

The Nearness of Youths: Spatial and Temporal Effects of Protests on Political Attitudes in Chile

Since the mid-2000s, a series of social mobilizations have shaped Chileans politics and society. Students, workers, and environmental local activists, and other actors) have staged various demonstrations across the country. Although social movements rarely have a direct impact on political reforms, (Tarrow, 2011b), the actions carried out by Chilean activists have had repercussions. As Donoso & von Bülow (2017, p. 4) explain, “these social movements have repoliticized many aspects of Chile’s development path, and forced a debate on pending political reforms.” The rise in unconventional political participation has also resulted in a veritable explosion in the amount of scholarship studying different aspects of protests. However, and reflecting the general state of the literature on social movements, few of these works have focused on the consequences of mobilizations. How do protests influence political processes, and particularly political attitudes¹?

This article explains differences in political attitudes using a relatively understudied factor: the geographic and temporal location of protest events. The argument advanced herein is that proximity to protests has a significant effect on individual attitudes. The size of the effect, however, depends on the type of attitude: the effect tends to be larger on the more sensitive weak attitudes, and smaller on the more stable strong attitudes. To test this claim, this article combines data from the 2008, 2010 and 2012 LAPOP Chile surveys and a dataset of student protest events in Latin America (Disi Pavlic, 2017) using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The combined data creates a measure of the number of student protest events close to each respondent, geographically

¹ Attitudes are “favorable or unfavorable dispositions toward social objects, such as people, places, and policies” (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 7).

as well as temporally. Using regression analysis, I find that proximity to these college student protests has a statistically significant effect on several political attitudes, including identifying education as the country's main issue, approval of peaceful demonstrations, political interest, trust in the Executive, and national pride.

Studying the proximity effects of mobilizations on political attitudes is relevant for at least two reasons. First, several studies evidence a growing decline in political interest, trust, satisfaction with democracy and other attitudes associated with the health of Chilean democracy (Disi Pavlic & Mardones, *forthcoming*; Toro Maureira, Acevedo, & Jaramillo-Bruhn, 2016). It is important, therefore to assess whether the effects of mobilization in recent years has been significant or not, and positive or negative, on political culture and disaffection. Second, mobilizations tend to shape the policymaking process through the effect that they have on public opinion (Agnone, 2007; Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, & Su, 2010, p. 299). In Chile, for example, student mobilizations have influenced electoral campaigns and platforms, which has resulted in new public policies and laws regarding higher education funding (Palacios-Valladares & Ondetti, 2018). Analyzing the way protests shape public policy is increasingly interesting for both activists and policymakers, as they resort to mobilizations to advance or incorporate social demands.

Analyzing protests in Chile

In line with the rise of contentious politics in the country, the literature has expanded at a rapid pace. Regarding the causes of protests, the literature is large, and it offers a series of explanations. Some studies have focused on malaise and grievances as a driving force (Joignant, Morales, & Fuentes, 2017; Somma, 2017). In the case of student protests, several works link them to grievances associated with debt and costs (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013; Bellei, Cabalin, & Orellana,

2014; Cummings, 2015, 2015; Disi Pavlic, 2018; Donoso, 2013; Somma, 2012). Other explanations, based on political process theory (Tarrow, 2011a), point to the relationship between social and political actors (Carruthers & Rodriguez, 2009; Disi Pavlic, 2018; Somma & Bargsted, 2015; Somma & Medel, 2017; von Bülow & Bidegain Ponte, 2015). According to these works, the distancing between civil society and institutional politics has resulted in more mobilizations. A third influential strand emphasizes the role that social media has played to explain participation (Scherman, Arriagada, & Valenzuela, 2015; Valenzuela, 2013; von Bülow, 2018). These studies argue that social media have become an additional and complementary arena through which activists can organize and protest (Cabalin, 2014; Valderrama, 2013; Valenzuela, Arriagada, & Scherman, 2012).

The accumulated knowledge on the characteristics of protests is relatively smaller but is still important. Examples include works that analyze the tactics used in mobilizations, both off- and online (Medel & Somma, 2016; von Bülow, Vilça, & Abelin, 2018). The evidence suggests, for example, that the type of tactic (conventional, cultural, disruptive or violent) depends on the targets, the presence of formal organizations, and the number of participants in the demonstrations. Other characteristics explored by the literature include state repression (Medel, 2016), the number of participants (Somma & Medel, 2019), internal organization (Palacios-Valladares, 2016a), and the relationship with political parties (Palacios-Valladares, 2016b; Somma, 2018).

Although intuition suggests that mobilization has had tangible effects, scholarship on consequences of mobilization is much scarcer. This relative lack of works reflects the general state of the discipline, where knowledge about the effects on mobilizations in terms of policy change is limited (Giugni, 1999). Some authors, for example, have analyzed the indirect effect that the student movement has had on the policymaking process (Castiglioni, 2014; Donoso, 2016; Silva,

2015, pp. 32–33). Our knowledge of the effect on public opinion is even scarcer, although Donoso (2016, pp. 185–186) suggests that the 2011 coincided with a change in public opinion in favor of signaling education as the country’s most pressing problem.

