extremity to which political identity can alienate students from each other, with no pretense of cordiality. Thus, political affiliation denotes a certain predefined judgment of character, which in some cases does not allow engagement from different movements, from either party. Just as much as Crecer *militantes* ignored the NAU member, the NAU member ignored them and only spoke with me.

Between MG and Crecer: Comfort of Political Expression in the UC?

During these elections, I also noticed very different types of politics being practiced by the various movements. I was beginning to understand that PUC was indeed very political and mobilized in different ways, but I wished to break down homogenizing views of UC’s political expression—I wanted to know what it was like for people in general to engage in politics and express themselves politically. When I asked people how they felt expressing themselves politically in the university, I noticed very distinct approaches and responses to this question distinguished by those from the Right versus the Left (MG versus Crecer), which I illuminate here—the discomfort of the Right due to individuals’ prejudices towards them, and the Left’s experiences of institutional and physical violence by the institution and larger structures of power outside the university.

Right-Wing: Individuals’ Hostile Prejudice. Right-wing informants often spoke about the prejudice and aggression they faced due to their class and/or political preference, as well as their major. My informant, Miranda from MG, noted that she received aggressive words, death threats, and spitting, all because she is MG in her major *Historia* (history), which is known as a Left-wing stronghold. Aside from this dissonance, however, between major and political preference, she is completely comfortable in the university, where MG has a huge presence. Solandra from NAU corroborated upon that discrimination piece by naming experiences being purely hated by Crecer people and being called offensive names because of her class. Solandra’s ide-



Figure 2

Large cloth banners belonging to Crecer (white banners) and MG (orange) fighting for territory in contested university departments.

ologies in my opinion most likely align best with Crecer, but she informed me that she had bad experiences with Crecer *militantes*—she received lots of aggression from Crecer people—calling her a *cuica culiada*, or fucking rich kid, when she tried to do political organizing work with them. Otherwise, in the conservative majors of College and *Derecho*—Law—she finds herself fully accepted or at least not harassed. She explains that in NAU, there is such a great diversity of people, and they would never disrespect her like that for something she cannot control, whereas with peers from Crecer, the populist undertones are not so undertone-like when they are spit out as slurs and insults.

Left: Visible (and Invisible) Institutional Violence. On the other hand, through analyzing how Left students (mainly Crecer) feel expressing themselves politically, we see that they experience many more severe limitations as seen through institutional violence and powerful parties' denunciation of Left-wing sentiment. One of the most controversial acts of institutional violence against Crecer has been the physical violence inflicted on Rodrigo Avilés, a victim of police repression. During a regular march of the Student Movement in May 2013, the Crecer (and UNE) member was blasted by water tanks by Special Forces of Chilean police from only 5 meters, putting him in a coma. This act of violence pushed national and global media attention to focus on police repression, accountability, and students at La Católica. This also became a controversial topic because when members of the student government wanted to organize a *paro* for a day to reflect and discuss this issue, the MG FEUC executive table at the time all rejected it in favor of simply extending sympathy to the afflicted family. Below, in a snippet of an interview, Paulina, a Crecer *militante* who achieved a representative position, explains her sentiments regarding the institutional response to an acceptance speech in which she expressed resistance to the violence of the institution.

Medha: “How comfortable do you feel expressing yourself politically in the UC?”

Paulina: “...Complicated question. Not completely comfortable...what happened in the ceremony, for example, leaves you with a bitter taste in your mouth.... The comments... [about] the speech...also left me worried...They...[said] that it was very confrontational, that it was warlike...if one goes and says pretty things, maybe it's accepted, but here there are realities that are normally invisibilized; there are topics which are preferably not touched because of whom they bring discomfort. It's not an indoctrinating institution—it should be a space where different visions

can dialogue and exist. We have been very critical with the authorities...but in the end, there exists a counter-position in this distance. This counter-position from these sectors also makes you fearful in the hour of acting. I mean I know that I couldn't stop myself from saying what I want to... without having to be hurting anyone in particular. I mean maybe I would stop myself from talking about the subcontract [subcontracted laborers] with all of this...it's going to generate rejection and that's not acceptable to me in any case.”

