

Why Chile “Woke Up.” Antecedents of the Formation of Prochange Group Consciousness Promoting Collective Action

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In October 2019, student protests in Chile quickly expanded into a mobilization of more than three million citizens, who protested for nearly a year and successfully brought about sociopolitical change. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the social-psychological processes behind the Chile despertó, we analyze the protests using the group-consciousness model. The model assumes that collective action is fuelled by a sense of belonging to a group formed around the unifying idea of sociopolitical change through a new constitution, anger at the current status quo, and a belief that protesters can work together to effect the desired change. Data from over 700 Chileans collected in May 2020 indicate that (1) group consciousness is an important construct related to participation in collection action, (2) the main predictors of the group consciousness of Chile despertó are perceived social inequality and unfairness of authorities, and (3) family support and left-wing ideology are positively related to participation in collection action, which are partially mediated by group consciousness. Thus, the current study highlights unique factors that contributed to the Chile despertó and highlights the commonalities of key social-psychological processes in collective action.

KEY WORDS: Chile despertó, collective action, group consciousness, protest behavior, social change, social inequality

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Beginning in mid-October 2019, local student protests against a metro fare price hike in the Chilean capital of Santiago quickly expanded into a nation-wide movement, known as the *Chile despertó* (“Chile woke up”). While there have been recent Latin American challenges to the status quo (e.g., Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela), in Chile nearly three million people mobilized in just 14 days to protest for systemic change. This demand for change included replacing the Pinochet-era constitution with a new supreme law targeting social and economic inequalities (e.g., Gonzalez & Le Foulon Morán, 2020; Somma et al., 2021). Despite repeated attempts by officials to stop the mass protests, they persisted for 12 months until the successful 2020 Chilean referendum. What propelled so many Chileans to come together as a united force to fight for sociopolitical change?

Distinctively from other attempts to understand the social-psychological causes behind it (e.g., Castro-Abril et al., 2021; Gerber et al., 2021; Pozzi et al., 2022), we apply the group consciousness model (Duncan, 2012; Thomas et al., 2022) to examine what lead to this heterogeneous crowd supporting the *Chile despertó*. By situating our measurements and analysis in Chile in 2019–20, the current study examines explanations of collective action in a particular sociohistorical context. We identify and test a mediation model to uncover appraisals of the sociopolitical situation and ideological beliefs that reinforce the development of a sense of “we-ness” associated with participation in the protests.

The Chile Despertó

As suggested by collective-action researchers (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; Uluğ et al., 2022), we contextualize by integrating a description of socioeconomic and political processes in Chile. We rely on expert reports to understand public sentiments that preceded the 2019–20 protests, as well as empirical analyses that were published before June 2022. First, we outline a brief overview of the events associated with the emergence, culmination, and conclusion of the social protests (see Figure 1).

Since 2009, Chilean students have attracted international attention for various protests on behalf of educational reforms (e.g., Cabalin, 2012; Somma et al., 2021). When students invaded a subway station in October 2019, however, their demands clearly went beyond education. The movement challenged social issues arising from the 1975 (neoliberal) Pinochet reforms, including the pension system and privatization of the electricity, water, and health systems. In addition, protesters advocated for a constitutional recognition of Chile’s indigenous people, equal pay, and protection of the country’s natural resources (e.g., Gonzalez & Le Foulon Morán, 2020; Palacios-Valladares, 2020). On October 19, 2019, more than 1.2 million people gathered in Santiago (nationally around three million, or 15% of the population). Unlike previous Chilean protests, the supporters were mobilized less by organizations and political parties but by social media and private networks (Somma et al., 2021). This allowed a variety of structurally disadvantaged social groups such as indigenous people, women, working-class people, students, and the elderly to advance their interests.

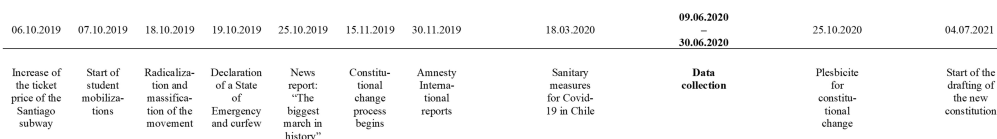


Figure 1. Timetable of major events related to *Chile despertó*.

At the time, the Chilean military dictatorship's (1973–90) constitution was in force, even though democracy was reinstated more than 30 years ago. The old constitution mainly supported the interests of a small economic elite—strengthening the antagonism between the “elites” and “the people” and the idea that Chile needed a radical sociopolitical change (Palacios-Valladares, 2020). A unifying demand of activists was thus a constitutional reform to implement a new supreme law that redresses the social order (Gonzalez & Le Foulon Morán, 2020; Somma et al., 2021).