Understanding Political Attitudes in Chile

There is a sizable literature on the causes and effects explaining differences in Chileans’ political attitudes. Growth in this scholarship can be partly explained through the availability of data due the appearance of various public opinion surveys, and the low levels of political satisfaction, trust and other political attitudes, which have caught the attention of both scholars and policymaking experts (Toro et al., 2016). Indeed, the country has experienced higher levels of political disaffection, understood as “hostility to, and estrangement from, the political system” (Montero, Gunther, & Torcal, 1997, p. 136), which includes political disinterest, distrust, and inefficacy. Several works at the Chilean and Latin American level study the causes of different facets of political engagement, such as institutional trust (Morales, 2008; Segovia, Haye, González, Manzi, & Carvacho, 2008), regime approval (Booth & Seligson, 2009; Rhodes-Purdy, 2017), or disaffection itself (Joignant, 2012; Lechner, 2003a, 2003b; Mardones, 2014; Parker, 2003; Toro, 2008). Somma, Rossi, & Donoso (2019), for instance, argue that Chilean LGBTIQ activists show lower levels of attachment to institutional politics than their Argentine counterparts because the LGBTIQ has had more limited policy success in Chile. Disaffection is also a major determinant of political participation: Disi & Mardones (2019), for example, show that it negatively affects both electoral and protest behavior. To the best of my knowledge, however, no works have systematically assessed the effect of protests on Chilean public opinion.

By contrast, the scholarship on attitudes about mobilizations or the country's most important problems is much less developed. As mentioned above, some works argue that student mobilizations have shaped policymaking through their effect on public opinion (Castiglioni, 2014; Donoso, 2016; Kubal & Fisher, 2016, p. 232; Silva, 2015, pp. 32–33). According to Altman & Toro Maureira (2016, p. 166, author's translation), “the organization of large protests for education reform, healthcare coverage and quality, environmental protection and the development of remote areas managed to place in the public agenda and opinion the need to change social, political and economic paradigms.” Consequently, several public opinion surveys changed their instruments in moments of large-scale mobilizations by adding questions related to the movements and their demands. Nevertheless, although there seems to be a consensus that mobilizations do shape political, *how* do protests effect change on public opinion remains an open question. Does proximity to protests shape political attitudes? Does the effect vary by attitude? These are the questions that this paper seeks to tackle.

Proximity to protests and its effect on weak and strong attitudes

From a methodological standpoint, there is a high degree of homogeneity in the study of social movements in Chile, which tend to favor qualitative approaches.² This type of studies excels when it comes to describing the context and the necessary causal mechanisms for causal explanations (Falleti & Lynch, 2009) but they do not possess the same capacity as quantitative approaches to simultaneously test different hypotheses, and to control for the effect of several explanatory variables (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). The majority of quantitative studies use survey data (Castillo, Palacios, Joignant, & Tham, 2015; Roberts, 2016; Scherman et al., 2015; Valenzuela et

² For an excellent example, see Donoso & von Bülow (2017b).

al., 2012), so they analyze social mobilization indirectly through individual protest participation. One notable exception is Medel & Somma (2016), who use protest event analysis (PEA) to create a dataset of protests in Chile. In geographical terms, however, this study is limited to comparing the effect on protest tactics of staging protests in Santiago or elsewhere in the country.

Spatial analysis (see Darmofal, 2015) can be a useful and timely addition to the study of social mobilization in Chile. Spatial analysis as method fits nicely with the research tradition in social sciences and social movements in particular focusing on diffusion processes in social phenomena. For example, the spatio-temporal dimension played major role in the diffusion of protests during the Paris Commune (Gould, 1991) and in the Swedish labor movement (Hedström, 1994).

There is also a burgeoning literature incorporating spatial elements to the study of protests. For example, spatial analysis has been used to measure the effect of proximity to West German television antennae on the 1989 East German protest wave (Crabtree, Darmofal, & Kern, 2015). More important for this study, some works have also explored the effects of protest proximity on public opinion. Wallace, Zepeda-Millán, & Jones-Correa (2014) find that large demonstrations during the 2006 immigrant rights marches in the United States increased Latinos' political alienation, while increased numbers of nearby small events had a positive effect in their political efficacy. These marches also had an effect on Latino's immigration policy preferences, but this impact depended on temporal and spatial exposure, as well as respondents' personal characteristics (Branton, Martinez-Ebers, Carey, & Matsubayashi, 2015). Meanwhile, Andrews, Beyerlein, & Tucker Farnum (2016), show that proximity to Civil Rights protests in the Deep South had a positive effect on certain white Southerner's attitudes towards mobilizations in 1961. This social movement also appears to have had a lasting impact on political culture: whites in counties that experienced historical Civil Rights protests are today more likely to identify with the

Democratic Party (Mazumder, 2018). Similarly, I theorize that college student mobilizations might have had similar effects on political attitudes in Chile.

Hypothesis 1. Proximity to protests has significant effects on political attitudes

Not all political attitudes are equally sensitive to events such as protests, however. As Albarracin & Shavitt (2018, p. 302) explain, “attitudes are partly memory based and partly constructed on the fly.” A key feature of attitudes emphasized in the psychological literature is that they vary in their strength (Krosnick & Petty, 1995). “Strong” attitudes are defined as “attitudes that are durable in the sense of being stable and resistant to attack, and that have an impact by influencing thought and guiding behavior” (Bassili, 2008, p. 238). As Bohner & Dickel (2011, p. 394) explain, “strong attitudes are more stable across situations and over time and, hence, can consistently be recalled from memory, whereas weak attitudes are less accessible and thus more susceptible to context influences.” My argument is that, while protests may shape all attitudes, their impact is more substantive on “weak” attitudes.

