Handbook on the Politics of Higher Education
Section 7: Higher Education, the State, and Civil Society

Student Politics: Between Representation and Activism*

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Abstract: This chapter reviews and offers directions for future research on student politics in higher education in different parts of the world. The concept of student politics refers to the activities related to the power relations between students and other social actors in and out the higher education systems; more specifically, it pertains to the relationships between students and university authorities, as well as the interactions between students and state officials. In analyzing the various forms of student politics, we draw the distinction between representation and activism, as two distinct yet interrelated activities. The first pertains to students organizing into representative student associations, such as student governments, graduate student employee unions, party-affiliated student organizations, or other student interest groups. Activism, on the other hand, denotes practices of student collective action through various forms of political engagement, whereby students act in support of or in opposition to a specific cause and/or hold the authority accountable. The analysis is guided by questions on how the various forms of student politics emerge and how they develop their organizational characteristics and their respective strategic repertoires.

Keywords: student politics; student representation; student activism; student governments; graduate student unions; party-affiliated student organizations; student political behavior; college students

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INTRODUCTION

Scholars in political science, political sociology, and the sociology of higher education have investigated the different dimensions of student politics for more than half a century (Weinberg and Walker 1969, Altbach and Lipset 1969, Braungart 1971, Zhao 1998, McFarland 2001, Fisher 2012, Weiss et al. 2012, Milkman 2017). Looking at the "collective action by university students directed toward (and often against) the ruling regime" (Weiss et al. 2012: 2), social scientists have analyzed both the predictors (Braungart 1971, Fisher 2012) and consequences of student activism (McAdam 1990). Yet, emphasizing the multi-faceted dimensions of student politics (Altbach 1991, Fisher 2012), researchers have increasingly focused on specific dimensions, issues, and strategies—thereby losing sight of a more comprehensive theoretical framework for the study of student politics. In fact, efforts have been sparse to advance theoretical explanations of what student politics entails, how it has evolved over time, and how it is shaped by the varying higher educational and political contexts (Luescher-Mamashela 2015).

This chapter attempts to address this lacuna by presenting a theoretical framework for the study of student politics—understood as the students' political activities associated with the governance of the student body and its influence on both the higher education institution and society to which they belong. In doing so, it distinguishes between two distinct yet interrelated forms of student politics: representation and activism.[1] Through representation, students work through the formal representational structures (such as having a seat in the university governing body or membership in the National Higher Education Council) to influence the decisions made both on and off campus. In fact, the typical strategies of representation involve participation in

[1] This distinction is similar to the designations used by other scholars, such as the institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of student politics (Weinberg and Walker 1969), or ordinary and extra-ordinary student politics (Pabian and Minksová, 2011). Yet, we argue that representation and activism mostly express the two main forms of students political organizing and collective political action.

"board politics": attending and contributing to meetings of governing bodies, task forces and similar bodies, as well as the activities around lobbying and issue advocacy (Klemenčič 2012). As such, student are considered legitimate participants in the decision-making processes on issues that ultimately affect students. They are also asked to contribute to the implementation of agreed decisions on campus. Essentially, representation as a form of student politics presupposes simultaneous existence of two conditions: first, that student representative or other student interest associations exist; and second, that formal channels of representation and interest intermediation are instituted.

In contrast, activism engages in claim-makings outside of formal decision structures. In most of the older literature, activism has been associated with contentious politics and non-institutionalized forms of claim-making, such as protests, boycotts, campaigns (Barnes and Kaase 1979). In contemporary conceptions of activism, however, this includes any collective political action to bring about political and social change (Fisher 2012). Hence, political activities of student interest groups, student governments, even volunteering in public service may now be referred to as legitimate forms of activism as well.

There are several distinctions, besides the somewhat anachronistic demarcation between conventional and unconventional forms of participation (Fisher 2012), that can be drawn while analyzing student activism. First, we distinguish between the collective and individual aspects of student activism. For this purpose, students are considered a distinct, and far from homogeneous, social group of individuals enrolled in higher education institution. Second, we distinguish between organized student movements and one-off acts or events of student activism. As opposed to a one-off student protest, student movements are characterized by durable efforts of employing protest by informal networks comprising individual students from student groups,

which came to form a collective identity, i.e. have a sense of shared issues and will to act collectively for a common cause (Polletta and Jasper 2001, Porta and Diani 2006, Edwards 2014). Third, we differentiate violent and nonviolent forms of activism: while most of student activism starts non-violent,[2] student activism can and sometimes does turn to violence (Broadhurst and Martin 2014).[3]