The movement quickly expanded, and some protestors radicalized engaging in destructive protest actions (Somma et al., 2021). Meanwhile the police began to repel demonstrators with tear gas and other measures with the support of the government. Shortly after, then President Sebastian Piñera Echeñique decreed a state of emergency and curfew in different cities with the armed forces assuming political control in a state of constitutional exception. These forceful responses to protests resulted in 31 civilians killed (four by security forces) and 12,000 people injured with 347 suffering from eye injuries over a few weeks (October 19–November 30, 2019; Amnesty International, 2020).

After a month of protests, an agreement was reached to hold a referendum about drafting a new constitution. This agreement was supported by most political parties, whereas many citizens felt that it was not a solution for their concrete problems—thus, the protests continued (Cuadra, 2020; Mayol, 2020). With the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, President Piñera decreed a “state of catastrophe” throughout the country restricting mass protests severely (Ministerio del Interior y Seguridad Pública, 2020). The pandemic also worsened the financial situation of many Chileans, who were unable to work (Heiss, 2020; Morales Quiroga, 2021). At the referendum in October 2020, Chileans decided they wanted a new constitution (with 78% voting “yes”) and determined the body that would draw it up.

Prochange Group Consciousness of the Chile Despertó

Previous work demonstrated that the emergence of a shared identity of protesters in Chile was associated with collective-action intentions (Pozzi et al., 2022). In accordance with the SIMCA (social identity model of collective action; van Zomeren et al., 2008), collective-action intentions were driven by attitudes against the government as well as by moral outrage and perceived efficacy of the social movement. Moreover, the collective experience of emotions during the gatherings further mobilized the masses (Castro-Abril et al., 2021). These findings indicate that group formation played a crucial role in the mobilization during the *Chile despertó*.

We propose that the emotional reaction to the sociopolitical situation together with a perceived efficacy of the protests and identification with a prochange opinion-based group created a *prochange group consciousness* that fostered collective action in Chile. These three components are known to be crucial for joint action (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2008) and raise individual experiences to a collective level (e.g., Bliuc et al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2016). The group-consciousness model (Duncan, 2012) explains the relation between collective-action antecedents and participation in collective action through mediation via group consciousness, which is a second-order factor consisting of anger, perceived efficacy, and politicized identification. It draws on the three components of the SIMCA model but changes their causal order to examine a broader range of antecedents such as individual differences and life experiences. Based on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), collective experiences allow disadvantaged and privileged group members to become aware of a shared politicized identity centering around shared ideas, feelings, and interests (Duncan, 2012). A politicized identity is a necessary predictor of successful collective action, in which majority group

members support the minority's grievances to promote social change (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Subašić et al., 2008).

An essential element of group consciousness is social identification with a group based on a shared view about how the world should be (see e.g., Bliuc et al., 2007). Such opinion-based groups emerge in the context of salient intergroup comparisons and convey one's stance on contested issues of societal importance (e.g., pro-life/pro-choice, Bliuc et al., 2015; anti/pro refugees, Thomas et al., 2019), or in case of the *Chile despertó*, the antagonism between the favored "elite" and "the people" (Castro-Abril et al., 2021; Somma, 2021).

This antagonism came with the collective emotional experience of anger about the current social policy. Anger is a typical reaction to the experience of being disadvantaged or relatively deprived (Smith et al., 2012), of illegitimate ingroup privileges (Leach et al., 2006), and affective reaction to general injustice perceptions (Thomas et al., 2016) and is, in turn, a crucial determinant of collective action (e.g., Tausch et al., 2011; van Zomeren et al., 2008). The neoliberal policies in Chile produced continuing disadvantages which, in turn, provided a fertile ground for public discontent. Lethally violent attempts to suppress the protests may also have triggered group-based anger and fueled rather than contained collective action (Ayanian et al., 2021; Gerber et al., 2021).

Finally, the quick mobilization of people and acceptance of the governmental agreement to hold the referendum revealed the efficacy of the social movement. This together with the global media coverage emphasized the importance of the movement and its political influence. Following these events, many communities started to hold so-called *cabildos*, public meetings in which they discussed constitutional matters that provide a democratic experience for their participants (Ureta et al., 2021). Together these factors strengthened beliefs that the collective goals of changing the status quo could be achieved in Chile (Pozzi et al., 2022).

The many aims of the *Chile despertó* can be captured by the group-consciousness model: People are mobilized through identification with the supporters of sociopolitical change, anger at the current sociopolitical situation, and the belief in protesters' collective efficacy. This sense of "we-ness" may have shifted certain appraisals and ideologies to a collective level that drove people to come together into mass protests.

Antecedents of Group Consciousness

The analysis of contextual factors allows us to determine which antecedents have fostered group consciousness among supporters of the *Chile despertó*.