Strong attitudes are shaped and crystallize during childhood and adolescence through political socialization in the family, at school, and among peers. These attitudes, which include political interest, trust, ideology, party identification, and racial attitudes (Alwin & Krosnick, 1991; Hooghe & Wilkenfeld, 2008; Prior, 2010; Sears & Funk, 1999), tend to remain stable in the long run, and make up the political culture of a certain place at a certain time (Almond & Verba, 2015). These strong attitudes “are said to be acquired before the adult is fully mature, to be relatively stable through the life course, to be consistent with related attitudes, and to influence the formation of attitudes toward new attitude objects such as new issues and political candidates” (Sears & Funk, 1999, pp. 1–2). Prior, 2010 (p. 763), for example, finds that “people return to their stable long-term political interest levels quickly after perturbations caused by political or personal

events,” and that interest in politics “behaves like a central element of political identity, not like a frequently updated attitude.” Although party identification and political trust in Chile have eroded since the return to democracy (Castiglioni & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2016; Morales, 2008), the change has been gradual and can be partly explained by inter-generational differences, rather than solely by within-individual variability. On the other hand, increased damage by the 2010 earthquake was significantly associated with lower system support and legitimacy in the country (Carlin, Love, & Zechmeister, 2014).

Weak attitudes tend to be more sensitive to the political context and events later in life. These attitudes, which are akin to latent opinions (Key, 1964), include policy positions and evaluations of political figures, tend to change over time, and are usually informed by people’s strong opinions, which are used as mental shortcuts (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001).³ These opinions are also context-dependent, as they are more likely to be formed from “implicit influences of peripheral information” (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 10), and retain “residues of experience of such a nature as to guide, bias, or otherwise influence later behavior” (Campbell, 1963, p. 97).

The psychological literature on the effect of political and historical events on weak attitudes has increased considerably in the past decade (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018, pp. 315–316). For instance, attitudes towards the “Muslim ban” changed rapidly and significantly after a protest wave denouncing the policy (Collingwood, Lajevardi, & Oskooii, 2018). In the case of attitudes towards certain politicians or institutions, perceived political or economic performance also determine to a great extent these weak opinions (Finkel, Muller, & Seligson, 1989). Events are also important:

³ Although strong and weak attitudes are both explicit, the latter may be more reactive to weak attitudes, which are “introspectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) traces of past experience that mediate favorable or unfavorable feeling, thought, or action toward social objects” (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 8).

surveys fielded before and after Hurricanes Sandy and Irene in New Jersey showed a positive effect on attitudes toward a Green political candidate (Rudman, McLean, & Bunzl, 2013). Thus, proximity to protests may have a higher potential to shape weak rather than strong attitudes.

Hypothesis 2. Proximity to protests has a larger substantive effect on weak attitudes than on strong ones

Data and variables

To analyze the effect of mobilization on political attitudes in Chile, this work combines protest event analysis (Koopmans & Rucht, 2002) and survey data. More specifically, the analysis relies on data about protests with college student participants from the Latin American Student Protest Dataset (LASPD, Disi Pavlic, 2017), and the 2008, 2010, and 2012 waves of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP, 2015).⁴ The LASPD, which recorded more than 4,700 protest events in Latin America between 2000 and 2012 (of which 461 occurred in Chile), provides information about the location of each event. Meanwhile, the LAPOP dataset is used because, unlike other surveys (such as Latinobarómetro, CEP, Nacional Bicentenario, and Nacional UDP) it is the only one that contains the following information: the dates, location of fieldwork (at the *comuna*⁵ level), and questions about both weak and strong attitudes across several survey waves.

⁴ The "AmericasBarometer Grand Merge 2004-2014 (Version 3.0 Free)" dataset can be obtained from The AmericasBarometer by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), www.LapopSurveys.org. The rest of the data files and replication code may be obtained from the author upon request.

⁵ *Comunas* (communes) are the smallest administrative subdivisions in the country. The country currently has 345 communes (in addition to Chile's territorial claim in Antarctica). Most communes contain one town and some smaller settlements, while the larger cities are subdivided into several communes. The metropolitan area of Santiago, which is the country's largest city, extends into 37 communes. Communes are used in this study because no survey releases its respondents' primary sampling unit (residential blocks) for privacy reasons.

Three different waves are used to introduce more temporal variation in the analysis, which a single survey could not capture. Residents of a neighborhood near a major campus may, on average, be more sensitive to student demands; however, including information from distinct time periods with different levels of mobilization may tell apart the effect of living near students from the effect of exposure to protests.

Independent variable: calculating the number of nearby student protests

To quantify the effect of protests, each of the 461 events recorded in Chile was mapped using ArcGIS at the commune level.⁶ While most events occurred in one location (and thus in a single commune), some events occurred in up to 33 different districts. The same procedure was done with the LAPOP data, with more than 5,000 survey respondent being geocoded. Finally, the two geodatabases were combined to calculate the number of protests in the respondent's commune or in bordering communes in the two weeks before the date of fieldwork. Table 1 summarizes the values of this covariate, which is the main variable of interest in this study. The majority of respondents (85.4%) were not close to a protest but the rest were close to up to six different events. The number of nearby demonstrations varies by year: 98.8% of respondents in 2008 had not events occurring in their vicinity in the two weeks before they were surveyed; this proportion decreases to 81.7% in 2010, and to 76.2% in 2012. There is missing data for some respondents (4,3%), for whom the date of fieldwork was not recorded in the 2010 and 2012 waves.

