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*Why Women Protest*TIPPING, TIMING,
AND FRAMING

The socialist government of President Salvador Allende (1970–3) and the military government of General Augusto Pinochet (1973–90) represented two of the most divisive periods in the recent history of Chile. These two regimes differed in almost every respect. The Allende government attempted to pave a “peaceful road to socialism,” implementing Marxist reforms within a democratic framework. Allende nationalized industries, accelerated the process of agrarian reform, and incorporated peasants and workers into the political system on a massive scale. When the military took power in a coup in 1973, the Pinochet regime put a decisive end to Chile’s experiment with socialism, not only undoing Allende’s reforms but implementing a new order altogether. Pinochet’s efforts to reconstruct the country extended far beyond replacing civilian leaders with military officials. He opened the economy to the free market and built Chile’s political institutions to establish order and stability. A fierce campaign of repression limited the expression of public opposition to these policies.

Despite the stark differences between these two regimes, they shared an important, even remarkable feature in a patriarchal culture such as Chile’s: the mobilization of women. In both of these tumultuous periods, women mobilized to bring down the government in power and demanded a role in the new political order. The anti-Allende women organized the famous “March of the Empty Pots” and pressured the military to heed women’s call for intervention. During the Pinochet regime, women organized around the slogan “Democracy in the Country and in the Home,” punctuating the pro-democracy movement with demands for human rights, economic justice, and women’s equality.

To be sure, the two cases of mobilization differed in fundamental ways. Activists mobilized in very different political contexts and espoused

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radically distinct interests. The anti-Allende women protested against a democratically elected government and supported a military coup, while the anti-Pinochet women mobilized in the midst of a repressive military dictatorship and sought to restore democratic rule. These movements represent two opposing sides of a deep and enduring conflict in Chilean politics, one that centers on the legacies of the Allende government and the military regime. In one version of Chile's history, the Allende government epitomized the triumph of the Chilean *pueblo* over the bourgeoisie, and the military government represented a fascist dictatorship that systematically violated the basic human rights of its own citizens. This view characterizes the women who organized the March of the Empty Pots as the shrill harpies of the upper class, who complained about food shortages while hoarding goods and making profits on the black market. According to the other view of Chilean history, the Allende government unleashed a period of chaos, violence, and Marxist arrogance that threatened to destroy the entire nation, while the military government restored order, established economic prosperity, and vanquished the enemy in an internal war against subversion. From this vantage point, the women who protested against Pinochet emerge as communists in Gramscian disguise.¹

Given these differences, drawing comparisons between these two movements may not seem appropriate; it may even be anathema to those who sympathize with one movement over the other. Yet striking similarities between them warrant explanation. The two closely resembled one another in terms of the timing of women's protest and the way in which women framed their demands. In each case, women mobilized amid a context of partisan realignment, as the political parties of the opposition formed a new coalition against the regime in power. Women perceived moments of realignment as uniquely gendered opportunities. Women framed their mobilization in terms of their status as political outsiders, in response to what they perceived as men's characteristic inability to overcome narrow partisan concerns. The groups that predominated within each movement argued that women "do politics" differently from men. Activists maintained that women possess a unique ability to transcend con-

¹ Chilean conservatives appear to have read quite a bit of Gramsci. Many of the conservative women I interviewed for this project described Gramscian theory as the current embodiment of the Marxist threat. As one woman explained to me, "It is another way of getting to Marxism, but by way of education. . . . People are calmer now, that the [Berlin] wall has fallen and Communism destroyed itself, but – watch out! (*Ojo!*) – even some of Aylwin's ministers are declared Gramscians" (Maturana 1993).

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flict and forge unity within a male-dominated political order. Women organized across party lines in the hopes of setting an example for male politicians, who had been unable to coordinate their actions against the government. Both movements sought to forward the concerns of women in the context of more general demands for regime change. At the same time, women in both movements lobbied for the incorporation of their own issues and concerns on partisan agendas, with varying degrees of success.

Why did these two conditions – partisan realignment and gendered framing – lead to the emergence of mass mobilization among women? The decision of female political entrepreneurs to frame their actions in terms of women's status as political outsiders resonated within a broad spectrum of women, activists and nonactivists alike. Even women actively engaged in partisan politics framed their participation in these terms. Framing women's demands in terms of women's status as political outsiders allowed diverse groups to coalesce in a movement. Claims about the nonpartisan status of women distinguished them from numerous other movements active at the time (e.g., among workers, students, and peasants) and brought women to the forefront of the opposition struggle in each case.

The timing and framing of women's demands also appealed to male politicians. At periods of realignment, politicians try to portray their actions as a response to the will of the people, rather than as a bold effort to gain political power. Women's protests provided a way for male party leaders to recast their goals in credibly nonpartisan terms, as a response to the concerns expressed by female activists. This explains why male politicians acknowledged the emergence of women's mobilization and encouraged its development.