Perceived Social Inequality

First, although Chile is one of the few Latin American countries where the actual income inequality—as measured by the Gini index—declined over the period 1997–2017 and perceived injustice of the income distribution had increased over the same period (Hadzi-Vaskov et al., 2021). The reinforcement of neoliberal economic policies contributed to increased living costs in Chile that fostered poverty and precariousness of the middle class (Cuadra, 2020; Palacios-Valladares, 2020). In Chile, people with lower income have less access to pension funds, as well as health and education services, which has also started to threaten the well-being and family progress of upper- and middle-class Chileans (Gonzalez & Le Foulon Morán, 2020; Somma, 2021). Such socioeconomic issues were also major driving forces of previous social protests in Latin America (Somma et al., 2020).

Similarly, grievance-based approaches to collective action (e.g., Gurr, 1970; Simon & Klandermans, 2001) argue that perceived socioeconomic ingroup disadvantages serve as a

major motivation for protest behavior. It leads to the sense of relative deprivation—the feeling of resentment on behalf of one’s ingroup (for an overview, see Kessler & Mummendey, 2001; Smith et al., 2012)—that also forms part of the group consciousness. Moreover, perceptions of social inequalities increase intolerance of the status quo and hostility toward its supporters (e.g., Greitemeyer & Sagioglou, 2017; Sagioglou et al., 2019) and encourage political action against the status quo (e.g., Osborne et al., 2019).

Social Mobility Beliefs

Perceived economic inequality may also lead individuals to realize that societal structures reproduce the unequal access to public goods, hindering mobility between socioeconomic groups (Kuhn, 2019). Social policy in Chile benefited only a small elite and obstructed social mobility between the strata (e.g., Cabalin, 2012). For example, trans-generational data shows low social mobility between lower, middle-class, and upper-class Chileans over the last decades (Jaramillo-Echeverri et al., 2021). The protesters not only criticized the greater opportunities of certain sociopolitical groups but also their corrupt means to maintain their position (Somma et al., 2021).

Lower perceived permeability together with perceived social inequality promote groups to engage in collective action to overturn the status quo (e.g., Mummendey et al., 1999; Sagioglou et al., 2019; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A prominent example is Chile’s segmented education system (the most expensive in the world), which was challenged by earlier mass movements in 2006 and 2011 before the *Chile despertó* (Cabalin, 2012; Donoso & Somma, 2019). Thus, the perceived lack of legitimate opportunities for social mobility may have facilitated the formation of a politicized identity motivating collective action.

Unfairness of Authorities

Some analysts have identified the increasing disconnection between citizens and the political system as a crucial cause of the upheaval in Chile (e.g., Morales Quiroga, 2021; Pozzi et al., 2022). Although recognized as a full democracy (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020), there has been a growing gap between the country’s political system and its citizens: One year before the *Chile despertó*, a national poll revealed that 68% of respondents distrusted authorities and public institutions (COES, 2019), and the institutions received even less support a few weeks after the protests began (Cuadra, 2020).

Moreover, the violent treatment of protesters by authorities in Chile provoked support for conventional collective action, such as demonstrations, and even more for destructive protest action, such as blockades (Gerber et al., 2021). The perceived illegitimacy of institutions (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2008), including the perception that authorities impede democratic expressions (Ayanian et al., 2021), is a key predictor for collective action and supposedly also in the case of the *Chile despertó*.

Family Support

People are more likely to engage in collective action when they regard it as normative (e.g., Smith et al., 2015). In Chile, children who perceive that both parents participate (i.e., descriptive family norm) and approve (i.e., injunctive family norm) collective action are more likely to participate in collective action (Cornejo et al., 2021; González et al., 2021), indicating that family support may play a role in protest behavior in the *Chile despertó*.

Left-Wing Political Ideology

Political ideology (e.g., affinity to the left or right) is important for the formation of politicized identities (Levenson & Miller, 1976) and support for social movements (see González et al., 2022). For instance, certain social-justice concerns, including support for the limitation of corporate power, environmental protection, and gender equality, are typically associated with affinity with left-leaning ideology and predict political behavior aimed to advance these causes (e.g., Jost et al., 2017). In contemporary Chile, the most obvious ideological divide is preference between Liberals (left) and Conservatives (right), with the supporters of the *Chile despertó* leaning toward the political left.

National Identification

The grievances of subgroups cause conflicts within a common frame (e.g., the Chilean nation), where people perceive themselves as deserving better because they belong to a superordinate category (Wenzel et al., 2007). According to McGarty et al. (2014), the bottom-up identity formation of civil-resistance movements typically involves activists' alignment with "positively valued social categories or institutions within the society in which they operate" (p. 730; see also Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). By articulating loyalty to and claiming ownership over shared social categories (e.g., nations) in the contexts of social movements such as the Arab Spring uprisings (e.g., Hancock & Gurung, 2018) or the color revolutions in Ukraine (e.g., Chayinska et al., 2019), activists sought to persuade broader society to support their cause and, thus, assert the legitimacy of their cause for national politics (see also Simon & Klandermans, 2001). The name of the protests and the frequent use of the national flag indicate that a psychological bond with the nation may be involved in engagement in collective action.