In this chapter, we review the scholarship on student politics, or the study of the power relations between students and other social actors in and out the higher education systems; more specifically, we consider the relationships and interactions both within student organizations and across students, university authorities, and state officials. First, the chapter introduces the various theoretical frameworks used in the studies of student politics, focusing in particular on the literature on social movements and youth political attitudes and behavior.[4] Second, it presents a review of various research on representative and interest student associations: student governments, graduate student employee unions, and youth branches of political parties (also referred to as the party-affiliated student organizations). Then, we consider student activism based on the different venues where the movement takes place: 1) physical student movements on and off campus and 2) online student activism. The analysis is guided by questions of how these forms of student politics navigate the different contexts of higher education systems and

[2] For a comprehensive list of nonviolent action strategies, see Sharp (1973)—a classic reference on this topic.
[3] We acknowledge that it might be impossible to draw an exact boundary line between representation and activism. In fact, representative student associations and student interest groups can and often do resort to activism when the formal channels of interest intermediation fail. Activists groups also work through processes of student elections and try to address student grievances through formal channels of student representation. This explains why, in contemporary conceptions of activism, student representation could be considered one aspect of activism. Yet, for purposes of analytical clarity, we treat these two as different sides of the same coin.
[4] As they encompass the interactions between these different types of actors, studies of student politics can be considered not only as a distinct area of the politics of higher education, but also part of the literature on social movements as well as national and transnational politics.

political regimes, and how they develop their organizational characteristics and strategic repertoires.

THEORIZING STUDENT POLITICS

The Early Scholarship on Student Politics

Research on student politics emerged and proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s with the rise of student movements across the world (e.g. McAdam 1986, McAdam 1990, De Groot 1998). Challenging the structural functionalist theories, the scholarship on activism rather focused on the power struggles among different groups in society. The studies on student politics followed and also influenced this trend while building on the works of Altbach (on Japanese students [1963], international student movement [1964], student protests in Europe [1968a] and also student politics in India [1968b]) and Lipset (on students and politics in developing countries [1964] or industrialized nations [Lipset and Wolin 1965]). Lipset and Altbach collaborated on several publications on student politics, perhaps most notably *Students in Revolt* (1969), which offers comparative account of students and politics across world regions. While Lipset ended his research on student politics in the 1970s, Altbach continued to investigate this issue in both the American and international contexts throughout most of his career.[5]

The early scholarship on student activism focused on two aspects of student politics: 1) The link between student politics and the coordination of higher education by the state, the market, and the university—whereby students as political actors engage with issues specific to higher education both at the institutional and national levels; and 2) students' political involvement within the broader political system. Looking at the development of student activism,

[5] While Altbach mostly focuses on student protests, he also looks at the role played by representative student associations in student politics (Altbach 1974, 1989, 1990).

Altbach (1992) and Lipset (1964) drew a distinction between the political developments and characteristics of political regimes of industrialized nations as well as those of the developing countries. Meyer and Rubinson (1972) rather emphasized that it is the social definition of students as a group, both symbolically and structurally, that determines students' political activity. Weinberg and Walker (1969) explained student politics through 1) the government's control of higher education funding and institutional structures, and 2) the career pathways between student politics and national political parties.

Examining the characteristics of politically engaged students, on the other hand, scholars have talked about the biographical availability of students (McAdam 1986; Altbach 1989, 1991), the high concentration of students in small geographic spaces (Altbach 1991; Weiss et al 2012), the density of social networks (Altbach 2006; Weiss et al. 2012), and the promotion of critical thought in higher education environments as especially suited to student political organizing (Altbach 1991). Altbach (1991: 252-253) suggested that politically-engaged students tend to come from: i) upper middle class, urban families with educated and liberal parents, ii) minority groups, or iii) social sciences, humanities, and mathematics concentrations (rather than professional fields). Yet, the scholarship that followed Altbach continues to investigate the socio-demographics of politically engaged students (see Fisher 2012 for more details).

While most of studies of student politics are time- and space-specific, scholars have tried to conduct more comparative research, taking into account the international diffusion of ideas and practices, as well as different forms of transnational collaboration (e.g. student representation and activism in Africa [Luescher et al. 2015; Luescher et al. 2016], student activism in Asia [Weiss et al. 2012], student activism in Latin America [Levy 1991, Guzman-Concha 2017], student representation in Europe [Klemenčič 2012]). While comparative research

on this topic poses clear challenges, such as the process of data collection, it seems that the rise of social media and other forms of communication among students calls for more extensive research that take on a comparative lens.

The Applications of Organizational Theories and Theories of social movements

Student politics has also been studied through the lens of organizational or social movement theories.[6] Drawing on organizational theories, Zuo and Ratsoy (1999), Boland (2005), Menon (2005), Lizzio and Wilson (2009), Pabian and Minksová (2011), Luescher-Mamashela (2010, 2013) and others have focused on the formal powers of representation students have in university governing bodies. Other research have problematized the characteristics, changes, and impacts of higher education governance arrangements on student governments and student representation[7] (Jungblut and Weber 2012, Stensaker and Michelsen 2012, Day 2012, Brooks et al 2015), including the influence of governance arrangements within the intergovernmental institutions such as the European Union and the European Higher Education Area (Klemenčič 2012). In doing so, scholars have been concerned with structures and political processes within representative student associations. For instance, they have looked at questions of resource dependencies (Luescher-Mamashela 2010, Klemenčič 2012), and autonomy and legitimacy of student representative and interest associations (Boland 2005. Lizzio and Wilson 2009, Day 2012, Jungblut and Weber 2012, Stensaker and Michelsen 2012, Klemenčič 2014).

