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A Comparative Study of Youth and Adult Education in Three Social Movement Contexts

Abstract: This article presents the results of a comparative study of learning and education in contemporary student movements in Chile, Egypt, and Puerto Rico, which arose as responses to neoliberal economic grievances. The study uses an andragogical lens to analyse these movements as examples of collective self-directed pedagogical practice by and within social movements. Drawing on Santos' (2006) sociologies of absence and "emergence", the study utilizes autoethnographic and secondary data analysis to voice

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social movement-based learning alternatives. We argue that, despite the different contexts of each movement, they still share many commonalities in organizing and educating in response to global neoliberalism.

Key words: social movement learning, comparative adult education, Chile, Egypt, Puerto Rico, andragogy, neoliberalism.

Andragogy and Social Movements

In the last few decades, we have seen a major upsurge in social movements across the globe. Almeida (2019) cites several social science researchers who have empirically demonstrated what many of us subjectively feel and understand: there is an increasing level of collective action being taken by the people in our countries and across the world. This increase in social movement activity has not gone unnoticed by educational researchers. According to Niesz, et. al (2018), it is the field of adult education that has the most coherent research program on the relationship between learning and education and social movements. Increasingly, we are seeing more-and-more studies in the field framed by the term social movement learning (SML). The field of adult education has shown that social movements are an important area for understanding the nature of learning (Holst, 2018; Walker & Butterwick, 2020).

Nevertheless, the interest in SML is not taken up evenly across the subfields within adult education. Based on a review of literature across the major adult education journals, we find that there are very few studies that relate andragogy to learning or education in social movements. Keefe's (2015) andragogical approach to a study of Myles Horton and the Highlander Folk School is perhaps unique in its effort to specifically analyse social movement-based adult education from an andragogical perspective.

The dearth in andragogical research on SML could be explained by the oft cited critique (e.g., Kruszelnicki, 2020; Pratt, 1993; Raymer, 2020) that andragogy focuses predominantly on the individual at the expense of the social; thereby, orienting any andragogical research toward individual learning and not learning that takes place in social or collective contexts, such as social movements. While this may be true, there are adult educators who have taken up the central andragogical tenet of self-directedness and detailed how it can easily be framed as a fundamental aspect of education for social change. Brookfield and Holst (2010), for example, show how self-directedness, when framed as self-determination for oppressed sectors of societies, becomes essential for understanding adult education for social change. Raymer (2020) shows how a social and transformative

andragogy of hope is a central aspect of The Global Network of Learning Cities that emphasizes adult education for social change.

It is our view that andragogical studies can and should join the efforts to understand the nature of learning and education in social movements. In this article, we present comparative research on three contemporary social movements in three countries. All three cases are examples of how sectors of society engage in social movement-based, collective self-directed learning and education, which can help us explore the andragogical aspects of social movement-based or social change-oriented education.

Methodology

Our research is a qualitative, interpretive, and comparative case study of the collective self-directed learning and education taking place in specific periods of mobilization within three social movements in three countries. Our study is interpretive because we are interested in developing conceptual and theoretical insights (Merriam, 1991, pp. 27–28) into the nature of collective self-directed learning and education within social movements, more specifically within student movements arising from the struggles against neoliberal policies. The authors who participated in these movements used data drawn from autoethnographic analysis of their own participation in the movements, data from secondary analysis of the movements, and data from artifacts such as social media, videos, and interviews produced by the movements themselves. Moreover, the interpretive and comparative nature of our inquiry is based on Santos' (2006) concepts of a "sociology of absences" and a "sociology of emergences" that are a part of his broader project of epistemologies of the South. Considering these two sociologies as dialectically related, we find Santos (2006) to be particularly informative for our methodology; his work on the World Social Forum movement of the early 2000s was specifically focused on the then emerging social movement-based alternatives to neoliberal globalization, and on the alternative Global South-based epistemologies foundational to these alternatives. Furthermore, Santos' work emerges contemporary to the movements we are analysing. For Santos, a sociology of absences focuses on social entities which are purposely produced as non-existent in dominant ways of understanding the world. In other words, the absences refer to that which does exist, but is absent in mainstream and, particularly, in Western perspectives; these are sites where subaltern pedagogies arise.

The sociology of "emergences" is future oriented. In revealing and highlighting the absences, a sociology of "emergences" looks to identify the latent pos-

sibilities for alternatives to the dominant ways of being in and understanding the world. We see the movements we are investigating as sources of alternative ways of being, understanding, collective self-directed learning, and educating that are generally absent in and made absent by mainstream notions of adult education, but that are emergent possible alternatives to these very same mainstream approaches to adult education.

The above appears particularly relevant in the context of the struggles against Neoliberalism, an economic model that has not only subjected the field of education to market forces, but most relations as well. Starting with its early implementation in Chile under dictatorial conditions (Letelier, 1976), the model was quickly promoted all over the Global South, and in societies as distinct as Egypt (Beinin, 2016) and Puerto Rico. The student movements presented here emerged, first and foremost, in response to the conditions the global neoliberal agenda imposed in all three countries.