The Present Study

We collected data from over 700 Chileans during the *Chile despertó* in May 2020, four months before the referendum took place. The case study was designed to test the proposed prochange group consciousness and its social-psychological antecedents as determinants of collective action. To advance the group-consciousness model (Duncan, 2012), we identified and tested a wide range of antecedents including social and political appraisals as well as family support, national identity, and political ideology to predict collective action. The presented theoretical analysis suggests that the perceptions of social inequality, social-mobility beliefs, and the unfairness of authorities as well as family support are determinants of participation in the *Chile despertó*. Moreover, participants seem to be politically left leaning (opposing the right-wing government) and may show great centrality of and solidarity with their national ingroup. We hypothesized that a latent factor of group consciousness indicated by identification with a prochange opinion-based group, anger about the socioeconomic situation, and collective efficacy beliefs would mediate the paths between appraisals and ideologies and collective action as illustrated in [Figure 2](#).

Method

Participants

The data were collected between June 9 and June 30, 2020, after ethical approval from the Friedrich Schiller University Jena (#FSV 20/011). Recruitment took place via snowball

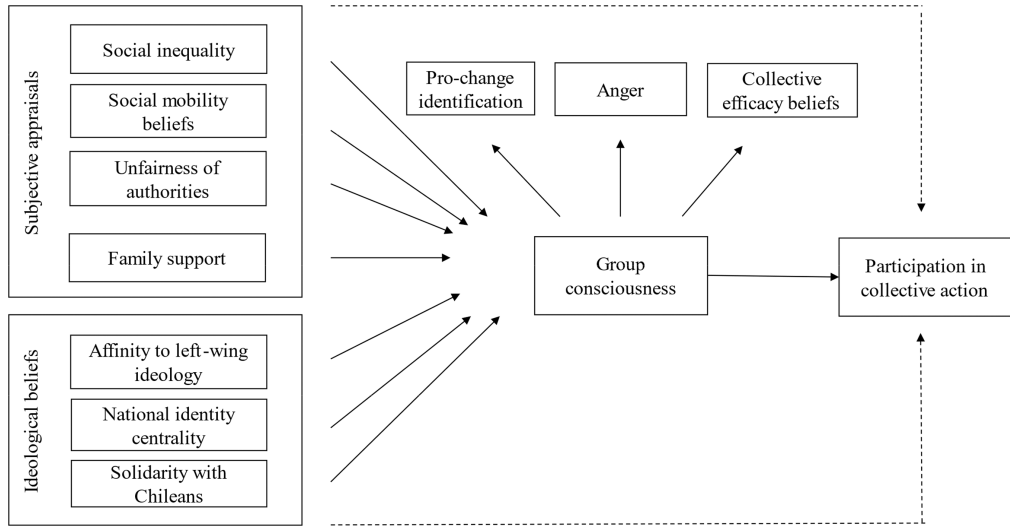


Figure 2. Conceptual adaptation of Duncan's (2012) integrated model to the *Chile despertó*. Group consciousness is a reflexive second-order factor that explains prochange identification, anger, and collective efficacy beliefs.

sampling on Facebook and Twitter and collaborators' personal networks by circulating a link to the questionnaire entitled "Social protests in Chile."

Participants included were Chilean citizen over 18 years of age currently living in Chile. The link was circulated for three weeks aiming to collect at least 200 valid cases—the recommended minimum sample size for achieving adequate statistical power, minimal bias, and overall propriety of mediation models (e.g., Kline, 2015). The time frame was intended to limit additional political events influencing the survey.

The link was clicked 1,997 times of which 888 volunteers entered the survey. Participants who did not sign the informed consent (11) had more than 89% missing values (1), indicated a country of residence other than Chile, or did not provide their country of residence (163) and were excluded. The final sample included 713 participants; 58.7% of the participants were female, 1.1% indicated a nonbinary gender identity, and 1.4% did not indicate their gender. Their average age was 26.79 years ($SD=9.14$; $n=657$). Most participants were highly educated (64.3% students, 34.5% university degree); 9.3% categorized themselves as belonging to one of Chile's indigenous groups.

A sensitivity analysis in G*Power (Faul et al., 2007), treating the path model as a multiple linear regression with 15 predictors of collective action, indicated that the model can detect small effects ($f^2=0.015$) of single regression coefficients on the dependent variables, with $df=697$, a significance level of .05, and a power=.95. All research materials, data files, and statistical analyses reported are available via the Open Science Framework (OSF) at https://osf.io/3km2g/?view_only=00a0a67cab5942e4846a810e5c096fd2.

Analytic Strategy

Data analysis comprised three steps. First, we checked descriptive statistics. Secondly, using the *lavaan* package (Rosseel, 2012) in *R*, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses of

the composite variables to ensure valid psychometric properties of the latent constructs. Finally, we used structural equation modeling to test the proposed mediation model.

Procedure

Participants first signed the informed consent. Subsequently, they filled in the survey measures and provided their sociodemographic data at the end. Participants responded to all items on 5-point Likert type scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) unless otherwise indicated.