The scholarship on social movements, including the political opportunity/political process approach (e.g. McAdam 1999, Kurzman 1996), the resource mobilization theory (e.g.

[6] Interest group research which would also been relevant to study of student associations tends to focus on business interest associations, trade unions, and environmental groups and so on. Yet, we did not find interest group research that includes student associations.
[7] Governance refers to the political processes, structures and relations, both formal and informal, through which decisions are made (Kjaer 2004).

McCarthy and Zald 1977), the idea of framing and narratives (e.g. Snow and Benford 2000, Ferree 2003), the perspectives of social movements as collective identities (e.g. Polletta and Jasper 2001), and the theories of diffusion (e.g. Given et al. 2010), have also informed the studies of student politics, In fact, scholars of student politics have applied social movement theories in student activism in different contexts: Drawing on the social movement theory on political opportunities, Bégin-Caouette and Jones (2014) have looked at how the political structure influenced Quebec students' protest choices during the 'Maple Spring' movement (see also Fidler 2012, Stromquist and Sanyal 2012). Bellei and colleagues (2014) have focused on students' resource mobilization during the Chilean student protests (Bellei et al. 2014). Mobilizing the idea of framing and narratives, Guzman-Concha (2012) has questioned whether the Chilean movement was an occupy-type protest or a more traditional form of social movement. Giroux (2013), on the other hand, has focused on the various perspectives of social movements as collective identities, and Rojas (2006) has applied a diffusion theory to investigate the spread of protests for African-American Studies in the United States.

While exploring these different dimensions, scholars have also accounted for large-scale societal trends and their potential impact on student activism, such as the rise of neoliberalism or the commercialization of higher education. The neoliberal agenda combined with financial austerity in higher education bring about new distributional conflicts which in turn elicit reappearance of students as political actors (Cini and Guzmán-Concha 2017). The commercialization of higher education has pushed students to focus students' attention to finding employment or to pay for mounting tuition fees already while studying (Weiss et al. 2012). Weiss and colleagues (2012: 17) have also argued that the increase in numbers of students are

now stripping students of an elite social status: "the status and potential of students as a strategic political group often declines, ironically, precisely as their numbers increase."

Keeping these previous studies in mind, we argue that research on student politics offers ample opportunities for cross-fertilization of organizational theories with social movement theories: To be perceived as legitimate representatives of student interests, student governments often need to resort to mobilization strategies that are used by student movements. In fact, institutional changes in student governments can be explained through various aspects of social movement theory, such as tactics employed by change proponents and the diffusion of strategies (Rojas 2006) and the social skills (Fligstein 2001) needed for mobilization. For instance, studies of student governments could well benefit from blending institutional theories based on resource dependency, logics of action, and cultural influences (Klemenčič 2012, 2014) with social movement theories that account for conflict and contestations as an important part of organizational dynamic (Weber and King 2014). Given the increasing diversity of student body and student experiences, issues such as collective student identity, framing, informal mobilization, and networks are of increasing importance to student associations as well.

The Expansions of the Theories on Youth Political Participation

Highlighting the importance to bridge the literature on activism and that on electoral politics, Dana Fisher (2012) has identified the three main themes found in the literature on youth political participation, especially in the context of the United States: 1) pathways to participation (McFarland and Thomas 2006, O'Donoghue and Strobel 2007, Dalton 2008, Fisher and McInerney 2012), 2) the role of gender (Verba et al. 1995, Verba et al. 1997, Burns et al. 2001, Gordon 2008, Booth-Tobin and Han 2010) and race (Sullivan 1996, Hart and Atkins 2002, Ginwright 2007, Sherrod et al. 2010), and 3) the use of information and communication

technologies (Franzen 2000, Bennett et al. 2008, Winograd and Hais 2008, McAdam and Tarrow 2010, Wang and Wellman 2010, Earl et al. 2010, Garcia-Castanon et al 2011). The rich literature on student activism across the world, not only in the United States, but also in Europe (e.g. De Groot 1998), Latin America (Levy 1991), and Asia (e.g. Weiss et al. 2012) could also be classified in these three analytical clusters that Fisher (2012) has identified.