Table 1. Number of nearby college student protest in Chile (2008, 2010 and 2012 LAPOP Surveys)

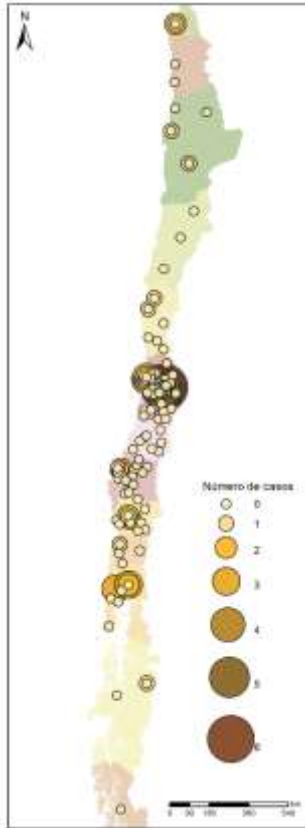
Number of nearby protests/Year	2008		2010		2012		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	1.524	99.80	1.605	81.68	1.197	76.19	4,326	85.44

⁶ The events were not mapped more precisely (using, for instance, points or polygons) because the dataset only offered commune-level data for each respondent.

1	3	0.20	120	6.11	160	10.18	283	5.59
2	0	0.00	65	3.31	74	4.71	139	2.75
3	0	0.00	24	1.22	33	2.10	57	1.13
4	0	0.00	0	0.00	27	1.72	27	0.53
5	0	0.00	0	0.00	27	1.72	8	0.16
6	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	0.25	4	0.08
Missing date	0	0.00	151	7.68	68	4.33	219	4.33
Total	1.527	100.00	1.965	100.00	1.571	100.00	5,063	100

Figure 1 illustrates the partial geographic distribution of the respondents and their number of nearby protests. As would be expected from a predominantly urban social actor, the respondents with the largest numbers of nearby student protests reside in the largest cities (Santiago, Valparaíso, Concepción), and in other regional capitals (Arica, Antofagasta, Temuco, Puerto Montt), where most of the higher education institutions are located. Respondents who live in small towns and rural areas, by contrast, are less likely to be directly exposed to student protests.

Figure 1. Geographic distribution of nearby college student protest in Chile



Dependent variables: weak and strong political attitudes

The number of nearby protests is regressed on six weak and six strong attitudes and opinions. The first one is considering the education as the country's most important problem. This variable is derived from a survey item with more than forty alternatives.⁷ As shown in Table 2, only a small share of respondents (4,1%) opined that education was Chile's most serious issue. More frequently mentioned issues include crime, the 2010 Chile Earthquake (included in that year's wave), unemployment, the economy, transportation, and inequality. Since Chilean students' claims are predominantly related to education policy (Disi Pavlic, 2018; Somma, 2012), I expect proximity

⁷ In 2012, half of the respondents were randomly excluded from answering this question, based on their questionnaires' number. Since their values in this item are missing completely at random (MCAR), their exclusion should not bias the results below.

to their protests to increase the probability that respondents identify education as the top public priority.

Table 2. Distribution of education variable

Most important problem	N	%
Education	174	4.1
Other issues	4,088	95.6
DK/NR	15	0.4
Total	4,277	100

The next four weak variables deal with respondents' approval of protests, measured using ten-point scales. The variables are approval of: government critics' right to protest peacefully; legal demonstrations; occupying private properties; and roadblocks. Table 3 summarizes the frequency distributions of the four covariates. Most respondents strongly disapprove occupations and roadblocks, while the majority neither approves nor disapproves peaceful and legal demonstrations. I expect closeness to mobilizations to have a positive effect on political attitudes towards them, as "increased perceptual fluency of a repeatedly presented stimulus (that is, increased ease of its identification on re-exposure) is misattributed to liking, yielding a positive evaluation of the stimulus" (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 10). In other words, recurrent proximity to protests could make bystanders more sympathetic to movements' claims (Andrews et al., 2016).

Table 3. Distribution of protest approval variables

Variables/Values	Approve peaceful protests		Approve legal protests		Approve occupations		Approve roadblocks	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1 (Strongly Disapprove)	406	8.02	449	8.87	2,434	48.07	1,797	35.49
2	170	3.36	162	3.20	610	12.05	515	10.17
3	287	5.67	173	3.42	414	8.18	443	8.75
4	469	9.26	294	5.81	396	7.82	459	9.07
5	703	13.89	587	11.59	375	7.41	479	9.46

6	569	11.24	500	9.88	236	4.66	297	5.87
7	518	10.23	539	10.65	177	3.50	298	5.89
8	490	9.68	532	10.51	127	2.51	242	4.78
9	257	5.08	310	6.12	70	1.38	108	2.13
10 (Strongly Approve)	947	18.70	1,418	28.01	141	2.78	343	6.77
DK/NR	247	4.88	99	1.95	83	1.63	82	1.61
Total	4,816	100	5,063	100	5,063	100	5,063	100

The last weak attitude variable is presidential approval. Tables 4 shows that most interviewees considered presidential performance to be fair or good. More nearby protests are expected to be negatively associated with the Executive's ability to solve problems, and hence to have a negative effect on presidential approval.

Table 4. Distribution of presidential approval variable

Categories	N	%
Very Bad	210	4.15
Bad	655	12.94
Neither Good nor Bad (Fair)	2,377	46.95
Good	1,459	28.82
Very Good	163	3.22
DK/NR	199	3.93
Total	5,063	100

The effect of protest proximity is also assessed on six strong attitude variables. The first one is political interest. Most Chileans have little interest or are outright uninterested in politics, as Table 5 shows. Protest proximity, however, is expected to increase conversations about, engagement with, and thus interest in politics.