Measures

We assessed *perceived social inequality* with a single-item measure adapted from Castillo (2012). Participants indicated how they evaluate the distribution of financial resources in Chile (1 = *equally distributed* to 5 = *unequally distributed*). To measure respondents' *social-mobility beliefs*, we adapted 10 items originally designed to measure beliefs about the causes of economic success in society (Kuhn, 2019). Participants indicated the extent to which they believed each of the following factors was important for Chileans to get ahead in their country (e.g., "Coming from a wealthy family"; "Knowing the right people"; "A person's ethnicity").¹ We measured how (un)fair participants perceived the state authorities to be in their function to preserve democracy (*unfairness of authorities*; adopted from Chayinska et al., 2019; four items; i.e., "the police," "the court," "the congress," and "the government"; 1 = *fair*, 5 = *unfair*).

Two items assessed *family support* (González et al., 2021; e.g., "My family values if I participate in movements for a sociopolitical change"). We used a single-item measure to assess political ideology by asking respondents to place themselves on a scale from 1 (*left-wing*) to 5 (*right-wing*), which has proved valid in the Latin American context (Wiesehomeier & Doyle, 2012). The item was reversed so that higher values indicate stronger *left-wing ideology*. Three items each assessed respondents' *national-identity centrality* (Leach et al., 2008; e.g., "Being Chilean is an important part of my identity") and *solidarity with Chileans* (e.g., "I feel a bond with the Chileans"). To ensure distinctiveness of the two components of national identity, we performed a PCA on all six items. The analysis suggested a two-component solution with the two factors of identity centrality (explained variance = 40.12%, factor loading $\geq .793$) and of solidarity (explained variance = 37.83%, factor loadings $\geq .712$; KMO = .823; Bartlett's test of sphericity: $\chi^2(15) = 2296.72, p < .001$).

We measured the three components of group consciousness with the following scales. *Prochange identification* that is the extent to which participants identified with an opinion-based politicized group for sociopolitical change in Chile based on an eight-item scale adapted from Bliuc et al. (2007; e.g., "I am like other people who demand a social-political change in Chile"; "I am happy to claim together with others for a social-political change in Chile"). *Anger* was assessed by participants indicating "the extent to which the current social policies make you feel [irritated/ furious/ angry/ displeased] on a four-item scale; Four items measured participants' beliefs about *collective efficacy* of the protesters ("I think that together we are capable of bringing a sociopolitical change in Chile"; Chayinska et al., 2019).

Finally, respondents indicated how often they have participated in six different prevalent forms of normative *collective action* of the *Chile despertó* in the past 12 months (1 = *never*,

¹ Four additional items measured beliefs about individual mobility. They were not further analyzed in the current study.

5 = *very often*; “Expressed demands on social networks”; “Participated in marches”; “Participated in *cazerolazo*” [banging pots as a protest]; Tausch et al., 2011).²

Results

Preliminary Analyses

As can be seen in Table 1, all variables showed adequate internal consistency. The correlations were in the expected direction with *r*s ranged from .19 to .69, except for solidarity with the national ingroup, $r = -.08$ to $-.12$. The three indicators of group consciousness—prochange identification, anger, and collective efficacy beliefs—positively correlated with collective action with *r*s ranging from .48 to .67.

Measurement Model

The measurement model comprised nine latent and two observed single-item constructs (perceived social inequality, left-wing ideology). Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Bliuc et al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2016), we constructed group consciousness as a reflexive construct explaining the relation between collective-action antecedents and participation in collective action. This second-order latent factor consists of prochange identification (i.e., the politicized identity), collective efficacy, and anger. Four items had observed factor loadings lower than .45 and were excluded from the latent constructs (Schreiber et al., 2006; three items on social mobility beliefs: “A person’s religion”; “A person’s political opinion”; “Having well-educated parents”; one item on prochange identification: “I respect people who demand a social-political change in Chile”).

Modification indices indicated highly correlated error terms among two items of solidarity with Chileans (“I feel solidarity with the Chileans”; “I feel committed to the Chileans”) and two items of prochange identification (“I am sure that I am a true supporter of a social-political change in Chile”; “I am sure that being a true supporter of a social-political change reflects my ideas about Chile’s future”). Because of their similar wordings, we allowed these items to correlate. Moreover, perceived unfairness of the courts and the parliamentary majority showed high residual correlations. Since these institutions were less associated with the protest suppressions than the police and the government, we allowed them to correlate. The residual correlations significantly increased the model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 483.59$, $p \leq .001$. Importantly, the model parameters, direct, and indirect effects did not change direction or significance when residual correlations were omitted.

The adjusted model had an acceptable goodness-of-fit, $\chi^2(779, N = 713) = 2105.743$, $p < .001$, CFI = .939, TLI = .932, RMSEA = .049, SRMR = .056, although the CFI and TLI had scope for improvement (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The factor loadings for each latent construct are presented on the OSF.