The Student Movement in Chile (2006–2019)

Neoliberalism in Chile was first implemented during the military dictatorship (1973–1988), and further developed under transitional governments (1989–to present). While in the 1980s students fought against the dictatorship, in the more recent uprisings they have organized against the economic model itself.

The years following the dictatorship did not change, but rather expanded the socio-economic neoliberal model. This economic model permeated all spheres of social life by introducing new widespread privatizations that, through processes of accumulation by dispossession, as Harvey (2005) has pointed out, reduced public investment, and transferred these funds to the private sector. In the area of public education, this meant the deterioration of state provisions and the exacerbation of social and economic barriers to the exercise of the right to education at all levels of the educational system (Assaél Budnik et al., 2011). Students have persisted in social mobilization processes throughout the post-dictatorship period (1989–present); both university and high school students have been relevant actors in the struggle for better and just living conditions in the country during this period (Aguilera Ruiz, 2012; Thielemann, 2017).

Historically, student protests took place in April and May each year, when the presidential "state of the union" address was delivered. Students organized to have their demands be included in the general announcements made in the address each year. During the 1990s, the students achieved remedial measures that did not go beyond the neoliberal framework, such as an increase in the scholar-

ship fund, or greater direct allocations to public universities. All this changed in 2006, when the high school students' protests directed against the cost of transportation and the school pass escalated to a national uprising lasting almost a semester. This movement installed in the country's ethos the idea that collective transformations could dismantle the advances of neoliberalism and turn society towards a progressive direction (Bellei & Caballin, 2013; Campos-Martínez & Olavarría, 2020; Inzunza et al., 2019).

The May of the Penguins

The mobilization of high school students during the first semester of 2006 was a lesson in organization, self-management, and construction of political subjects within a youth movement. Initially, the students used the traditional forms of protest — street blockades, demonstrations in the centre of the cities, etc. But the repression they suffered from the police forces forced them to change their protest strategies. That is when they began to occupy their schools in what is known as a "toma", or occupation. During the mobilization, a total of 20 schools were occupied. The "toma" is the occupation of the students' own educational establishments; in this way, the students establish spaces for self-education and political awareness building. The main spaces for this have been the student assemblies, which are non-hierarchical structures of participation and dialogue that function at the level of each school. Each school had its own assembly, which elected spokespersons. The spokespersons represented the voice of their peers in inter-assembly meetings at the regional and national levels. The spokespersons could not vote in these spaces without first consulting their base assemblies; this way, after each meeting, they returned to report points of agreement and disagreement, and new dialogue was generated from which a mandate emerged and was then taken by the spokespersons to new assemblies coordinating committees (Campos-Martínez & Olavarría, 2020; Domedel & Lillo, 2008).

In this reflective process, two phenomena took shape. On the one hand, the meaning of the demands was expanded from concrete local demands to more complex national demands. The local demands called for better teaching conditions, greater relevance of the curriculum, decent infrastructure, teaching materials, decent bathrooms, etc. The national demands questioned the essence of neoliberalism and its impact on the nature of the education system. Two of the most central and heartfelt demands were the end of for-profit education and the end of educational segregation between schools for the rich and schools for the poor. This was protested by both private and public-school students. They questioned the

role that market education had played in making social mobility practically impossible for most students, thus dismantling the myth of meritocracy, and strengthening the movement in the process. The students became aware of the unequal conditions that ruled their lives, and of the precarity of their survival in a country where state control had been delivered into the hands of the private sector.

On the other hand, within the "tomas", the students also developed cultural activities and activities linking the school occupations with the immediate communities; they also used the space to continue studying and training among peers. There was a process of political education that permeated an entire generation, launching waves of protest that overlapped over the years and shared aims and means in the struggle to put an end to neoliberalism and its impact on the educational system.

This stage of students' protests and organizing was co-opted by the government of Michelle Bachelet (2006–2010) through the creation of a broad space for discussion with economic interest groups. Representatives of the student world sat down with representatives of the political and business class and discussed the bases that the new educational system should have. No meaningful agreements were reached on this matter, and the movement lost strength until it disappeared the same year (Cornejo et al., 2012; Inzunza et al., 2019). But discontent emerged again with renewed strength in 2011, this time when most of the students of the "Penguin" generation were already attending university. This new movement was named the "Chilean Spring" (Campos-Martínez & Olavarría, 2020).