Tomás: Fear of Persecution and Expulsion. Another informant from Crecer shared a personal story in which he explained that he had a very promising political career ahead of him to be in the candidate list of Crecer a few years ago. He was also producing a lot of media for Crecer, and in one of his videos of student marches, he captured footage of police repression and violence against students, with a shot zooming in on the Rector standing by, smoking a cigarette, and watching the violence unfold. This video apparently went viral and the Rector was heavily scrutinized for his inaction against the interests of the students. Tomás simply uploaded the video and continued his political formation. Tomás was involved in an incident later that year in which an MG female peer accused him of sexual assault when the case was a completely different situation. This minor case, which was initially private, suddenly turned into a yearlong legal battle that almost ended in his expulsion, as mandated by university authorities. Though he was proven innocent and not expelled, he was suspended for half the year instead. His lawyer and friends could only rationalize this nonsensical exaggeration of the consequences as the authorities “having it in for him”—that they had rigged the case against his favor. Later that year, a very powerful MG student from *Derecho* contacted one of Tomás's friends to tell him “I know what happened with your friend Tomás. Be careful with your politics in Crecer. What happened with your friend—that may only be the beginning.” The friend did not explain further. Thus, we can deduce that Leftist students are being criminalized for political beliefs that inconvenience conservative authorities. The acts against the Leftist students have much more dire, career-threatening consequences than those mentioned by Right students, who simply face prejudice without the systemic backing required to be truly oppressive.

Through further analysis, I found that MG's and Crecer's differing definitions and values of politics creates completely opposing political visions: the conservative vision of MG implicates conserving the system at play in the university and the country, whereas Crecer proposes a radical change

of uprooting the entire neoliberal system. Miranda, MG informant, says “of course we’re different—because they’re talking about changing everything, and we’re talking about maintaining the present.” This dichotomy presents itself in the way that MG preaches changing culture versus Crecer’s hope to change the university. How MG and Crecer define politics and take stances strongly shapes what they desire from the role of the institution. This created radically opposing views on their relationship with the UC and what they believe, which is why I go into depth analyzing both parties’ values, proposals, and larger relationship with the institution of La UC.

Crecer v. MG: Demands of the University

Crecer: Democratization and Anti-Neoliberalization

In order to understand Crecer’s eventual election win in fall 2015, it is important to understand their goals of democratization and how they attempt to reflect populist values within PUC to transform them into something that can heal the wounds inflicted upon Chilean society during the military regime. They believe in the ideal of *triestamentabilidad*, the three-pronged strategy of having a team of students, faculty, and employees on the decision-making board that makes decisions with the Rector democratically, since they are the parties being directly influenced by the Rector’s decisions. This goal fell under their umbrella slogan of “*Democratizar La UC*” (democratize La UC). They also pushed for “*Fin al subcontrato*”—end subcontracted worker contracts—and living wages. This push would be furthered by their work with labor unions for the employees of the campus, and of the vendors who sell goods outside the campus without fees. In general, Crecer also wanted people to value jobs in the public sector in the service of the “great majorities” (*mayorías grandes*) versus the private sector. This is a part of the radical transformational shift of thinking in a separate system—not a neoliberal system in which everything is bought, commoditized, and inequalities run rampant, but a more equitable, liberated society. One of their more basic yet central premises was that of education—supporting gratuity to create the first step of establishing education as a right, a social good that deserves to be public, high quality, and free. Finally, they believe in changing Chile’s constitution, which is still that of the military dictatorship that ended 26 years ago. They hope this process will be done through *Asamblea Constituyente*, a constitutive assembly of common citizens and representatives that would participate in creating the new constitution.

Values and actions under the umbrella of democratization also include espousal of democratic, transparent decisions, and democratic participation in all levels of participation and representation across the university. Crecer prides itself on doing its “work from the base” (*de la base*), what we can understand as grassroots organizing. According to Oscar, one of my most dedicated Crecer informants, to him, *hacer política* (doing/making politics) meant that all students are part of decision-making at all levels, that people question the norm (and fall into whatever ideology to which they may pertain), and that they continue to work year-round through participation from the base—especially from non-militant members. This also includes attending assemblies, proposing projects, and participating in their center of student activities as well as the process of writing up proposals, discussing them, and carrying them up to the government level.