Table 5. Distribution of political interest variable

Categories	N	%
None	2,383	47.07

A Little	1,5	29.63
Some	926	18.29
A Lot	215	4.25
DK/NA	39	0.77
Total	5,063	100

Table 6 describes the values of last five dependent variables, which are measured as seven-point Likert scales. Most respondents have low levels of external but higher levels of internal efficacy.⁸ Following Wallace, Zepeda-Millán, & Jones-Correa (2014) I expect protests in the vicinity to have a positive effect on both types of efficacy. Meanwhile, most respondents have medium-high levels of trust in the president, and relatively high levels of support for democracy. I expect that, as the number of protests near respondents increase, attitudes towards democracy should improve – particularly when understood in its deliberative and participatory dimensions (Donoso, 2016). By contrast, the levels of national pride and presidential trust should decrease, as protests signal poor political performance, which has negative effects on trust and regime support (Finkel et al., 1989; Mishler & Rose, 2001) .

Table 6. Distribution efficacy, trust, support for democracy, and national pride variables

Variable/ Value	External efficacy		Internal efficacy		Trust in the President		Support for democracy		National pride	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	1,04	20.54	614	12.13	600	11.85	135	2.67	59	1.17
2	551	10.88	431	8.51	299	5.91	116	2.29	61	1.20
3	716	14.14	655	12.94	449	8.87	257	5.08	117	2.31

⁸ Measured by level of agreement with the statements “Those who govern the country are interested in what people like me think” and “I feel I have a good understanding of the country’s most important political issues,” respectively.

4	976	19.28	1,092	21.57	874	17.26	711	14.04	320	6.32
5	919	18.15	1,117	22.06	1,146	22.63	985	19.45	621	12.27
6	444	8.77	651	12.86	986	19.47	1,141	22.54	969	19.14
7	277	5.47	341	6.74	602	11.89	1,457	28.78	2,86	56.49
DK/NR	33	2.76	162	3.2	107	2.11	261	5.16	56	1.11
Total	5,063	100	5,063	100	5,063	100	5,063	100	5,063	100
<p>Note: in the External and Internal efficacy and Support for democracy scales, 1 means "strongly disagree" and 7 means "strongly agree," in the trust in president and national pride scales 1 means "not at all" and 7 means "a lot"</p>										

Control variables

Seven control variables (two of them attitudinal and five sociodemographic) are incorporated into the analysis to account for other theoretically-relevant factors. The first one is ideology. Identifying with the Left is an important predictor of participation in protests (Castillo et al., 2015; Dalton, Van Sickle, & Weldon, 2009, p. 60; Disi Pavlic & Mardones, *forthcoming*), and is also associated with support for public spending and education policies (Busemeyer & Garritzmann, 2017; Garritzmann, 2015). Leftism, therefore, may also be correlated with positive attitudes towards mobilization and prioritizing education. Ideology is a particularly important control for the weak attitudes, as people use their political identities as cognitive heuristics for their more superficial opinions (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). The LAPOP eleven-point ideology scale is recoded into the following categories: Left, Center-Left, Center, Center-Right, Right, and “Doesn’t Know/No Response.”⁹ The second attitudinal variable used is retrospective economic evaluations

⁹ This category is added because about 23% of respondents refused to answer this question, and

(Better, Same or Worse), which have significant effects on political trust (Mishler & Rose, 2001; Polavieja, 2013), approval (Arriagada, Navia, & Schuster, 2010; Lau & Redlawsk, 2006), and national pride (Evans, 2002).

The first sociodemographic covariate is education, measured as the number of years of formal schooling (from none to seventeen). Higher levels of education are associated with increased political engagement (Sunshine Hillygus, 2005) and more positive attitudes towards politics (Carlin, 2006; Galston, 2001). Education is also important because people who are more educated tend to be more unvarying in their opinions (Feldman, 1989). At the same time, however, more education is associated with lower levels of nationalism (Coenders & Scheepers, 2003), and hence may have a negative effect on national pride. Students status and having children¹⁰ are also incorporated because students and parents may be more likely to consider education as an important issue (Garritzmann, 2015). Additionally, students' own opinions maybe particularly sensitive to student mobilizations. Finally, age (continuous) and gender (dichotomous) are also used as controls.

Results

The hypotheses mentioned above are tested using several regression models. In the case of the education variable, a mixed-effects logistic regression is used; the rest of the dependent variables are regressed using mixed-effects ordered logistic regressions. All models have commune-level and survey wave-level random effects, so they are multilevel models (with respondents nested within communes, which are in turn nested within survey waves). These random effects are used

because Chileans have ceased to identify with ideological positions over time (Bargsted & De la Cerda, 2019).

¹⁰ Both of these variables are dichotomous.

to account for commune- and year-specific dynamics.¹¹ The models are regressed using STATA 15 (StataCorp, 2017).

Table 7 shows the effect of proximity to student protests on weak political attitudes. The number of nearby protests has a statistically significant effect on two of these political attitudes, and both are in the expected direction. More specifically, each additional student protest in the respondents' vicinity increases the odds of identifying education as the country's most serious problem by about 21%. The effect is similar for approving of peaceful demonstrations: additional events increase the odds of higher levels of approval by almost 19%. These odds ratios suggest that the effect of protest proximity is relatively large for weak attitudes (when significant). The effect on approving other types of mobilizations (allowed by the law, occupations, and blockades) is not statistically significant, which suggests that the effect of protest proximity on opinions about demonstrations depends largely on whether they are peaceful or not. Presidential approval levels, on the other hand, seem to vary independently from the number of nearby student protests.