The Chilean Spring

In 2011, the student mobilizations started early; paradoxically that year, it was the private universities' students with a focus on the popular classes the ones who started the demonstrations that escalated again to national levels. The leadership of these demonstrations was entrenched in the CONFECH, an association that groups the traditional universities' student centres. CONFECH has a hierarchical structure, with representatives from the different universities, and a centralized structure for deliberation and planning. The structure facilitated the coordination between marches in some ways, and it was possible to gather multitudes of people of different ages in these marches. Some of them surpassed one million people; almost 10% of the country's population marched in the streets, and 80% of the population supported the students' mobilization process (Campos-Martínez & Olavarría, 2020; Inzunza et al., 2019; Figueroa, 2012).

The demands of this mobilization also occurred at the local and national levels. At the local level, each college negotiated aspects that were important to them, such as curriculum, modes of work, school fees, etc (Campos-Martínez & Olavarría, 2020; Figueroa, 2012). At the national level, common demands that continued the anti-neoliberal legacy of the "Penguins" were brought up. At this point, the political understanding on the need to overcome neoliberalism was shared transversally with the public through training and popular education processes that students carried out in the streets, on public transport, in schools, and in other community spaces (Sandoval Moja & Carvallo Gallardo, 2019; Stromquist, & Sanyal, 2013).

Protest strategy during this period included massive marches with take-overs and occupations of higher education institutions. As with the "Penguin movement", the occupations became important spaces for cultural development, creativity, and sharing the political common sense of the times. In the "tomas", students met to deliberate and discuss their situation and discontent, but also planned cultural and educational actions to educate the population as to the importance of ending neoliberalism and its impact on the living conditions of the whole society (Sandoval Moja & Carvallo Gallardo, 2019).

The marches were also multitudinous and took place in different regions of Chile. Within the marches, different cultural manifestations took place. The march was a place of joy, the foretelling of the possibilities of a new society. Students came with their children, parents, and grandparents; multiple generations marched for the idea of a society that would overcome neoliberalism (Figueroa, 2012). During this period the right-wing were in government (2010–2014) but it was very difficult to maintain governability. In the Ministry of Education, three different ministers took turns in less than six months. None of them was able to channel the general discontent of the population (Campos-Martínez & Olavarría, 2020; Palacios-Valladares & Ondetti, 2019).

The aftermath of the mobilizations

President Piñera's conservative government (2010–2014) was unable to address the demands put forward by the waves of student protests, so the protests extended throughout his administration. While there were no gains in this period, there were no major setbacks in areas such as privatization of education and profit-making. But the neoliberal framework remained in place, this time supported again by the so-called centre-left government under Michelle Bachelet (Cornejo et al., 2012; Palacios-Valladares & Ondetti, 2019). The student movement also

underwent transformations; one of the most important ones was the consolidation of a feminist outlook in the organizational structures of the students (Aguilera Morales et al. 2021). The first glimpses of this occurred, one more time, among high school students, when an all-girls' high school protested against the chants made by their peers in an all-boys' high school. Their banners read: "They ask for quality and equality but, when they march, they shout without thinking"[6].

In the universities, gender secretariats slowly came about under the auspices of student federations, but with less than enthusiastic support. These secretariats would be instrumental in what became the third major wave of protests and strikes that affected the country (Aguilera Morales et al., 2021; Campos-Martínez & Olavarría, 2020). The feminist mobilizations of 2018 paralyzed most of the country's campuses under the banner of greater equality, safe and harassment-free campuses, and clear institutional actions to prevent violence and discrimination against women and sexual minorities (Aguilera Morales et al., 2021; Campos-Martínez & Olavarría, 2020). In terms of the internal politics of the universities, it can be said that these mobilizations succeeded in establishing the need for profound transformations; still, the greatest impact they had was to extend feminist ethics and organizational outlook outside the university campuses.

On the other hand, the state was again in the hands of conservative groups, with Sebastián Piñera (2018–present) as president once more. At the educational level, the main task his government set for themselves was to dismantle student organizations, particularly those in high schools (Sisto & Campos-Martínez, In press). A new law was passed to facilitate the expulsion of student leaders. The safe classroom law, Nº 21.128 (a.k.a. Safe classroom law), was used at least 52 times in 2019 to expel, without due process, those students who protested for better learning conditions and equal education (Díaz & Spencer; 2021). Jointly, the conservative governments at the local level relied on the police to unleash repression, even inside the schools themselves. The students had no choice but to look for new creative ways to demonstrate. This is how, in October 2019, a new fare hike in public transportation inspired students to leave their schools and protest in the subway stations. The form of protest was the evasion of fare payment by jumping turnstiles at the stations. The students encouraged the public to do the same under chants such as "evade, don't pay, another way to fight." The government's response came in the form of repression inside the subway stations, which eventually led to a stoppage of service due to the risk to students and drivers. The collapse of the subway led to the collapse of the city, and so, on October 18, 2019, Santiago exploded in a social protest that paralyzed the country

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[6] https://noticiasyanarquia.blogspot.com/2016/05/la-marcha-feminista-del-liceo-de-ninas.html

for several weeks, and which dealt an important blow to neoliberalism (Sisto & Campos-Martínez, In press).