Recently, there has been much controversy over the UC Rector—personally appointed by a member of the Vatican—who has been making very large-scale and long-term decisions “*entre cuatro paredes*” (between four walls; similar to the English phrase behind closed doors). Through what Leftist students call undemocratic processes without student consultation or consensus, he emailed the entire student body with messages informing students about the university’s stance on topics such as gratuity—for which the student movement has been fighting since 2011—and abortion. Both times, the Rector informed the students that the UC would simply not adhere to gratuity. He also stated that even if abortion were made legal in the three clauses that had been debated in congress for years, UC hospitals would “exercise their autonomy” and not allow abortions to be conducted on their campuses. This caused controversy within the university, not only because of the content of the message, but also the manner by which it was delivered—an informative decision announced through email. While Leftist students called it undemocratic, Right-wing students called it the proper autonomy of the Rector. Additional controversial matters are not hard to find—in the past, multiple professors have been fired for criticizing the Catholic Church, calling into question the university’s values of “*libertad de cátedra*” (freedom of lecture). UC has also faced accusations of censorship when they denied the possibility of hosting workshops within the university that they claim are against Catholic interests/values—for example, a workshop about the LGBT community—and they would not allow students to host that event in the name of impartiality and bias that they cannot promote. My study abroad group faced the brunt of this authoritarian view as well when our reservation to have an equally weighted roundtable debate

on the controversial yet topical issue of abortion on the PUC campus was revoked due to complaints to the Rector by a high profile MG alum.

Critique of the Public Role: "Servicio al País"

Besides critique of the hierarchical system of authority in the UC, Crecer also engages in criticizing La UC's role of "*rol de servicio al país*" (role of service to the country), which they find antithetical to the neoliberal scheme to which the university adheres. They often criticize what they find to be hypocrisy, given the institution's history, priorities, and aims, such as how the university mostly directs students to seek jobs to the private and not public sector (private medical care, corporations, private engineering firms, etc.), engages in vertical decision making, and is funded by mostly private sponsors, which are the richest elite in Chile. Crecer says La UC claims the public role because of obligation, given their prestige and the quality of the institution, yet it plays to the pockets of Chile's powerful corporations.

Paulina:

When we talk about a social role, it can't be understood from a paternalistic vision—a notion that the university possesses all the information and is going to solve all the problems of others. On the contrary, in the university there exist tools that have to be at the service of the university.... That also links with the public role that the university can have, which has been defended by many of the sectors, that say that the university is "public," because it's of quality, and is good, and provides support to the country...and surely, it can mean support to the country, but today we have a university that makes decisions behind closed walls without including its actors, a university where there does indeed exist censorship, a university where they attempt freedom of lecture...

In the end you realize that it's only within certain limits, a university where there are certain topics that can't be discussed, a university that puts its workers into precarious conditions... When one considers all the aspects you start to question: What is the public role that makes this university public? If everyone can enter? Who can enter? This university is at the service of whom?...So I believe this university is fundamentally not public, that it can't be public while it maintains all these conditions—precarious labor policies, passing to have minimum democratic policies that have to exist in the internal aspect of the university, having freedom of lecture,

freedom of speech—this university is not public. And, furthermore, even considering how good this university may be, there's still much to be advanced. It has much to offer to the country, and that is only going to be achieved working in conjunction with different actors.

Crecer's critiques bring up classic questions about individual dissidence to challenge violent institutions. What does it mean to critically challenge the foundations/inner infrastructure of a privatized, conservative university, and use it for your own means? Can you change its use? Is that effective? Can a private university, even theoretically, be able to take a "public role" "at the service of the country" given the systems it is a part of, and the ones it supports and reproduces? Affiliation with the student movement means that Crecer holds to populist thought and criticisms of the entire neoliberalization of the country, and believes in not only reforming health, housing, and education, but changing La Católica's hegemonic control of Chile's private sector due to its alumni's career choices, as well as the distribution of wealth from the private sector to the public sector. They wish to persevere to politicize an institution that is actively kept non-interfering/very conservative due to neoliberalist commitments to privatized corporations, refuting Right-wing ideologies of autonomy being used to defend institutions' positions of not needing to engage in national politics. Paulina's opinions that "[Y]es, academics is inherently a political space...the way we think and react is political" shows how they believe they have a moral obligation to use their access to higher education and its historical link to national politics as a platform to engage in justice and politics of the university and country.