Table 7. Regressions of student protest proximity on weak political attitudes in Chile

	Educatio n most serious problem (1)	Approve peaceful demonstr ations (2)	Approve legal protests (3)	Approve occupatio ns (4)	Approve roadblock s (5)	Presidenti al approval (6)
Number of nearby protests	1.209***	1.186***	1.028	1.039	0.961	0.992
	(0.0645)	(0.0520)	(0.0540)	(0.122)	(0.0645)	(0.0574)
Ideology (reference: Left)						
<i>Center-Left</i>	0.986	0.860	1.015	1.171*	1.025	1.373

¹¹ Commune-level effects are pertinent due to the extremely segregated nature of Chilean cities (Sabatini, Cáceres, & Cerda, 2001). Meanwhile, wave-level random effects are added to account for time-specific trends in public opinion.

	(0.368)	(0.162)	(0.0649)	(0.101)	(0.188)	(0.367)
<i>Center</i>	0.651**	0.629***	0.551***	0.804***	0.649***	1.914
	(0.119)	(0.0278)	(0.0152)	(0.0342)	(0.0566)	(1.162)
<i>Center-Right</i>	0.466***	0.629**	0.552***	0.839	0.762	2.764
	(0.128)	(0.133)	(0.0560)	(0.122)	(0.132)	(2.746)
<i>Right</i>	0.589**	0.592***	0.598***	0.516***	0.457***	3.943
	(0.143)	(0.0716)	(0.0486)	(0.0672)	(0.101)	(6.119)
<i>DK/NR</i>	0.793	0.583***	0.481***	0.582*	0.496**	1.758
	(0.197)	(0.0506)	(0.0297)	(0.178)	(0.157)	(1.136)
Retrospectiv e economic evaluation (reference: Better)						
<i>Same</i>	1.024	1.016	1.008	1.174	1.135	0.549***
	(0.440)	(0.0441)	(0.0663)	(0.117)	(0.117)	(0.0976)
<i>Worse</i>	0.647	0.976	0.983	1.138	1.211*	0.275***
	(0.271)	(0.167)	(0.0985)	(0.188)	(0.131)	(0.108)
Years of education	1.087	1.039***	1.047**	0.983	1.009	0.998
	(0.0670)	(0.0131)	(0.0203)	(0.0130)	(0.0183)	(0.00607)
Student status	2.778***	1.184	1.316	1.167	1.266	1.213***
	(0.700)	(0.261)	(0.348)	(0.297)	(0.261)	(0.0644)
Has children	1.109	0.930*	1.005	0.925	0.853*	1.156
	(0.265)	(0.0396)	(0.0327)	(0.0780)	(0.0807)	(0.182)
Age	0.979*	0.994***	0.991***	0.990***	0.990***	1.008
	(0.0113)	(0.000340)	(0.00310)	(0.000930)	(0.00127)	(0.00509)
Male	0.961	0.915**	0.768***	0.815***	0.955	1.105
	(0.119)	(0.0347)	(0.0329)	(0.0468)	(0.0508)	(0.125)
Observations	3,977	4,497	4,642	4,657	4,658	4,542
Number of waves (random effects)	3	3	3	3	3	3
Number of communes (random effects)	274	274	274	274	274	274
Robust standard errors in parentheses. Odds ratios reported instead of coefficients. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1						

Several control variables also have significant effects on these attitudinal variables. Perhaps unsurprisingly, being a student and younger have major positive effects on considering education as the country's most pressing problem. As expected, Leftists (compared to most of the other ideological groups) and younger respondents have higher odds of approving all types of protests. Male respondents, on the other hand, are less likely to approve occupations and peaceful and legal demonstrations. In line with the literature (Arriagada et al., 2010), presidential approval varies to a great extent depending on economic evaluations.

The effects on strong political attitudes are shown in Table 8. In this case, the vicinity to mobilization has significant effects on three variables, all of which are in line with the theoretical expectations. Every additional nearby protest increases the odds of having higher values in political interest variable by 7%, but they also decrease the odds of having higher levels of trust in the President and national pride by 6,5% and 4,8%, respectively. Thus, as hypothesized, the effects of protest proximity on strong political attitudes tend to be rather small.

Table 8. Regressions of student protest proximity on strong political attitudes in Chile