The parallels between these two “most different” cases raise important questions about women's mobilization more generally. Why do women protest? Under what conditions do women protest as women, on the basis of their gender identity? What prompts female political entrepreneurs to perceive certain situations in gendered terms? In what context will decisions made by a diverse array of women coalesce into a collective response, thus sparking the formation of a movement?

By raising these questions in the context of the two Chilean movements, I am focusing on points of similarity across women's movements rather than differences among them. To that extent, this book diverges significantly from most studies of women's movements, for which acknowledgment of the diversity of interests that women's movements represent has

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proven fundamentally important. Studies of women's movements show that women have mobilized in diverse political environments. Recent research has emphasized national and regional differences across women's organizing (Nelson and Chowdhury 1994; Basu 1995; Marsh 1996; Threlfall 1996; Buckley, M. 1997; Buckley, S. 1997; Chatty and Rabo 1997; Kaplan 1997; Stephen 1997; Jaquette and Wolchik 1998; Rodríguez 1998; Bystydziński and Sekhon 1999; Sperling 1999; Young 1999), as well as transnational mobilization among women (Rupp 1997; Alvarez, Dagnino et al. 1998; Clark 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998). Women have mobilized within diverse political contexts, including stable democracies (Katzenstein and Mueller 1987; Black 1989; Gelb 1989; Bashevkin 1998), revolutions (Tétreault 1994; Gilmartin 1995), nationalist movements (Ackelsberg 1991; Kaplan 1992; West 1997), fascism (Koonz 1987; De Grazia 1992), and transitions to democracy (Alvarez 1990; Jelín 1991; Feijoo 1994; Jaquette 1994; Friedman 2000) as well as around a diverse set of substantive interests, from suffrage (Hahner 1990; Lavrín 1995; Banaszak 1996; Marilley 1997; Marshall 1997; Terborg-Penn 1998) to peace (Kaplan 1997) to economic justice (West and Blumberg 1990). Even the term *feminist movement* encompasses tremendous diversity. Recent studies affirm that feminist movements come in various forms – liberal; radical; socialist; African-American; Chicana; Latina; lesbian; third-world; multicultural; nationalist; indigenous; pan-Asian; or first-, second-, or third-wave (Jayawardena 1986; Mohanty, Russo et al. 1991; Cohen, Jones et al. 1997). As Sonia Alvarez (1990: 23) observes,

When one considers that women span all social classes, ethnicities, religions, nationalities, political ideologies and so on, then an infinite array of interests could be construed as women's interests. Gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexual preference and other social characteristics determine women's social positioning and shape women's interests.

In the effort to highlight difference, however, scholars have neglected the question of what women's movements have in common. A focus on diversity across and within women's movements provides little leverage on the question of why women mobilize as *women*. This book argues that all women's movements share the decision to mobilize as women, on the basis of what I maintain are widely held norms about female identity. These norms constitute a set of understandings that reflect women's widespread exclusion from political power. At certain historical moments, women have bridged myriad differences among them to stage mass demonstrations that

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have set in motion profound transformations both in women's lives and within the political system overall. If women represent so many different interests, then what prompts them to mobilize on the basis of a shared identity that allows them to transcend those differences? Under what conditions are women likely to protest as women?

This book forwards a general theoretical framework to address these questions. I explain why women protest in terms of three theoretical concepts: tipping, timing, and framing. I rely on the concept of tipping to identify the dependent variable in this study, which I define as the point at which diverse organizations converge to form a women's movement. Tipping, a cascade of mobilization among women, is the main object of study. Timing and framing constitute the main independent variables in this study. I argue that two conditions must be in place in order for widespread mobilization to emerge among women: partisan realignment, understood as the formation of new coalitions among political parties, and women's decision to frame realignment in terms of widely held cultural norms about gender difference. At moments of realignment among political elites, women have mobilized around the idea that the male political elites care more about preserving their power than addressing pressing substantive issues.

Tipping

This study focuses on the precise point at which social movements coalesce as movements. I aim to identify the moment when diverse groups and individuals join together under a common rubric to challenge the status quo. Scholars of social movements have long recognized the importance of particular protests that change the course of future events in profound ways – the civil-rights march on Selma, the first protest of the Berkeley Free Speech movement, and the student protests at Tienanmen Square, for example. Yet people tend to talk about such protests in somewhat metaphysical terms. Numerous firsthand accounts of protests such as these attest to the existence of transcendental moments in the evolution of protest, or a point during which everything seems possible and after which “nothing remains the same.” These “moments of madness,” as Aristide Zolberg (1972) calls them, mark the point at which disparate organizations and individuals converge to forge a common identity and to confront a common opponent. Such moments catalyze the formation of a social movement. As I shall show, the conditions that shape a movement's

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emergence also constrain its evolution and outcomes in significant, although not determinant, ways.