MG: Focus on Shifting Culture

In stark contrast, MG defines itself as not simply a political organization group, but also a social identity group—one that participates in social events, community service programs, and then politics, too. Thus, some of their main values include social cohesion, with their slogans touting advocacy to "*romper barreras*" (break barriers) to "change the culture" of the UC, since many of them feel victimized by the opposition and prejudice they face for their Right-wing beliefs. Yet many of their programs—a fully funded ski trip, or a panel to "get to know" the subcontracted workers that are part of the "UC community"—were criticized by informants across all three organizations. An NAU informant mentioned to me: "MG—They only do events that they like. They don't "lower topics" (to the base) that actually matter. This year (under their executive table), there has been no space to talk about things—almost seems like a

repression of energy to me. They leave political stuff for themselves to do and then do only social events for people, and school has felt repressed this year.” Miranda, from MG, who was also running for a representative position, expands on her pushback of Left-wing ideology that the educational space is inherently political. She explains (below) how politics is more than just national politics, that university politics is about bringing programs to different academic units.

Miranda:

For us as MG—that [being political] is something that we’ve always been, so to speak, reprimanded for—though I think it’s a misunderstanding of what we do as politics—is that they say that we’re very concerned with the university [but] that we don’t concern ourselves with what happens in Chile. It’s a criticism that happens every year, the same; but one has to understand that, in the end, there are things that are limited to the university and things that are not limited to the university.

For example, the *paro* of the Civil Registry. Students of the university are free to opine in favor or against it—no one tells them that they need to opine the same. But it doesn’t concern, for example, the Center of Students of History to have to declare something about the Civil Registry’s *paro*. Why? Because it has nothing to do with anything.

So we see a separation not because we think they’re actors whom we can’t touch—I mean, La UC is how it is because it’s in a society—in a specific city in a specific country—it obviously responds to those interests. But we believe that in the end, we can’t instrumentalize the different Centers of Students so that they serve political parties or even big companies (not only the political parties). That’s why we believe there’s a division. I mean here—pretend the president of Social Work could be in favor of abortion, which is legitimate even though I don’t share that—but that doesn’t mean that his whole major has to be functioning in function of promoting abortion. Rather, what he can do and what he should do is promote the debate and generate roundtable forums, but not put himself at the service of a cause that has nothing to do with his major. That’s why we have this separation: we believe that the separation in the end isn’t political. It’s because everybody...every Center of Students, every advising body, whatever, has to

service who they should supposedly serve—which are the students of X or Y major.

Thus, in opposition to Paulina’s beliefs, Miranda believes that the university has its own disparate space and types of politics that are not necessarily connected to national politics. Interestingly, NAU and Crecer informants, as well as those from Solidaridad, expressed discontent in MG’s apparent politics (or lack thereof) because they do not allow spaces for discussion in their respective departments and the student government as a whole about the country’s relevant political events. A Crecer informant labeled their ideologies as “old school *gremialismo*,” describing a political wave initiated by Jaime Guzman, who, acting as MG founder, did not condone insurgent or resistant political behavior in La UC during the dictatorship. Thus, we see that the repression of politics that arose during the dictatorship in the country, as well as in the microcosm of La UC, is similar to the current discussion held in the university by MG (who is, not insignificantly, mad up of children of *pinochetistas*) about the separation of La UC and national politics, as well as the tendency to focus on administrative and/or social responsibilities as a service to students instead of contiguously politicizing an already politicized student populace.

Demand to Protect the Autonomy of the Institution

For all the reasons Crecer criticizes La UC, MG says these are all allowed because of the proscribed autonomy from the state, from the government, of unborn fetuses, and more, a principle they extend to any subject that they value. They believe that the university’s nature as a private institution allows it the autonomy to act like single actors.

MG informant: “Being Catholic makes us confessional and really different from rest of the universities. It doesn’t have to be politicized as the country and Crecer wants.”

Miranda:

What happens is that you, for example, serve the country and you can do it in different areas. La UC is a complex university in the sense that it has many plans of action. It has 21,000 students that are in the university, and that serves the country because it’s forming 21,000 people. Furthermore, it has all of the things about research and that serves the country—I mean it’s scientific-technological, and then you also have all of what is the projects of La UC like the Penta and the Pre-universitario, which gives the opportunity to different children who come to the university to become formed (trained) with the best, in order to, in the end, sup-

plant the bad education they have received. So, yes, serving the country isn't only political. When there was flooding in the north, many people from the university, under the name of university, went to reconstruct homes. This is also serving the country, and that's not politics. Perhaps it's public policy but it's not partisan politics in the end—I mean it doesn't respond to Left or Right. It responds to the proactivity that the UC has with respect to the country.