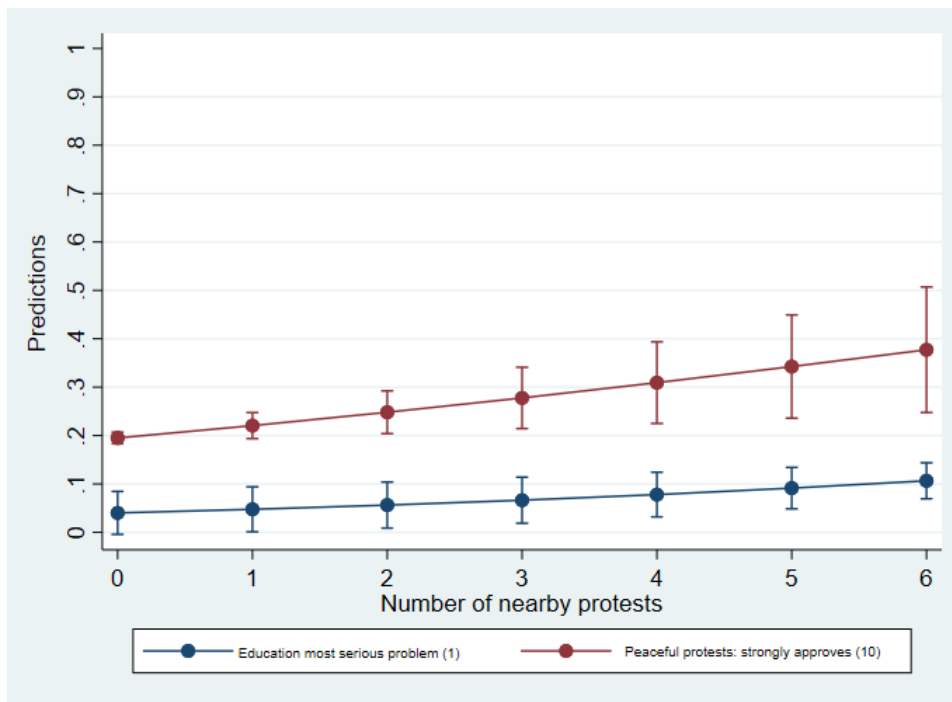
	Interest (7)	External efficacy (8)	Internal efficacy (9)	Trust in the Presiden t (10)	Support for democra cy (11)	National pride (12)
Number of nearby protests	1.070***	1.107	1.051	0.935**	1.006	0.952**
	(0.0102)	(0.0948)	(0.0636)	(0.0292)	(0.0504)	(0.0230)
Ideology (reference: Left)						
<i>Center-Left</i>	0.783	1.207	0.810***	1.315	1.047	0.929
	(0.142)	(0.149)	(0.0257)	(0.363)	(0.148)	(0.110)
<i>Center</i>	0.380***	1.443	0.667***	2.232	0.726***	1.187
	(0.0175)	(0.407)	(0.102)	(1.351)	(0.0580)	(0.192)
<i>Center-Right</i>	0.593***	1.756*	0.839	3.166	0.671***	1.253
	(0.0445)	(0.598)	(0.0911)	(2.934)	(0.0294)	(0.282)
<i>Right</i>	0.678***	2.170	1.090	6.201	0.640***	1.756***
	(0.0404)	(1.124)	(0.178)	(9.102)	(0.0857)	(0.378)
<i>DK/NR</i>	0.168***	1.030	0.382***	1.869	0.644***	1.036

	(0.00819)	(0.144)	(0.0391)	(1.274)	(0.0979)	(0.194)
Retrospective economic evaluation (reference: Better)						
Same	0.811***	0.665**	0.863*	0.592***	0.935	0.707***
	(0.0653)	(0.112)	(0.0677)	(0.0669)	(0.0667)	(0.0119)
Worse	0.741***	0.524***	0.782*	0.329***	0.851	0.576***
	(0.0633)	(0.0782)	(0.105)	(0.0737)	(0.127)	(0.0326)
Years of education	1.111***	1.002	1.139***	0.992	1.034***	0.949***
	(0.0115)	(0.0104)	(0.0106)	(0.00621)	(0.00324)	(0.00360)
Student status	1.288**	1.183	0.944	1.519**	0.947	1.144***
	(0.138)	(0.143)	(0.245)	(0.266)	(0.0453)	(0.0201)
Has children	1.080	1.064	1.150	1.207***	0.989	1.357***
	(0.0834)	(0.105)	(0.204)	(0.0704)	(0.0771)	(0.125)
Age	1.004	1.006***	1.012***	1.014***	1.013***	1.007***
	(0.00391)	(0.00103)	(0.000371)	(0.00319)	(0.00146)	(0.000758)
Male	0.713***	1.009	0.638***	1.024	1.031	1.077***
	(0.0307)	(0.0785)	(0.0926)	(0.0652)	(0.0525)	(0.0294)
Observations	4,686	4,593	4,578	4,621	4,484	4,666
Number of waves (random effects)	3	3	3	3	3	3
Number of communes (random effects)	274	274	274	274	274	274
Robust standard errors in parentheses. Odds ratios reported instead of coefficients. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1						

Some theoretically-informed control variables are also shape strong political attitudes. Leftist ideology (in contrast to other ideological categories) and older age are positively associated with political interest, internal efficacy, and support for democracy. Meanwhile, positive economic evaluations are significantly associated with higher values in all the attitudinal variables (except for support for democracy, where the effect is not significant). Additional years of schooling tends to have a positive effect on these attitudes with the exception of national pride, where less educated respondents tend to have higher values, which is in line with the literature.

Figure 2 shows the predicted probabilities of selected values of the dependent weak variables from models 1 and 2 in Table 7, where protest proximity had statistically significant effects. In the former case, the predicted probabilities of considering education to be Chile's main concern increase from 4% with no nearby protests to about 10,7% when respondents are exposed to six mobilizations. Similarly, the predicted probabilities of exhibiting the highest value in the peaceful protest approval scale increase from approximately 20% without protests in the vicinity to almost 38% when close to six college mobilizations. These results lend additional support to the argument that protest proximity has a major effect in shaping political attitudes that are formed on the spot.