The tipping model describes movement emergence in analytically tractable terms. Mobilization among women emerges as the result of a tipping process in which participation in protest activities starts out small, builds gradually as more people become involved, and then suddenly reaches a critical mass of momentum. A tip occurs when political entrepreneurs frame the need for mobilization in terms that resonate with an array of people, at a particular point in time.

In a tipping model, the probability that any given individual will participate depends on the likelihood that a person thinks others will participate (Schelling 1978). Whether individual actions reach a critical mass and tip or cascade toward a collective outcome, in other words, depends on a particular individual's perceptions of what others appear ready to do. A tip occurs when a sufficiently large number of people believe that other people will also participate. In the strongest case, a tip will occur when people come to believe that their participation becomes necessary or even required (Chong 1991; Laitin 1998). Tips occur as the result of individual decisions made by activists and members of the general population about whether or not to participate in a protest. The tipping model explains mobilization in terms of how people respond to each other, rather than how they respond to selective incentives, or some kind of material benefit. Whether someone participates does not hinge on thinking "what do I get out of it?" but "what will you think of me if I don't participate?" In other words, your decision to participate in an act of protest hinges on your beliefs about what others are likely to do.

The tipping model thus points to cognition and perception as the triggers that set off the process of mobilization. An appeal to common knowledge or widely held cultural norms often sets the tipping process in motion. Movement entrepreneurs can draw upon these norms in a variety of contexts (Taylor 1987; Chai 1997; Laitin 1998; Petersen 2001). *Cultural norms*, defined as sets of common beliefs and practices in a particular society, can provide the kinds of focal points that trigger collective action. Mobilizing as women entails framing activism in terms of readily understood cultural norms about female behavior.

Yet entrepreneurs cannot expect to issue a call to women any old time and expect tens of thousands to take to the streets. A rhetorical appeal will trigger a collective response only under certain conditions. My approach focuses on the macroconditions under which tipping is likely to occur, and

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thus differs from studies that employ the tipping model to explain the microfoundations of protest, that is, to illustrate the process by which individual decisions are coordinated into collective outcomes (Chong 1991; Lohmann 1994; Parikh and Cameron 1999). My study explains the conditions that set off mobilizational cascades among women in particular and identifies the conditions that activate this process, or cause it to be “switched on,” to use Jon Elster’s terminology (Elster 1989). I argue that two conditions – timing and framing – evoke a desire to participate, and evince participation from a particular group of people, setting the tipping process in motion.

Timing

The timing of women’s mobilization can be explained in terms of partisan realignment. Women’s movements emerge in response to a realignment, understood here as the formation of new coalitions among political parties. Political scientists have tended to define partisan realignment as enduring shifts in partisan attachments *within the electorate* (Sundquist 1983; Gates 1987; Kawato 1987; Hurley 1991; Nardulli 1995; for a review see Brady, Ferejohn et al. 2000). Yet defining realignment in terms of voting behavior need not be the only way to identify realignment. I define *realignment* as fundamental changes in the issues that political parties represent, similar to the approach followed by Robert Rohrschneider (1993). In multiparty political systems, the formation of a new coalition among political parties also constitutes a realignment. New coalitions indicate evidence of a realignment even in cases (such as Chile) where voting behavior for particular political parties remains fairly stable over time (but see Valenzuela and Scully 1997). In addition, most studies assert that realignments must be long-lasting in order to count as legitimate realignments, rather than temporary blips in voting behavior. I would argue that the temporal dimension of this definition is unnecessary. A long-term pattern may be appropriate for stable democracies such as the United States, but realignments have occurred with far greater frequency in Latin American countries. The short duration of cleavage patterns in Latin America should not mean that they are any less significant.

At moments of realignment, political parties establish a new political agenda. They also cast about for new bases of popular support and seek to legitimate their actions in the public eye. To do so, they often seek to portray their new alliance as representing national interests over sectarian

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ones. This strategy often involves masking partisan interests in appeals to unity, nonpartisanship, and the spirit of cooperation – precisely the characteristics commonly associated with cultural norms about women. Political elites frequently look to women as a quintessentially “neutral” constituency to lend legitimacy to the new coalition. In many cases, women do not represent the only organized groups mobilizing at these moments; other groups may be trying to gain concessions from political leaders at the same time. Nonetheless, women’s appeal to their status as political outsiders makes them a particularly desirable constituency for parties negotiating the terms of alliance with one another. Gender cuts across all other political cleavages and enhances the degree to which a coalition can be seen as representing national rather than narrow, partisan interests. Thus, partisan realignment provides a political opportunity that is uniquely propitious for the mobilization of women.