Path Model

Figure 3 shows the results of the path model. Group consciousness was strongly associated with past participation in collective action. Further, perceived social inequality and perceived

² We also measured intentions to participate in future protests with the same items ($r = .85$) and participation in confrontational collective action in the past ($\alpha = .77$; correlation with normative collective action: $r = .42$).

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Key Variables (N = 714)

	α	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Social inequality	—	4.75 (.63)	—	.20**	.46**	.26**	.38**	-.10**	-.04	.59**	.47**	.41**	.45**
2. Social mobility beliefs	.89	3.08 (1.06)		—	.15**	.12**	.22**	-.01	.00	.24**	.23**	.07	.19**
3. Unfairness of authorities	.78	4.31 (.76)			—	.27**	.41**	-.15**	-.09*	.57**	.59**	.37**	.50**
4. Family support	.80 ^a	2.99 (1.33)				—	.36**	.03	.06	.45**	.35**	.33**	.47**
5. Left-wing ideology	—	2.35 (.99)					—	-.12**	-.03	.57**	.49**	.31**	.54**
6. National identity centrality	.84	2.99 (1.18)						—	.58**	-.08*	-.13**	-.012	-.09*
7. Solidarity with Chileans	.85	3.62 (1.01)							—	.02	-.07	.066	-.01
8. Prochange identification	.95	4.31 (.93)								—	.67**	.62**	.69**
9. Anger	.91	4.23 (.99)									—	.48**	.61**
10. Collective efficacy beliefs	.85	4.11 (.91)										—	.47**
11. Participation in collective action	—	3.51 (1.23)											—

Note: α = Cronbach's alpha.

^a Correlation coefficient r .

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

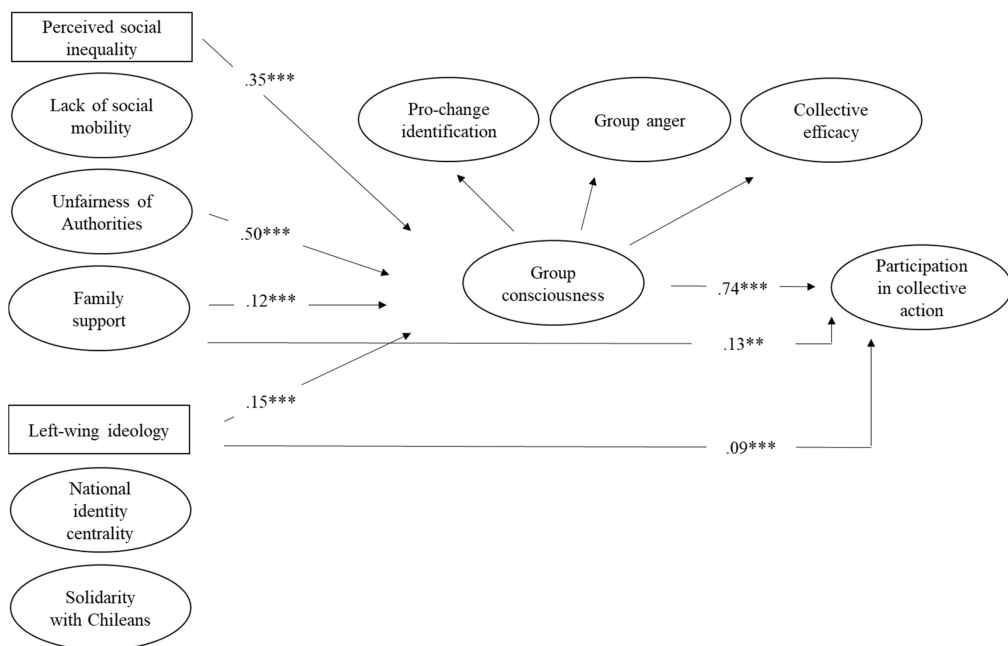


Figure 3. Path coefficients of the mediation model predicting participation in collective action ($R^2 = .69$) via group consciousness ($R^2 = .77$). The second-order factor group consciousness combines prochange identification ($R^2 = .89$), anger ($R^2 = .62$), and collective efficacy ($R^2 = .53$). Path coefficients are standardized estimates; Only statistically significant paths ($p > .05$) according to 95% confidence interval are depicted; *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Table 2. Standardized Estimates of Total and Indirect Effects