First, scholars have looked at the different pathways taken by the young voters who become engaged in politics (Verba and Nie 1972, Verba et al. 1995, McFarland and Thomas 2006). As Fisher has summarized, "research finds that young people who come from families with higher level of socioeconomic status tend to talk about politics more regularly, vote more frequently, and [are] more generally engaged" (Fisher 2012: 122). Researchers have also investigated the role that voluntary associations and social movement organizations play in citizens' long-term engagement (McFarland and Thomas 2006). Time, but also space, has become an important aspect of students' involvement of political participation. De Groot (1998), on the other hand, has taken us back to the international student movements in the 1960s by looking at protests in not only the United States, but also France, Germany, Britain, and Mexico.

Second, social scientists have tried to understand the role that gender plays at different levels of political involvement (Verba et al. 1997, Burns et al. 2001, Booth-Tobin and Han 2010). Some have argued that women are "less political" by stating that "females of all ages are less likely to engage in most institutionalized political and civic activities" (Verba et al. 1997, Burns et al. 2001). Looking at the case of student mobilization in May 1968 in Mexico, Carey (2005) has showed how young Mexican students challenged gender norms. More recently, Booth-Tobin and Han (2010) have found that young women were less likely to consider themselves as political actors via study of female members of the College Democrats in the

Boston area. Disagreeing with such stances, researchers like Schussman and Soule have argued that there is "no significant effect of gender on propensity to protest" (Schussman and Soule 2005: 1089). In the same vein, sociologists have questioned whether racial minority youth are less likely to take part in different civic activities (Sullivan 1996; Hart & Atkins 2002, Sherrod 2003, Zukin et al. 2006), and called for a reassessment of the previous findings in light of the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The third and last cluster of research that Fisher brought up was the one related to the use of information technologies. With the rise of the "technology tsunami" (e.g., Winograd and Hais 2008), scholars have tried to assess the impact of these tools on institutional and non-institutional forms of political participation (Bennett et al. 2008, Earl et al. 2010). While García-Castañon and colleagues (2011) have found that an online participation in politics increases one's level of participation offline, the discussions on this topic does not seem to have caught up with the inflow of new forms of social media and emerging platforms that shake the way people communicate these days. Although the Internet is not restricted to national boundaries, it would be interesting to further investigate how students' political attitudes and behaviors are affected differently in different countries around the world.

Although all these different streams of research conducted to enhance our understanding of youth political attitudes and behavior, and in particular those of college students, there remain a number of blind spots that scholars have not systematically investigated. For instance, social scientists have yet to analyze the role of students in the emerging populist movements across the globe, seen during the rise of the extremist right parties in France and other European countries, or its impact on the higher education system. While a few studies have considered the relationship between age and support for populism (Elchardus and Spruyt 2016), no substantive

study has been conducted on the role that college students play in those movements. What role, if any, did the students play in the emerging populist movements in both European and American contexts, and in other parts of the word? Is Elchardus and Spruyt's (2016) conclusion regarding the non-existent effect of age on the level of support for populism actually portable in different contexts or should we expect to see a different outcome elsewhere? These questions call for further investigations. Focusing on the political socialization that students go through via their political engagement on and off campus would be a great place to start.

REPRESENTATION: STUDENT GOVERNMENTS, STUDENT UNIONS, AND PARTY-AFFILIATED STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Representation rests on the notions of participatory democracy. In the context of universities, participatory democracy is manifested through shared governance arrangements that enable all key stakeholders, including students, to have a say in university decision processes. The principles of shared governance are perhaps most strongly upheld in European higher education institutions (Klemenčič 2012), but are also observed in public higher education institutions in other parts of the world (Klemenčič 2014). In the context of national or supranational public policy processes, students communicate their interests to public authorities via representative student associations, political parties, trade unions or other interest groups. Stakeholder participation here is justified here more through resource dependency: "political resources are dispersed over several public and private actors, thus forcing a government or university leaders to include these actors in decision-making in the interest of effective policy formulation, legitimization of adopted policy, and accountability" (Klemenčič 2014: 398-399). As they are directly affected by higher education policies, student representatives request to be

considered an internal constituency or vital stakeholder that participate in higher education governance (Klemenčič 2012, 2014).

Two conditions must be present for representation to emerge in student politics: First, students must be able to organize into representative and interest associations. These associations display certain organizational stability and continuity which comes from 1) the formalization of governance arrangements by recording the rules and procedures in statutory documents; and 2) the institutionalization of these arrangements through the establishment of common institutions, such as an executive board or a presidency or secretariat. These associations include representative student associations, such as student governments, graduate student employee unions, party-affiliated organizations, and other student interest groups.

Students associate in a wide variety of interest groups or community group that hold political agendas. For example, the associations of first generation students are established primarily to offer support and build community to first generation students. Yet, they can also hold a political agenda and act collectively by joining a student movement or putting forward candidates to stand in student elections. Student identity, religious, ethnic, cultural, etc. groups too can play a role in student politics, even if their involvement may be fragmented and influence limited. Student representative and interest associations are distinctly different from student movements since they perform specific functions at the level of interest representation and have existing relational structures to the various authorities (Della Porta and Diani 2006).