Finally, through a deeper understanding of Crecer and MG, especially Crecer, in their political tactics in the second round, I was able to see how the university features echoes and haunts of history—neoliberalism and dictatorship, populist movement against neoliberalism, since before dictatorship, during, and after—that live on in very real and symbolic ways.

A Campus Rife with Haunts of History

The second round of campaigning, in the final elections between MG and Crecer, showed how students instrumentalized and weaponized the university microcosm, which

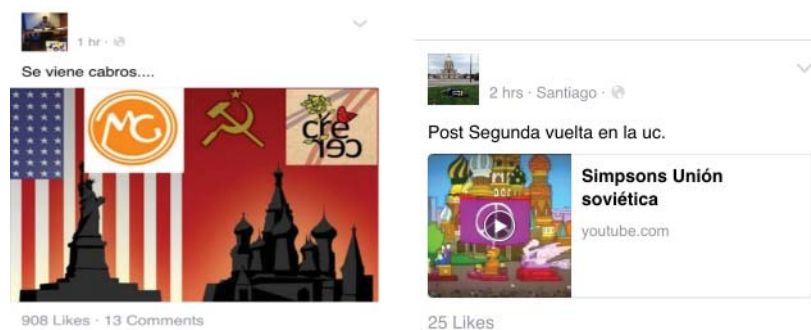


Figure 3

Left photo: A student post compares the second round parties to capitalism and communism; “It’s coming, friends.” Right photo: A student posts a satirical Simpson’s clip about Soviet Russia; “Post second round en la UC”

is rife with haunts of the country’s history, for political disruption, agitation, and education. In the Facebook group Estudiantes UC (UC students), one of the most active and dynamic arenas of interaction within the UC, memes began dominating the feed with comparisons between the Soviet Union and U.S. (communism v capitalism) in a symbolic Cold War environment. MG’s smear tactics against Crecer throughout the second round were compared by fellow political members as a practical simulation of the Campaign of Terror, which mirrored a real historic event in

Chile during which national conservative parties demonized Leftist candidates. In this more local case, the campaign, memes, flags, etc., were all used by MG to defame Crecer’s credibility and viability. It is during this period that the virtual sphere became a place of debate and contesting power (Figure 3). Others mentioned more historically derogatory and stigmatizing jokes about communists and the stereotypes of them “eating babies” by posting photos of gummy candy called *guaguitas*—babies in Chilean slang.

Some are satirical, such as the photos, possibly reflecting real fears and threats about election results turning the Chilean society communist, Crecer’s rise possibly bringing about the end of the economy, and a rising model that is doomed to become that of Venezuela. Because these are satirical, however, we can see that the Right and non-political students alike (such as those posting these photos) capitalize off historical parallels to continue the historic violence against Leftist resistance through humor, now in new forms such as memes.

Recognizing and Reconciling University’s Past for Continuity of Resistance

Another example of history happened during the *Cambio De Mando* (Change of Command), the official formal passdown ceremony from one executive table to the next. Earlier in the ceremony, Ricardo Sande, the departing MG president, made a speech with a main message of defending the identity and vision of the university, which was about celebrating 50 years of *gremialismo* and the strength of the UC. On the other hand, when the entering FEUC president gave his speech, he explained the need to check the rise of *gremialismo*, which he claimed overlooked horrific human rights violations and only saw economic growth. President-elect Daniel Gedda also talked about people who disappeared during the dictatorship, and mentioned how in 1977, students went to Casa Central with the sign “*Chileno: El Mercurio Miente*” and talked about the violence. Then, at the end of his speech, as militantes of Crecer applauded very loudly, the Crecer federation all took the stage and pulled up a flag that said “*Aquí estamos, reivindicando tus sueños, continuando su lucha*” (Here we are, reclaiming your dreams, continuing your fights) to screaming support from Crecer and noticeably quiet authorities and Right-wing students.