Finally, the students have achieved what they fought for so many years, but, paradoxically, in the process of organizing, their protagonism made them citizens, who, allied with other citizens and diverse generations, joined together in territorial, neighbourhood, and community assemblies to plan for a country we all dream of. The organizational drive followed the groundwork laid down by the 2006 assemblies; the analysis of the consequences of the neoliberal model also rescued the learnings of 2011; and feminism has made an important contribution to the general understanding that neoliberal patriarchal capitalism is not only based on the precariousness of the lives of workers, but also on the profit from and the invisibility of care work, in other words, of those conditions that ensure the reproduction of life and that are often under the sole responsibility of women. The process has now led to the writing of a new constitution by a democratically elected constituent assembly, with results we hope to see soon.

Scenes from the Student Movement in Egypt

Universities in Egypt have historically been known as social movement territories and spaces for resistance against a government that does not allow students' political participation. In the 1970s and 80s, Egypt had more than half a million students in Higher Education. The student unions and the "families" (a small group that created on-campus student engagement around various topics) were the drivers of the student movement at the time. The university administration tried to build obstacles for these forms of collective actions. Students called for improving student welfare on campus and demanded their right to engage in political participation. The government's stance towards these demands and actions was reflected in President Sadat's words at the time: "I am saying that strikes, sit-ins, disruption of studies are forbidden…It shouldn't happen in the universities… The mission of educational institutions is Education. Those who wish to engage in politics should find a political party outside" (Abdalla, 2008, p. 228). This state of affairs did not change in the years that followed.

Neoliberalism and socio-economic grievances

By the end of the 1980s, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) became strong advocates for neoliberal thinking. They began demanding the Global South implement neoliberal policies in exchange for debt refinancing

(Beinin, 2012). Egypt was one of the first countries to implement these neo-liberal policies. Mubarak's economic reform and his neoliberal project required dismantling old systems and establishing a new state. These reforms resulted in both a discontent that catalysed resistance and social movements and discontent that led to building alternative non-formal educational spaces.

Egypt had been under emergency law[7] since Mubarak came to the presidency in 1981, which gave him the right to act without requiring the backing of the supreme court. The law extended Mubarak's presidential powers and centralized the Egyptian political system. Additionally, state security and the ruling party interfered to systematically create obstacles and prevent people from political participation (Dorio, 2016; Mirshak, 2020a). Abuaita, A. (2018, p.39) captures Mubarak's mindset about education in light of neoliberal reforms: "Education is the major pillar for our national security on a broad scale…It is our way to world competition in markets".

In 2002, the ruling party (NDP) announced a new education reform policy as follows:

1. Decentralizing the education reform process and involving the community in decision making.
2. Equipping the universities with the needed infrastructure, whether human or physical.
3. Improving the quality of the faculty and administrators in Higher Education (Kozma, 2005).

Student mobilization before 2011

On the outbreak of the second Palestinian Intifada in 2003, Egypt's historical conflict with Israel led to waves of public mobilizations that had no precedent in the Mubarak era (Joya, 2011). The government did not strongly oppose these protests so as not to look unpatriotic. Egyptians from different backgrounds continued to organize themselves to provide various forms of aid to the Palestinian people. At this point, Egyptians could not overlook the inequalities in their own society, particularly not those students on campuses faced with reform policies failing to bring about change.

In 2004, there was a collective effort to organize a two-fold front: anti-war and anti-neoliberalism, as implemented in the universities. Several student groups from a wide range of ideological backgrounds, including communists, liberals, and Islamists, supported the "Kefaya (translates Enough) movement"

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[7]   The emergency law has been lifted as of October 2021.

(Joya, 2011). The "Kefaya movement" mobilized and organized on the streets, taking political education from textbooks to the ground practice for the first time in decades (Ezzeldeen, 2010). The movement's activities started by organizing mass demonstrations to break the taboo against political participation and to announce the beginning of a new era of resistance (Abdelrahman, 2015). "Kefaya's manifesto" clearly stated its demands for the ending of the emergency law and of the constraints over collective and individual rights and freedom; it also demanded the end of state's control over syndicates and unions; and, finally, it manifested its rejection of Gamal Mubarak's presidency. These demands were extended to university demands for a police-free campus.

Students became aware of the contradiction in this era's educational reform. Mubarak's privatization of universities did not mean letting go of his control on the content offered by these institutions. For example, political education was only allowed, whether in schools or universities, under state control and in a very superficial manner that would not provoke opposition, but build a taboo around political participation (Mirshak, 2020a). The reform expected youth to take responsibility and engage in specific and predefined aspects of the public sphere while being censored from political participation. At that time, it was acceptable to organize a fundraiser or a charity event to help workers who lost their jobs, but it was not allowed to hold a protest in solidarity with those workers (El-Mahdi, 2011). Education reforms came with the mantra that every individual's responsibility is to search for knowledge online to advance their education and equip them with the needed skills to match the labor market demands. These reforms were "well-suited to the neoliberal agenda" (Milana, 2012, p. 111).