Second, representation as a form of student politics presupposes the existence of some formal structures or processes through which student representatives funnel student interests into policy processes be that at the level of higher education institutions or in state public policy processes. These structures can either be defined in higher education legislation or decided

within the context of individual higher education institutions, or even within national or international higher education polities (Klemenčič 2012; 2015).

Student Governments

The most recognizable and widespread form of institutionalized student organizing are student representative associations whose primary aim is to represent and defend the interests of the entire student body (Klemenčič 2012: 2; 2014: 396). Student governments—and variations thereof as student unions, councils, parliaments, board, guilds, etc.—are distinct forms of organizational bureaucracy specific to higher education governance. They operate as quasi-'governments' as they present a system of rules and norms by which the student body is organized (Klemenčič 2014). In fact, they are political in that they aggregate collective student interests and funnel these to institutional and public authorities. Frequently, they are also professional and service organizations as they provide academic and welfare support services to students, and manage student facilities, and sometimes even business operations (such as travel agencies, publishing houses, clubs and restaurants).

There are significant differences between the level of formalization, institutionalization (i.e. bureaucratization), and professionalization of student representative associations. National student governments, for example, can have two distinct organizational models: interest-group and student-movement organization (Klemenčič 2012, 2014). Student associations as interest groups have professionally-organized structures and use lobbying, expert services, and political advocacy as their mode of political action. In contrast, social movement organizations tend to be more network-like with weak organizational resources, active participation in one or several social movements, and inclination towards contentious politics and protests as a form of claim-making. The state can recognize student associations' role in higher education governance by

involving highly formalized and institutionalized student governments in public policy processes, both formally and informally (Klemenčič 2012, 2014).

The few studies on representative student associations have focused in particular on the organizational characteristics of these highly institutionalized student governments (Stensaker and Michelsen 2012, Day 2012, Jungblut and Weber 2012, Parejo and Lorente 2012). They seek to determine how they balance between what Schmitter and Streeck (1999) call the 'logic of influence' and 'logic of membership' and consequently how political opportunities and resource (inter)dependencies define their organizational characteristics and political agenda. Most of them believe that student governments possess and can supply important resources: professional expertise, legitimization of policy outcomes, social control of their members, and services valued by the authority (Klemenčič 2012). Authorities in turn provide funding and other material or symbolic resources. They also define the relational structures through which student governments can formally and informally represent their interests. These interactions inevitably take place within a particular 'structure,' either the university setting or the political system, with a set of formal and informal rules, norms and values, which can both constrain and enable behavior of student associations (Thelen and Mahoney 2010). The state can (and often does) regulate the terms of the relationship between student governments and their home institutions, as well as the structures and processes through which student governments represent student interests in institutional decision-making (Klemenčič 2012).

Graduate Student Unions

Given its distinct status and the responsibilities that graduate students hold in higher education, graduate student unionization is a separate form of student organization. In the

European context, graduate students tend to form representative associations of doctoral candidates and junior researchers. In many countries in Europe, Africa, and Latin America, doctoral candidates are employed by their universities and their rights and obligations are therefore defended also by the traditional higher education teachers' unions. In the European higher education system, associations of doctoral students tend to serve more as interest groups than a collective bargaining unit, and are therefore, often less contentious.

On the contrary, in the United States, graduate student unionization is one of the most contentious issues in contemporary higher education (Julius and Gumport 2003). In the US context, graduate student unions often operate as labor unions in that they represent students who are enrolled as graduate students, but receive remuneration from universities for teaching, research or administrative services. Some of these unions are affiliated to industrial unions, such as the United Auto Workers or the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

Graduate student unionization in the U.S. has grown significantly after the 1990s because of a combination of several factors (Julius and Gumport 2003): the emergence of faculty unionization, the expansion in graduate student enrollments, and favorable labor laws. Others see it as a response to growing corporatization of universities, which results in worsening work and study conditions for graduate students (Rhoads and Rhoades 2005, Singh et al. 2006, Dixon et al. 2008). Such situation points to potentially adversarial relations between students and administration implying the inherent conflicts of interest in the labor-management relations. As Rhoades and Rhoads (2003) suggest that graduate student unionization has frequently been assisted by the leaders of the labor unions. Focusing graduate student activism, the research on graduate student unionization has been grounded in theories of power structures and critical postmodern identity politics (Rhoades and Rhoads 2003). In fact, Dixon, Tope, and Dyke (2008)

have anchored their research on graduate student unions within the context of U.S. labor movements and focus more specifically on activism, including membership campaigns and demonstrations.