	Standardized β	95% CI	SE	p
Social inequality → Collective action (total direct)	.26	[.12; .42]	.076	.001
Social inequality → GC → Collective action (indirect)	.17	[.01; .31]	.075	.027
Social mobility beliefs → Collective action (total direct)	-.01	[-.06; .04]	.025	.786
Social mobility beliefs → GC → Collective action (indirect)	.004	[-.02; .03]	.013	.742
Unfairness of authorities → Collective action (total direct)	.50	[.33; .70]	.093	<.001
Unfairness of authorities → GC → Collective action (indirect)	.37	[.23; .61]	.097	<.001
Family support → Collective action (total direct)	.22	[.16; .28]	.030	<.001
Family support → GC → Collective action (indirect)	.09	[.05; .14]	.023	<.001
Left-wing ideology → Collective action (total direct)	.20	[.11; .30]	.048	<.001
Left-wing ideology → GC → Collective action (indirect)	.11	[.05; .19]	.038	.003
National identity centrality → Collective action (total direct)	.06	[-.02; .16]	.045	.165
National identity centrality → GC → Collective action (indirect)	.03	[-.03; .08]	.026	.310
Solidarity with Chileans → Collective action (total direct)	-.03	[-.13; .06]	.050	.573
Solidarity with Chileans → GC → Collective action (indirect)	.01	[-.04; .07]	.027	.606

Note: GC stand for group consciousness; 95% Confidence intervals were calculated with 500 bootstrap samples.

unfairness of authorities were positively related with group consciousness. The indirect effects, displayed in Table 2, are consistent with group consciousness mediating the effects of social inequality and unfairness of authorities on collective action, whereas there were no direct effects of either predictor on collective action. There was no indirect or direct effect of social-mobility

beliefs on participation in collective action. Further, family support showed a significant direct and indirect effect on collective action mediated via group consciousness. Finally, left-wing ideology was positively associated with group consciousness and collective action. We observed a small indirect effect indicating that left-wing ideology predicts participation in collective action partly by supporting the formation of a group consciousness.

Contrary to our hypothesis, social-mobility beliefs, solidarity with Chileans, and centrality of national identification were not significantly related to group consciousness or collective action participation. Overall, the model explained 77% of the variance of group consciousness as well as 69% of the variance in participation in collective action.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the social-psychological antecedents of group consciousness and subsequent participation in collective action in the *Chile despertó*. The data demonstrated that appraisals, norms, and ideology were closely associated to group consciousness, which was a strong predictor of collective action. An awareness of their collective experience that summarized the demonstrators' anger, belief in their collective efficacy, and identification with the *Chile despertó* supporters—which in turn predicted their actual participation in the protests. The protesters' demand for constitutional change to reduce injustices are reflected in the findings that appraisals of social inequality and unfairness of authorities strongly related to group consciousness. Group consciousness and collective-action participation were further forwarded by normative family support and left-wing ideology. In contrast, identification with Chile and solidarity with Chileans did not affect group consciousness or collective action.

Group Consciousness as Mediator to Collective Action

Contextualizing theoretical assumptions is necessary to reveal how general social-psychological processes operate in particular sociohistorical contexts (Tajfel, 1972). The group consciousness model has attracted empirical research examining the usefulness of the model in various political contexts—from collective action aimed at racial justice (McClain et al., 2009; Shingles, 1980), gender equality (Duncan, 1999), environmental protection (Bliuc et al., 2015), and inclusive migration policies (Thomas et al., 2016, 2019). The current study contributes to this literature by generalizing the application of the model to psychological group formation that drives participation in the *Chile despertó*.

The results of the present study supported the structural relations proposed by the group-consciousness model, including the mediation processes. The observed mediation supports the idea that collective action follows a process of psychological group formation rather than directly relating to experiences as individuals. Similarly, Castro-Abril et al. (2021) found that participation in *Chile despertó* was strongly associated with a collective experience. Group consciousness contains an affective (anger at sociopolitical situation), cognitive (belief in collective efficacy), and identity (identification with prochange supporters) component like the SIMCA (van Zomeren et al., 2008). Previous work shows that anger and group efficacy explain identification with the protesting group in Chile (2019–20) well (Pozzi et al., 2022). While SIMCA describes the interrelations among these three variables, the group-consciousness model treats them as indicators of a latent variable as it focuses the antecedents of movement participation (extending the scope of SIMCA). The direct associations of perceived inequality, unfairness of

authorities, and to some extent family support and left-wing ideology exemplified the sense of “we-ness” of movement supporters. The current data support the contention that group consciousness translates people’s individual experience into their commitment to collectively engage for sociopolitical change.

The Role of Antecedents of Group Consciousness

The model also tested known (e.g., perceived inequality, fairness of authorities, ideology) and novel (e.g., mobility beliefs, family norms) predictors of group consciousness and collective action. Building on our contextual analyses of Chile before and during the protests, and previous collective-action research, the empirical results show that the more people perceived the society as unequal and political authorities as unfair the more likely a group consciousness emerged, which strongly related to participation in the *Chile despertó*.

Political analysts suggested that the main causes of the movement were dissatisfaction with the economic and political institutions (e.g., Palacios-Valladares, 2020). Social inequality has been shown to increase collective action in Latin America (Somma et al., 2020) and elsewhere (e.g., Giugni & Grasso, 2016; Jetten et al., 2020). In Chile, there has been enormous discontent with socioeconomic inequalities deepened by neoliberal politics (e.g., Gonzalez & Le Foulon Morán, 2020; Somma et al., 2021). In the current study, perceived inequality was a very potent predictor of group consciousness that contained affective as well as cognitive reactions to social inequality.