The student movement aimed to educate the middle class and the working-class students to create social and political change. It also ensured that its educational activities included marginalized voices such as women. Working with "Kefaya", the movement began workshops and seminars to shed light on Egypt's economic difficulties and give people more political contexts and reasons to mobilize (Ezzeldeen, 2010). At the time, "Kefaya" undertook the unveiling of the government's propaganda about neoliberal economic growth and educational reforms and endeavoured to educate about how these reforms and changes affected the labour market. In 2006, the student movement supported and worked with the "March 9th group" against police intervention on several university campuses and advocated for academic freedom.

In 2010, student activists were an integral part of cycles of protest, which led to the emergence of new modes of mobilizing calling for quality education and economic justice. These organizations succeeded in attracting inactive and apolitical youth, who had not been previously involved in the public sphere,

through educating about civic and public engagement (Ramzy, 2018). They had flexible structures and were highly decentralized and based mainly on electing a steering committee. Moreover, they were "trans-ideological" and included youth from various backgrounds that could reach compromises that enabled them to work together.

Abdelrahman (2015) argued that "Kefaya" represented an umbrella for those movements. However, those movements were rhizomatic in nature as per Evans' (2012) definition, which means they were all non-centred and non-hierarchical. These movements included student organizations[8] such as "youth for change," which organized toward pro-democracy and political participation. The "9 March" Faculty group also emerged on several university campuses against the police and state security intervention and advocated for academic freedom. Each movement had its agenda; however, they still shared the same anti-neoliberal stance and maintained solidarity ties. The student movement pre-2011, depended on: 1) new technologies for communication, such as email groups, social media networks, and blogging, to educate, organize and mobilize people, 2) building non-formal education spaces on campus to educate towards employability and civic participation, and 3) strikes and demonstrations, believing that being present on the streets was an essential tool for building consciousness and contesting state hegemony (Oweidat et al., 2008; Ramzy, 2018).

This era did not witness movements that had a stable institutionalized structure. This was due to the very firm repressive nature of the Egyptian regime, with full control over the economic, political, and social aspects. This setting encouraged movements to become less structured and more flexible to manoeuvre around the tools of repression.

Post Arab Spring

With few openings for mobilization and limited resources, the students survived within very minimal organizing resources. The students' organizing witnessed several changes in terms of structure, and the resistance became a non-formal education space where people learned by doing. It started from socio-economic grievances and extended to the Arab Spring. The role of students and their modes of organizing affected the general population's response to the government of Mubarak. The students were an essential part of the Tahrir Square protests and even of the elections that followed.

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[8] We use the term »student organization« to refer to any student group on campus. These groups could include "families" (Abdalla, 2008), student activities (Ramzy, 2018), student unions, or student political parties.

Between 2011 and 2013, we witnessed an exceptional openness in the political space; many student organizations engaged in different forms of collective action across the country, with various causes and political affiliations. The uprising also led to a boost in the number of operational political parties. Most political parties had student branches in universities. These branches taught about the party's vision and goals or outsourced educators who shared the same vision. In general, the students extended their non-formal education spaces beyond employability skills to indirect and sometimes direct political education (Mirshak, 2020b).

For example, one of the liberal political parties, Misr El Qaweya (translates, Strong Egypt) held several workshops for students in different universities across Egypt. The goal was to educate participants about the different types of elections and the voting process. The January 2011 uprising helped expand the traditional definition of learning and education beyond schools and universities. Informal learning experiences occurred when participants started reflecting on and expanding their educational tools and pedagogy. Student-led organizations started to create educational tools such as board games, or experiences such as retreats and educational camps available to a broad public, preferably for a public that would not otherwise have access to them. The content of these educational tools was mainly related to community participation, redefining citizenship, and political education.

Educating within those student organizations, whether affiliated with parties or not, did witness some shifts post-2011. Previously, the groups engaged in organizing and education adopted the same ways they were taught within the formal education system. This meant replicating the power dynamics and offering corporatized methods of teaching. Before 2011, student organizations used to have a human resources management unit responsible for recruiting and training incoming volunteers. After 2011, some of them changed their practices and adapted language to meet our work's needs and nature. They started to recruit volunteers and encourage members' participation. We stopped using the vertical matrix structure in our work and changed those to horizontal structures. And thus, this reflected on how we were educated. This distinction required addressing political affiliations and navigating ideological representations.

To create spaces for these discussions, we started a series of reading groups and workshops to study sociological and pedagogical aspects of community organizing. We read from Gustave Le Bon to Malek Bennabi, Fanon, and Freire. The students' experiences were part of a larger-scale collective action that did not last long because of the closure of spaces where the educational work took place. Several spaces where students used to gather were closed; and, due to the violence

at that time, sustaining the work in smaller groups in individuals' homes could not last long.