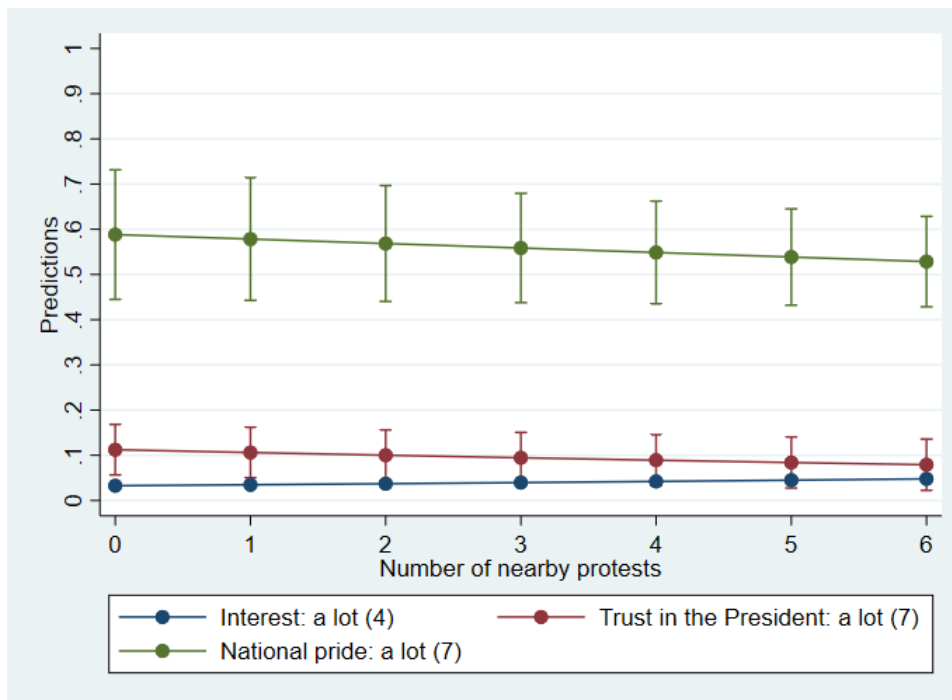
Figure 2. Predicted effects of protest proximity on selected values of weak attitude variables, with 95% CIs. All other variables held at their mean values.



Finally, Figure 3 illustrates the predicted probabilities of selected values from the dependent variables in models 7, 10, and 12 in Table 8: political interest, trust in the President, and national

pride. Showing high levels in interest in politics increases with protest proximity: the predicted value of being interested “a lot” grows modestly from approximately 3,3% when there are no protests to about 4,8% with six protests. The probabilities of high level of trust in the Executive and national pride, by contrast, decrease with more nearby protests: they each decline from approximately 11% and 59% at zero nearby events to about 7,9% and 53% at six nearby protests. Thus, the effect of spatial and temporal proximity to protests is relatively smaller in the case of strong political attitudes.

Figure 3. Predicted effects of protest proximity on selected values of strong attitude variables, with 95% Cis. All other variables held at their mean values.



Conclusions

This paper seeks to understand the spatial and temporal effects of college student protests on political attitudes in Chile. It theorizes that, at the individual level, geographic and temporal

proximity to student mobilizations can significantly shape political attitudes (Hypothesis 1). However, I also hypothesize that the impact of protest proximity depends on the type of attitude: the effect should be larger on weak attitudes, which are more sensitive to exogenous stimuli, and smaller on strong attitudes, which tend to remain stable over time (Hypothesis 2).

Combining data from three LAPOP waves and student protest event data, the article uses regression analyses to test these claims. The findings support Hypothesis 1, as the number of events near respondents has the expected significant effect on several attitudinal variables. Hypothesis 2 is also supported, as the magnitude of the significant effects is larger for the weak attitudes (opinions about education and demonstrations) and smaller for the strong ones (political interest, trust, and national pride).

The findings have important implications for the study of social movements and public opinion. The evidence supports the general claim that movements can shape public opinion and influence the policymaking process (Giugni, 2004), and the specific impact that student mobilizations in Chile have had a significant effect on public opinion (Donoso, 2016; Kubal & Fisher, 2016; Palacios-Valladares & Ondetti, 2018; Silva, 2017). They show that, rather than being stored in memory (Fazio, 2007; Petty, Briñol, & DeMarree, 2007) or determined by the context (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2007; Schwarz, 2007), political attitudes vary in their sensitivity to external stimuli. Thus, the findings contribute to our understanding of macro-micro bridges (Dogan & Rokkan, 1969), which are relatively understudied in social movements research (Walgrave & Rucht, 2010).

The effects on strong attitudes challenge some claims in the political sociology literature, however. The null effects of student protest proximity on external and internal efficacy and on support for democracy, for example, cast doubt on the claim that student mobilization has been a

“democratizing force” in Chile (Donoso, 2016). More generally, the small effects on strong attitudes contradict the argument that movements have an impact on individual political identity or national political culture (Earl, 2007).¹² Finally, the results suggests that protests have opposing effects on different dimension of political disaffection (Disi & Mardones, *forthcoming*; Montero et al., 1997): while protest proximity slightly increases political interests, it also diminishes political engagement through its negative effect on trust.

This paper has several limitations that future research may address. Unlike, for example, Wallace et al. (2014), this work relies on survey data from separate time periods, and the locations and dates of the fieldwork were not decided for this project, so there is no way to ensure that particularly eventful or uneventful periods and places are not overrepresented in the samples used. Since the protest data comes from college student mobilizations, the findings may not be applicable to other social sectors (workers, indigenous groups, sexual minorities) or to social mobilization in general. Likewise, future research may also investigate whether peaceful, cultural, disruptive and violent tactics (Medel & Somma, 2016) have particular effects on specific attitudes. Finally, while these results show that protest proximity shapes some attitudes, future works may explore how lasting this effect may actually be.

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¹² Evidence from the U.S. Civil Rights Movement suggests that movements can have lasting, culturally-relevant attitudinal changes (Mazumder, 2018). The Civil Rights movements sought more structural and profound goals unlike the student protests analyzed in this paper, which tend to have more policy-oriented and sectorial objectives.

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