Most the graduate student unions have been institutionalized at public universities in states where labor laws stipulate the unionization of academic student employees. In 2016, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled that student assistants at private universities also have the right to organize unions. This ruling has prompted highly contentious debates in private universities revolving around the questions concerning 1) the implications of unionization on the relations between faculty and students, and 2) the potential threat to the freedom of academic institutions over educational policies which are now subject to collective bargaining. Several notable studies on graduate student unionization have fed into these debates.

Comparing survey responses of represented and unrepresented graduate student employees, Rogers, Eaton and Voos (2013) have shown that unionization does not have the presumed negative effect on student learning outcomes. On the contrary, it has positive outcomes: higher levels of personal and professional support and better pay.[8] This study has complemented the one by Hewitt (2000) who surveyed faculty at liberal arts and sciences colleges and shows that faculty members did not perceive graduate unionization as detrimental to educational processes, as depicted through mentoring, advising and instructional relationships. In fact, according to Hewitt (2000: 153), faculty "do not have negative attitudes towards graduate students' unionization." Furthermore, Julius and Gumport (2003) have interviewed college administrators and graduate union representatives as well as analyzed graduate student union

[8] Furthermore, unionized and nonunionized students reported similar perceptions of academic freedom (Rogers et al. 2013).

collective bargaining agreements. They found no evidence that unionization would undermine pedagogical processes.

In sum, research on graduate student unionization has revolved around the perspectives of organizational conditions of university reforms, the legal conditions underpinning unionization, as well as the effects it has on graduate students and the educational processes inherent to higher education context. This research has focused exclusively on public higher education institutions as the spread of the graduate student unionization at private colleges and universities remains unclear.

Party-Affiliated Student Organizations

Not only have unions played an important role in student politics, but party-affiliated political organizations also hold a particular position in the political arena of different college campuses around the world. Yet, the role of these organizations in student politics differ significantly across institutions and countries. In many countries of Africa, Europe and Latin American, these organizations are formal branches of political parties, which tend to participate in student elections; elsewhere, including the United States, they act as autonomous student organizations that promote different causes along party lines. In the former case, party-affiliated student organizations obtain financial and other resources from political parties.; not in the latter.[9] In both cases, preserving the autonomy of student governments from political party influence or government interference can sometimes be a challenge (Luescher-Mamashela and Mugume 2014). Yet, most organizations strive to maintain their autonomy, especially as the

[9] Party-affiliated student factions get seats in the representative student bodies, which are typically organized according to a parliamentary system. Student government organizations (executive councils or similar executive bodies) are then constituted with the factions that get the majority of the votes. Upon graduation, members of these student groups also get recruited from political parties.

student governments that are not autonomous are often not perceived as legitimate in the eyes of the student body—which consequently weakens the entire system of student representation of which they are an integral part.

Party-affiliated groups in the United States demonstrate distinct characteristics: originally founded to promote the party's agenda among young voters by recruiting college students, the student branches of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, respectively referred to as the College Democrats and the College Republicans, work independently by coming up with their own action-items—prioritized differently depending on whether it is an election year or not. During election years, their primary activities revolve around campaigning and canvassing for the candidates they support. During non-election years, on the other hand, they usually focus on issue-advocacy, community service of different kinds, phone-banks and Lobby Days—on which they will go to the State House to meet their local representatives to promote their support for specific bills. In this case, the local chapters are not directly funded by the party. In fact, they are financially supported by private donors or through the official recognition and funding process of student organizations on their respective campus. They are only loosely affiliated to the regional and national organizations and do not receive any type of concrete support.

Despite the long-lasting legacy of these organizations and the role they have played in socializing prominent political figures, research on student politics through the lens of party-affiliated student groups has been rather sparse (with a few exceptions, such as Booth-Tobin and Han 2010 and Luescher-Mamashela and Mugume 2014). Several questions remain unanswered: we have yet to see how the representation of students in political party branches helps or hinders the consolidation of democratic political regimes, understand how the political party involvement in representative student associations affects the democratic structures and decision processes in

these organizations, or even assess what is the relative importance of political parties (as opposed to that of student movements) for student representation of interests.

ACTIVISM: ON CAMPUS AND ONLINE

Alongside representation stands activism. Here, activism refers to practices of student collective action through different forms of political engagement both on and off-campus, or in online environments, whereby students act in support of or in opposition to a specific cause or hold the authority accountable for their words and actions. As a distinct social group that can mobilize to collective action, college students have progressively developed a collective political identity. As suggested by Weiss et al. (2014: 7), students' political potency is "in part a function of self-identification and mobilization, but these dimensions are tied intrinsically to the shape of higher education, regime dynamics, the scope and nature of the rest of civil society, and socioeconomic development."