The Puerto Rican Case

Gerónimo-López and Tormos-Aponte (2021) analysed the experience of organizing in the national student strikes of 2005, 2010, and 2017 at the University of Puerto Rico, the island's only public institution of higher education. This section parts from their study to focus on how students reinvented their participation structures and modes of organizing as a result of those strikes.

Student activism has been a recurrent phenomenon in the history of the University of Puerto Rico since 1920 (Negrón, 1976). Different waves have mobilized against the consequences of globalization, neoliberalism, and United States' colonial rule over Puerto Rico over educational policies, such as the Americanization of education, privatization of educational institutions, and tuition hikes. Each context has influenced the students' response with different organizing outcomes in participation structures, articulation of common interests, and educational approach inwards and outwards.

The 2005 strike context

The student strike of 2005 responded to the implementation of neoliberal policies in Puerto Rico (Atiles-Osoria, 2013). The student body held an amalgam of different positions with respect to neoliberal changes. Most students voiced their personal perspectives in the hallways, while others carried forward the narratives of the political organizations and parties they belonged to. The student regular assembly was the place to come up with a unified position regarding an imminent 33% tuition hike. Those in favour, those against it, and those who had no idea what was going on attended the fall student assembly of 2005 seeking to have their concerns heard, or form an opinion based on other students' analysis of the context. Assemblies are an informal place of learning where students can perfect their argumentation, switch perceptions, or get their facts straight about any rumour of a strike or stoppage — a default tactic that increases the uncertainty and exasperation. In the 2005 assembly, student activists and nonactivists considered voting against the motion to strike because they understood that the strike had not been adequately prepared; but, in the end, the strike motion passed because "something had to be done immediately, and they could only think of the strike as the immediate tactic" (Roberto, 2017).

Though the assembly remained as the legitimate participation space, students resorted to the creation of a new body, a committee that would provide organized students greater organizational autonomy when compared to the limited powers granted by the official student council. More importantly, the committee would be agile in communicating with the administration and get back to the assembly for feedback and next steps. Carrying a class struggle analysis that defended the working-class' access to the public university, the members of the *Comité Universitario Contra el Alza* (or University Committee Against Tuition Raise) gained the students' trust and support to carry on. But the procedures were far from ideal in terms of diversity. Students faced the patriarchal, homophobic, and sexist positions from the committee's members, resulting in the withdrawal of support from feminists' groups and the LGBTTQIA+ (Tormos, 2019). Furthermore, the committee skipped crucial democratic deliberation processes and approved unilateral agreements with the administration, without bringing it to the plenary bodies that expected a participatory representation (Gerónimo-López and Tormos-Aponte, 2021). The strike ended after 26 days with the implementation of a yearly phased tuition hike. The relevance of staying organized was put to the test but prevailed (Roberto, 2017). Students kept participating in assemblies over the next academic years, but learned to be vigilant of pseudo participatory alternatives proclaiming autonomy under any representative democracy structure and procedures, student councils, and committees included.

The 2010 strike context

The student strike of 2010 responded to Certification 98, a policy initiative that threatened thousands of students' access to higher education by eliminating tuition exemption for honour students, athletes, work-study program students, and university employees' children (Gerónimo-López & Tormos-Aponte, 2021). In the spring, 3,000 students passed a motion for an immediate 48-hour stoppage, followed by an indefinite strike, unless the university administration dropped Certification 98. The strike started on April 19, when students shut down operations and barricaded the gates. It was the longest strike ever held, lasting 62 days.

Participation structures and procedures changed again. New college-based action committees increased student direct participation; intentionally so, they lacked hierarchical structures, but were loaded with collective accountability. According to Tormos-Aponte (2020), this form of student agency attracted students unaffiliated to political organizations, giving them an opportunity to engage with aspects of mobilization for the first time. Common interests were articulated at

a national level, with 11 campuses advocating for free and quality public education, and emphasizing public investment, multisectoral participation of university community, and the relaxation of admission standards to grant access to marginalized populations (Gerónimo-López & Tormos-Aponte, 2021). During the many nights that students camped at the gates, they discussed the institution's academic offerings, teaching methods, and pedagogy. They questioned formal education, but also the informal and non-formal learning opportunities of the strike. Students strengthened their critical thinking, conceived outreach educational efforts, and ran a community radio station from scratch (Reyes, 2021). The strike turned into a school and the encampment at the gates operated as outdoor non-traditional classrooms for open lectures, workshops and capacity building sessions run by students, alumni, and allied staff and faculty. Conflicts became learning opportunities as well, grappled with during night-long interactions which impacted the students' non-formal political education during the strike and had long lasting repercussions in further organizing experiences.