What immediately followed Crecer’s act of victory was one of the most dramatic moments in my fieldwork, which was a full act of disruption and agitation in front of the entire



Figure 4
Crecer's candlelight demonstration

UC community. Upon leaving the ceremony room to the outdoor plaza, all attendees saw a semi-circle of 30 Crecer *militantes*, each holding a photo of a *detenido/desaparecido* (detained/disappeared person) from La UC, and holding a candle (Figure 4). This was the scene that welcomed the PUC community—including deans, the Rector, other Vatican-affiliated community members, and students of all ideologies, as they came out of this formal, traditional ceremony. The students stood in silence with solemn faces, showing the faces of those who were lost. Then, the FEUC list of five joined them carrying their banner about reclaiming the dreams of those who had been lost, and then for ten minutes, they began reciting all of their different chants—some of which are adopted from the student movement, others of which are specific to Crecer and were used during the campaign. The use of the formal and traditional space of the UC ceremony, in light of the second Leftist win of the UC in more than a hundred years of history, with a candlelight vigil of all the detained/disappeared students from La UC from the dictatorship was a powerfully politicizing statement by Crecer to resist the violence their community has always faced, and will continue to face in the conservative stronghold.

Here we see praxis of flags, holding photos and candles, and chants all being used as part of a symbolic healing of the wounds of the past and the role the UC has played in

dictatorship. These wounds include the living ones—that the Chicago Boys continue working as professors, as well as the past wounds that continue to influence the present—La Católica was the *cuna of neoliberalismo* (nest of neoliberalism), and that it was the birthplace of Jaime Guzman, MG, and



Figure 5
“Chilean: La UC is changing” banner held by Crecer students in 2015 on the morning of their win in front of the oldest, original UC campus, Casa Central in the center of Santiago, Chile. This is shown in comparison with a similar banner held up resisting the dictatorship and exposing the biased, regime-backed newspaper El Mercurio. It says “Chilean: El Mercurio Lies” in 1977.

the national conservative party called UDI. We see that Crecer used this crucial time to disrupt an institutional ceremony with a visceral tribute to the students they hope to redeem, and whose political desires they wish to continue.

Continuity with “Chileno/a: La UC está cambiando”

Finally, one of the most powerful acts of symbolism was Crecer’s team going to Casa Central at 7:00AM after the voting night that announced their win of the federation, in order to hold up a long banner that said in 1977: “*Chileno: El Mercurio Miente*” to 2015: “*Chileno/a: La UC está cambiando*” ((Male) “Chilean: The Mercurio Lies” to “Chilean (male/female): The UC is changing”), as shown in Figure 5. This was yet another act that disrupted the comfort and complacency of the UC and the Chilean public to show that the new leaders of the UC acknowledge the dark history of human rights violations in La UC. Thus, we see that Crecer’s biggest move on the night of their inauguration was to make visible the invisible who are often purposefully ignored, forgotten, or invalidated, for a hegemonic neoliberal prestige that will not be tolerated any more.

Continuity with leftist, dissident predecessors in the dictatorship means a continuation of the legacy of reflecting on the past as Crecer brings in a new era to La Católica. We see this in the rhetoric of Crecer’s proposed changes and their dreams to take up this responsibility through the heartfelt, tearful speeches shared within the Crecer community after the final *conteo*, a few snippets and phrases of which I witnessed and highlight below:

Todo chile está mirándonos // All of Chile is looking at us

Tenemos una responsabilidad histórica que estamos defendiendo // We have a historic responsibility that we are defending

Cambio de UC = empezar a cambiar el país de chile // Changing the UC = starting to change the country of Chile

Abrir su puerta a chile // [We are going to] Open the university’s doors to Chile

Vamos a empezar este proceso de cambios para volver esta universidad a Chile // We are going to start this process of changes to return this university to Chile

Conclusion

This ethnographic research illuminates heterogeneous activist micropractices within the climate of an important and significant university, adding depth to our understanding of the social movement scene and how it manifests itself in complex university settings. Through this research, which delves into students’ political expression, territoriality, and resistance or defense of institutional realities, more nuanced understandings about Chilean student activism can be explored through an ongoing and dynamic conversation about political expression and resistance against system-wide neoliberalism and institutional forces through everyday political micropractices. Because of MG’s departure from FEUC, Crecer is now transforming the system of thought and, beginning on the day they were voted in, incorporating their new ideology of anti-neoliberalization, a process involving undoing, rebuilding, and revealing what was hidden and what prevents them from moving forward. Overcoming the continued structural violence they faced in the UC in the form of censorship, criminalization, and denunciation, Crecer now fights for democratization in La UC. Crecer’s triumphs will begin a series of changes regarding student mobilization in a university that never did its students and its country the justice they deserved.

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