Keeping in mind the volatile nature of political mobilization (Altbach 1991), and the fact that the higher education and political contexts change over time, we identify four categories of students on campus: 1) those who mobilize and join students groups, often driven by a sense of shared collective identity; 2) those who mobilize but join non-student groups, as they are spurred by identification with some other collective identity rather than that of being a student; 3) those who engage politically only individually, and 4) those who do not engage politically neither individually nor collectively.[10] Those who are politically engaged participate in politics through three main venues: through on- and off- campus activities and online activism.

[10] We have amended the three categories of students suggested by Weiss et al. (2012) by adding the category of students who engage politically only individually and not collectively.

On- and Off- Campus Activism

Speaking of the biographical availability of students (McAdam 1986, Milkman 2017), scholars have highlighted that being a student is particularly conducive to activism: in fact, the university is “a particularly favourable environment for the development of organizations and movements among students” (Altbach 1992: 1741). The intellectual environment of universities encourages independent and critical thinking (Altbach 1992) as well as political awareness. Student campus groups are encouraged and supported by the university’s administration as they help cultivate a vibrant student life. Students tend to reside on campus or in close proximity to campus; there is a high concentration of students in the physical space of university campuses or university towns (Weiss et al. 2014). Furthermore, students are relatively free from work and family obligations (Weiss et al. 2014), albeit the number of students who work while studying has been on the rise.

Yet, not all students engage in political activities, and even less in more radical forms of activism. In the classic typology of student subcultures, Clark and Trow (1966) describe students in the nonconformist culture as those who tend to have oppositional views of the university administration and political establishments. More recently, Grigsby (2009: 96) describes “alternative students” as those “with lifestyle interests or concerns that are the center of their identity work and guide their use of time in college.” These students are “interested in college primarily to support them in pursuit of their main interest, but identify and prefer to interact with others who are detached from mainstream campus life” (*ibid.*).

Research on campus activism has revolved around analyses of causes of activism (Heineman 2001) and the intensity of its occurrences (Loeb 1994). Causes of activism have ranged from broad societal and political issues to local university issues. In the United States in

particular, contemporary student activism has been linked to questions of campus diversity and the feelings of inclusion of minority groups (Rhoads 1998). Students mobilize for student welfare issues, opposing the increase of tuition fees, and promoting better living conditions. The neoliberal reforms in higher education across many countries and austerity measures in public spending for higher education have provoked a surge of student protests in the last decade (Cini and Guzmán-Concha 2017, Klemenčič 2014). Activism has been enacted by leftist student groups (Rhoads 1998) as well as conservative student organizations (Munson 2010, Binder and Wood 2013).

There has been raising controversy around methods used by student activists; in particular, the effectiveness of disruptive methods, such as disrupting educational processes and violent actions, such as vandalism, physical violence (Broadhurst and Martin 2014). While student protests before the 1960s were initially analyzed as cases of deviant behavior (Lipset and Altbach 1967), contemporary investigations on student activism rather focus on the benefits of student activism on student learning in the context of education for democratic citizenship (e.g. Bickford and Reynolds 2002, Biddix et al. 2009). In this line of research, student activism tends to be defined more broadly as any collective action towards social change, which includes representation and public service (Broadhurst and Martin 2014). The enabling conditions for student activism thus include universities' support for social justice groups, service-learning and public service organizations, or other associations that promote specific—and possibly more moderate—types of student activism on campus (Broadhurst and Martin 2014).

In the contemporary conceptions of student activism, the boundaries between activists, student representatives, and students volunteering in public service, can be blurred as they all share their intrinsic motivations to contribute to public good and acts beyond their self-interest.

What is specific to activists is the view that society consists of power hierarchies in which elites have structural ways to keep power, and in which inequalities are built into the system. Universities are seen as part of the larger system of such power hierarchies and are also tainted by power inequalities. Student activist may, and often do, hold adversary positions towards their home universities and the leadership of these universities. Student volunteers and elected student representatives may have similar concerns of societal inequalities, but unlike the activists, they are willing to work within the existing societal structures, rather than necessarily overturn these. They too are more willing to accept and cooperate with the university administrators and to contribute to collective goals set for the university.

Online Activism

Stepping out of campus boundaries, the widespread use of the Internet and the rise of social media, such as Facebook or Twitter (Bosch 2015) has drastically changed the ways in which students mobilize. Given the impact that online activism has had on offline activism, scholars have started to pay closer attention to the different forms of online activism: As explained by Neal Caren and colleagues (2012),

> Prior research on online activism has focused on four major topics: the relationship between online and offline activism (Earl et al. 2010; Raynes-Goldie and Walker 2008), the mediating role of the Internet in bridging the public and the private (Bimber et al 2005, Boyd 2010); and the role of cyberactivism in specific movements (Carty and Onyett 2006, McCaughey and Ayers 2003); as well as how it may change forms of collective action (Bimber et al, 2005, Postmes and Brunsting 2001) (Caren et al. 2012: 166).