The 2017 strike context

The implementation of Law 114th by the United States Congress created the Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico (PROMESA). Puerto Rico's colonial status opened the door for this type of neoliberal structural adjustment program which ensures the collection of the national debt, accrued by the national hegemonic political establishment and their respective elites along with corporate interests, and expedites procedures for infrastructure projects under the pretence of combating the Puerto Rican debt crisis; this, at the expense of social welfare, education budgets, and workers' rights. At the time of its implementation, the student movement had already more than 5,000 active members marching in the streets under the banner of the newly constituted National Student Confederation.

In April 2017, the student assembly approved an indefinite strike (Meléndez, 2017). Participation structures and positions changed once again; high school students from two public schools joined the mobilizations and it became common for Black and queer organizers to be elected as movement speakers. Diversity also influenced the articulation of common interests; students forefronted a gender perspective education discussion in their assembly agenda. Several issues, such as the lack of inclusive language, gender violence, and sexism inside the movement, were highlighted in educational efforts to better address internal disputes. The "pleno" (plenary), a relatively new structure for direct participation

before and after assemblies, approved the creation of the Activism Committee to develop educational efforts inwards and outwards. The committee's methodology followed Popular Education and connected what was happening in the university with the colonial and capitalist national context (Gerónimo-López & Tormos-Aponte, 2021).

The designed experiences allowed student activists to question their leadership practices and how they affected student direct participation. Also, students challenged their outreach messianic approaches, or the notion of "carrying a message to the masses", with open intergenerational dialogues with communities in which they valued and critiqued public higher education. This process was no longer unidirectional (from students to supporters and communities) but reciprocal; these learning experiences influenced organizing ideas and helped students to envision a Student Federation and a multisectoral congress against austerity. Learning and non-formal education were at the core of these newly attained goals.

Strikes as places of learning

The strike of 2005 affected the student movement's perception on how to sustain a movement, the relevance of movement diversity, and the risks of delegating direct participation to representative democracy types of structures. Students carried the lessons into the strike of 2010, when they generated new participation structures, processes, articulated common interests more diversely, and into 2017 when they addressed internal disputes with an emergent educational approach that helped students to organize and mobilize more coherently.

Mobilizations are an opportunity to learn something (Almeida, 2019; Choudry, 2015; De Sousa, 2020; Foley, 1999; Paulo Freire & Faundez, 2013; Mündel & Shugurensky, 2008; Peery, 2002). Informal learning and non-formal education efforts come to life in the heat of these tensions; ignoring such opportunities leads student movements to reinvent the wheel at every opportunity to mobilize. For Picó (1982) one of the most lasting results of the student movement in Puerto Rico was the alternative political educational experience.

From an adult education perspective there is a relationship between social movement learning and social transformations (Bierema, 2010), where action and reflection, conscientization and transformation are two inseparable processes (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Students aimed to challenge hegemonic meanings and practices, and identify, celebrate, criticize, and build democratic cultures (Foley, 1999) through popular education. Learning and doing popular education proved to be challenging. For example, the concept of conscientization would be

used to describe what happened at the gates and with outreach education. Yet, it was often confused as strategic persuasion. Though conscientization is an essential objective of social movement mobilization, popular education and workers union organizing (Carpenter & Mojab, 2017) are helpful to disconnect from an instrumental notion that co-opts real opportunities for dialogue, methodological reflection, self-determined mobilization, and movement sustainability. When structured without being scripted, dialogues can disrupt banking education and orthodox modes of organizing to foster critical participatory democracy. Welcoming intuition, emotion, pleasure, love, and joy, and other necessary wisdoms (Freire & Shor, 2014) enriches dialogue beyond Cartesian mind/body divisions. Some of the student educational activities of 2010 and 2017 pursued just that, and how it affected systemic and relational structures was the lesson most of those activists carried forward to places and communities they are working in today.

Discussion

The purpose of comparing the experiences of Puerto Rico, Chile, and Egypt was to highlight their commonalities and prioritize the attention given to social movement learning. The student movements of the 2000s and 2010s in Chile, Egypt, and Puerto Rico started as reactions to the economic grievances produced by neoliberalism. In the three cases, student uprisings extended beyond campuses, gained support, and incorporated marginalized populations and lower and middle-class students. In general, all the uprisings in this comparative analysis were relatively peaceful and faced police violence and brutality as well as resistance from the elites and their governments. The Chilean, Egyptian, and Puerto Rican student movements claimed to be "leaderless" and non-partisan at different points. Moreover, they were sometimes proclaimed to be spontaneous movements. However, in all of them, organizing efforts were ongoing in student organizations and political grassroots organizations for more than a decade before the uprisings.