This focus on realignment as a necessary condition for the emergence of women’s movements links claims within the literature on social movements to predictions about elite behavior drawn from the literature on political institutions. Social movement scholars concur that movements rise and fall in part in response to changes within the political arena, known as changes in political opportunities (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Kitschelt 1986; Gelb 1989; Costain 1992; Tarrow 1994; Hipsher 1997). The political opportunities approach points, correctly so, to the state as the central interlocutor of collective action in many cases. Recent scholarship has sought to narrow the concept of political opportunities in order to increase the possibilities for generating predictions about future outcomes (McAdam, Tarrow et al. 1996). Tarrow (1994: 86), for example, focuses specifically on realignment as a key variable. My approach builds on this perspective by not only identifying what political opportunities are relevant, but explaining when we might expect them to emerge.

The approach I have described uses the insights of the literature on political institutions to explain when political opportunities emerge and to explain *why* certain conditions are more favorable for protest than others. The formal rules of political engagement shape the incentives of political actors and define the points at which elites become vulnerable to challenges issued by activists. Divisions among political elites arise somewhat predictably as a consequence of the rules that structure their behavior. An institutional explanation can identify when a political system is ripe for realignment.

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Institutional arrangements are sets of rules, both formal and informal, that structure social interactions in predictable ways (Knight 1992). Formal political institutions such as constitutions, laws, and electoral systems shape the range of possible outcomes in a given situation. Institutions facilitate coordination among political actors because they shape people's expectations about the future in ways that people can anticipate, by providing a common frame of reference. The "establishment of clear mutual expectations" makes institutions binding, even when they generate outcomes that run counter to the interests of those who abide by them (Carey 2000: 13, see also Levi 1988; Hardin 1989; North 1990). Recent literature on political institutions has focused primarily on the actions of presumably rational elites who pursue their interests within the formal political arena, particularly the courts, legislatures, and the executive branch (for a review of this literature see Carey 2000). Some recent work examines how formal institutions structure strategic interaction among voters (Cox 1997; Harvey 1998; Lyne 2000). My study extends this research by determining how the design of formal political institutions affects decisions made by groups within civil society.

The Chilean Institutional Context

In the past, the institutional design of the Chilean political system created (regular) opportunities for "outsider" appeals by those who criticized the extent to which negotiations for power within a particular coalition prevented the parties from uniting around national interests. Prior to the 1973 coup, Chile was governed by a moderately strong presidential system characterized by two contradictory tendencies. The formal rules that structured engagement among political elites led them in two conflicting directions. On the one hand, the electoral system for congressional elections fostered the development of strong, ideologically distinct parties, rather than "catchall" parties that encompassed a broad spectrum of issues. On the other hand, the political system required the parties to form coalitions with one another in order to win control of the powerful executive branch. For presidential elections, institutional rules favored the formation of broad cross-partisan coalitions (Valenzuela 1978; Linz and Valenzuela 1994). Realignment in this kind of environment sometimes proved to be a tricky business, as it occasionally required parties to enter into coalitions with those who previously had been sworn enemies. These

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contradictory tendencies required parties to engage in competition on two fronts simultaneously: to enhance their own base of support in order to establish dominance within a particular coalition and to elicit support for the coalition as a whole in order to beat their opponents. This feature made the Chilean parties persistently vulnerable to realignment.

As I discuss in the chapters that follow, women's movements formed at three precise moments over the course of the twentieth century: the women's suffrage movement (1935), the anti-Allende women's movement (1971), and the anti-Pinochet women's movement (1983). The formation of these movements corresponds with major realignments among the political parties of the opposition: the formation of the Popular Front, an alliance of center-left parties (1935); the formation of the Democratic Confederation (CODE), an alliance of center-right parties (1971); and the Democratic Alliance (AD), a coalition of center-left parties (1983).² The parallels among these instances in terms of timing provides suggestive evidence for a correlation between the emergence of women's movements and partisan realignment. But an important question remains: why did women perceive these institutional moments in gendered terms?

Framing

It is not enough to identify the conditions under which protest occurs, even if we can anticipate those conditions with some precision. The third component of my argument explains why women *perceive* these conditions as opportunities, why they perceive them *in gendered terms*, and why they perceive these conditions as *requiring them to take action*. Social movement scholars refer to this as cultural framing (Snow and Benford 1988; Snow 1992; McAdam, McCarthy et al. 1996). Rational-choice theorists would argue that women's movements engage in what William Riker termed *heresthetics*, the rhetorical restructuring of political situations in ways that change the possible outcomes (Riker 1986; Riker, Calvert et al. 1996). The term *heresthetic* remains obscure, but Riker (1986: ix) provides a straightforward definition:

² The Democratic Alliance (Alianza Democrática) formed the basis of what would later become the Coalition of Parties for Democracy (Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia), the coalition that would defeat the pro-military candidate in the 1989 presidential elections and has controlled the executive branch in three consecutive administrations since then.