Applying these themes to the study of student politics in particular, it is possible to focus more specifically on 1) the role that the Internet and social media plays in mobilizing students both on and off campus, and 2) the impact it has on students' offline activism.

Assessing the role that the World Wide Web and the various forms of social media, scholars have demonstrated that the Internet has provided a new and inexpensive way to communicate and share political ideas (Fisher 1998, Heaney et al. 2010). As exemplified in the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election and its unprecedented mobilization of young voters, the web has contributed to a more substantive mobilization of students both on and off campus. In fact, "[t]he [Obama] campaign brought in $500 million through online donations from more than 3 million people, it collected the email addresses of 13 million supporters, it sent text messages to more than 1 million people" (Fisher 2012: 129).

Refining the investigation of increased levels of mobilization with the rise of online activism, Fisher and Boekkooi (2010) have examined people's propensity to participation in a protest by comparing people who are mobilized online and those who are mobilized by their social networks. Their analysis of people's recruitments for a day of action has demonstrated that "the participants who heard about the event through all channels of mediated communication—including the Internet—were much more likely to come to the event alone than those who heard about it through their social networks" (Fisher and Boekkooi 2010: 193). As such, scholars have investigated the impact of online activism on offline mobilizations: for instance, in their study of the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election, García-Castañon and his colleagues (2011) conclude that online activism leads to increased activism offline, among the young and minority voters.

Despite these recent findings on the role of the Internet in mobilizing young voters, social scientists have yet to study how the Internet and social media affect students' mobilization within the campus boundaries more specifically. While Luescher and colleagues (2016) have recently focused on campus-based movements, it is now yet known what impact online activism has on offline activism on school campuses—a place where offline protests and mobilizations have been

more vibrant than in other places due to its specificities regarding proximity and accessibility. Investigating the impact of social media on both representation and activist forms of political participation on college campuses would indeed be an interesting venue for future research. Perhaps the method of digital ethnography which is newly applied to collect data on student experiences in higher education (Klemenčič et al. 2017), could also serve towards better understanding of students' political behavior and activism.

CONCLUSION

Despite the proliferation of publications on student politics since the 1960s, the scholarship on this topic is definitely not void of blind spots. This chapter sought to highlight them by putting together separate strands of research on student representation and activism. Given that higher education systems are becoming more complex and the student body more diverse, scholars would mostly benefit from more rigorous analyses of university culture, as highlighted by Binder and Wood (2013). Investigations of the role of emotions, students' sense of inclusion, as well as the emergence of different forms of collective identity and its impact on students' short term and long-term political behavior would be valuable addition to the existing scholarship. One ought to remember that participation in student politics is not only about enacting university citizenship (Klemenčič 2015), but also about cultivating habits of engaged citizenship in democratic societies.

Another possible line of investigation is to identify the different mechanisms through which student movements influence higher education institutions (Weber and King 2014). Several possibilities exist: one could look at the ways student collective action directly influences organizational changes within a higher education institution (via student protest or other tactics to pressure the university administration); others could examine the indirect

pathways through which student movements influence the higher education policies (for instance, student movements could bring about change in the university culture by prompting change of sentiments among prospective students or parents). Additionally, scholars would find value in investigating the organizational changes in universities that can be influenced by cooperative politics via student representation.

With the strengthening of quality assurance and accreditation bodies across the world, we are now witnessing a reordering of traditional forms of governance in higher education: breaking away from the regulatory frameworks of the state actors, new rules and novel forms of monitoring activities are being developed (Klemenčič 2015; Klemenčič *forthcoming*). In fact, quality assurance and accreditation agencies are challenging the role of the state actors who have for long held the monopoly for "rule-setting" in higher education. Now these agencies act as "standards-setters" and accreditors (i.e. certifiers) with a significant influence on higher education regulation (Klemenčič and Galan *forthcoming*). Given these unprecedented circumstances, researchers ought to investigate the ways in which way students, as higher education stakeholders, engage with the newly emerging quality assurance and accreditation bodies. In doing so, they could even go beyond the study of representation and activism, and study how student use their consumer-power to influence university decisions.

Finally, massive student protests around the world call for international comparative research on the causes of such contentious reactions by students, the dynamics of these protests and their consequences. Several of these protests have been linked to the neoliberal reforms of higher education (e.g. for Chile see Bellei, Cabalin, and Víctor Orellana 2014, for Chile and England see Cini and Guzmán-Concha 2017, for Quebec see Bégin – Caouette and Jones 2014, for South Africa see Luescher 2016). The question remains of how the changes in higher

education impact the relations between students and their higher education institutions, and shape student political behavior. Withdrawal of public funding for higher education and corporatization of universities present one important trend. Other changes are under way due to the gradual, but notable emergence of alternative higher education providers. In fact, alternative modes of higher education delivery are now unraveling the traditional models of higher education provision and the relations amongst students, teachers, and administrators.

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