Learning to carve out new spaces for resistance

In these three experiences of student uprisings, students were continuously faced with institutional pressure and sometimes state violence. This setting encouraged the students to question existing participation structures. Additionally, collective self-directed learning helped them move away from traditional protesting and carve out the spaces needed to enact less hierarchical modes of organizing. The

"tomas" in Chile, "student activities" in Egypt, and "plenos" in Puerto Rico were different forms of organizing adopted by the movements to respond faster and manoeuvre around state repression. In Chile, there were also calls to evade paying fares in the subway stations and calling other citizens to join in to protest the fare surge. In Egypt, students utilized social media platforms, including Facebook and WordPress, to expand their influence and political action methods.

Additionally, in all three cases, the students challenged hierarchical ways of organizing among themselves. They moved from adopting vertical matrix hierarchies and roles to horizontal structures. In Puerto Rico, the movements replaced student council structures with student committees that opened room for better decision-making and diversity inside the movements. In doing so, the students faced challenges promoting diversity and equality inside their movements. In Chile and Puerto Rico, the uprisings seeded meaningful opportunities to question sexist and political participation quotas. In Puerto Rico, the students had to challenge racism and gender heteronormativity.

Extending influence beyond campus

Given the above evidence, and despite the limited resources and the repressive political climate, the movements reached out beyond the educational institutions and into the communities, and from the local demands to be part of the country-wide debates. In Chile, the marches were multigenerational, and the movement encouraged parents and event grandparents to participate. In Egypt and Puerto Rico, students and youth who did not have any previous experience with organizing or community engagement came to join the movements for the first time. This allowed the movements' influence to extend beyond the local demands of improving education quality and tuition fees to anti-neoliberal and nationwide democratic needs. In Chile and Egypt, movements went so far as to include demands for their governments to resign and, in Chile to demand and achieve the drafting of a new *carta magna*.

Emerging of subaltern pedagogies

From each resistance movement, subaltern pedagogies emerged to transit such challenges and frame their outreach efforts in more dialogical ways with other sectors of society that supported and joined the movements. The students implemented their new pedagogies outside the universities. For example, in Puerto

Rico the students started educating at the gates and at the barricades of the strikes, offering a non-formal school for their peers and supporters. In Chile and in Egypt, the students used training to educate in the streets and on public transportation. Peers educating and transferring experience to one another was another approach for building consciousness and contesting the administration. The students used these tools of collective self-directedness and hands-on education to educate about their movements and the need to bring on change. Additionally, the Chilean students used cultural activities to educate about the repercussions of neoliberalism on society.

In the three movements, students learned to allow for emergent spaces where previously invisible actors could set the educational agenda. And they also learned from their previous participation to refrain from engaging in activities that entailed superficial political participation and would possibly distract them from the real work that could be done. When the state closed spaces or built barricades around strikes, the students learned to find ways to engage people from different ages, affiliations, and locations, in discussions around their shared socio-economic grievances.

Conclusion

This study examined the self-directed learning taking place in three different sites of student resistance movements. Although local, these struggles share many commonalities. Returning to Santos (2006), we can say that each movement is a local expression of resistance and all three pose alternatives to the global phenomenon of neoliberalism. By highlighting both their local specificities and their commonalities we are, as Santos suggests, "reglobalizing [them] as a counter-hegemonic globalization" (p. 26) to the neoliberal policies each movement resisted and continues to resist. Moreover, what stands out to us as adult educators in these movements is the way in which people, via their involvement, learn to develop and practice ways of being and educating outside of the individualism at the heart of neoliberalism. In other words, there is a collective self-directedness — a social andragogical practice — evident in these movements as they question prevailing formal educational practices and even long-standing hierarchical social movement organizational relations. By conducting this research, our hope is that the rich, dynamic, and democratic collective self-directive pedagogies we detail in these movements cease to be absences and become possible futures for educators.

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Komparativna studija obrazovanja omladine i odraslih u kontekstu tri društvena pokreta

Apstrakt: U ovom članku ćemo predstaviti rezultate komparativne studije učenja i obrazovanja u savremenim studentskim pokretima u Čileu, Egiptu i Portoriku, koji su nastali kao reakcija na nezadovoljstvo neoliberalnom ekonomijom. Ova studija primenjuje andragošku perspektivu u analizi tih pokreta, koji su primeri kolektivne samousmerene pedagoške prakse koju primenjuju ti pokreti i koja se primenjuje u okviru tih pokreta. Po

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uzoru na Santosov (2006) pojam sociologije odsustva i „nastanka", u ovoj studiji primenjujemo analizu autoetnografskih i sekundarnih podataka kako bismo skrenuli pažnju na alternative učenju koje počivaju u društvenim pokretima. Uprkos različitim kontekstima svakog od tih pokreta, smatramo da se odlikuju brojnim sličnostima u organizaciji i podučavanju u sklopu reakcije na globalni neoliberalizam.

Ključne reči: učenje u okviru društvenih pokreta, komparativno obrazovanje odraslih, Čile, Egipat, Portoriko, andragogija, neoliberalizam.