The discontent with the sociopolitical situation in Chile is associated with the perceived illegitimacy of authorities and institutions supporting the status quo (e.g., Mayol, 2020; Morales Quiroga, 2021; Somma et al., 2021). At the time of the data collection, the government was also condemned for its harsh repression of protesters. Unfairness of institutions as well as repressive actions have been shown to fuel collective action in other contexts (Ayanian et al., 2021; van Zomeren et al., 2008). In Chile, perceptions that authorities treat protesters with disrespect arguably promoted (violent) protest (Gerber et al., 2021). Our study shows that perceived unfairness of institutions is one major predictor of the prochange group consciousness of the *Chile despertó*.

The finding that families provide normative support for political participation replicates the findings of other studies in Chile (e.g., González et al., 2021). At the time of data collection, a national poll revealed that most Chileans disapproved of how President Piñera was conducting the government (73.8%) and favored the new constitution (85.1% of those who intended to vote; Activa, 2020). The results of the national poll may have provided public support of the protesters encouraging participation in the *Chile despertó* movement. Future studies may not only consider support by the close social environment (e.g., strong ties such as family and friends), but also by distant peer groups and the broader public to encourage collective action.

By including political ideology in our analyses, our research aligns with the literature that emphasizes the ideological underpinning of political collective action (e.g., Chayinska & McGarty, 2021; González et al., 2022; Jost et al., 2017). Our results demonstrate that left-wing ideology further predicted political participation in the *Chile despertó*. The affinity to left-wing ideology of participants may have emerged because they distanced themselves from the right-wing government and its conservative supporters (e.g., Bliuc et al., 2015) or because they associated with the left-wing causes of the *Chile despertó*, such as demanding an alternative to the existing social order (Somma, 2021). The current data shows that left-wing ideology correlated

positively with unfairness of authorities and identification with protesters. However, the coefficients indicate that left-wing ideology was not a major factor driving collective action in Chile, indicating that the protests were not merely a left-wing push but that political ideologies of supporters and protesters were diverse. This idea is supported by a recent poll which showed 62% of voters rejected the proposal for a new constitution in part because they considered it too left leaning (Schmidt, 2022).

Contrary to our predictions, we found that social-mobility beliefs, identification with the national category, and solidarity with other Chileans did not predict participants' political participation in the social movement. It is quite possible that these constructs have predictive power for engagement in social change per se, as previous research has shown (Sagioglou et al., 2019), but their explanatory potential in the current study was lower than that of other constructs. Social-mobility beliefs (i.e., with high values that imply low social mobility) correlated positively with collective action, supporting the hypothesis that impermeable group boundaries in social hierarchies strengthen collective action (Mummendey et al., 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The belief that getting ahead depends on factors such as coming from the right family and knowing the right people is closely related to perceived illegitimacy of the system (Kuhn, 2019). The current findings indicate that the motivation for becoming part of the prochange group may be less about increasing the chances for (individual) success in society but changing the starting positions for everyone—that is redistributing the resources to establish a more equal society.

At the time of the data collection, a prochange attitude was widespread throughout the Chilean population (Activa, 2020; Somma et al., 2021). Together with the repeated display of national symbols in the protests such as the Chilean flag, this may indicate that protesters were representative for the general population with respect to their political opinion. However, national identity centrality and solidarity with Chileans did not correlate strongly with collective action nor were they relevant antecedents of group consciousness. Supposedly, Chilean identity was not crucial for engaging in collective-action behavior, given that it was not measured in respect to any content of this identity (Leach et al., 2008). The measure of national-identity centrality might also have been associated with national glorification (i.e., the sense of superiority that occurs when people value their country's strengths and ignore its weaknesses). This is indicated by the low negative correlation between national-identity centrality and leftist ideology (see Table 1) that might have suppressed the link between national identification and taking action on behalf of prosocial change. Even though the protesters demanded to address social inequality in several public sectors of Chile (Somma et al., 2021), the solidarity with Chileans did not predict the prochange group consciousness. So the broad consensus in support of socio-political change does not mean that everyone has developed a prochange group consciousness. Protesters and nonprotesters may have similar levels of identity centrality and solidarity with Chileans. Since there were only small to no correlations of identity centrality and solidarity with collective action or the components of group consciousness, these potential explanations may only be effective when controlling for other factors. This might appear to challenge social-identity approaches to collective action. However, the crucial group membership enhancing collection action is a *politicized* identity that connects people to the common cause, rather than their national identity (see also McGarty et al., 2014; Stürmer & Simon, 2004). The visible use of national symbols at the protests may also have other functions such as the demarcation of group boundaries (Geisler, 2005) and the articulation of group distinctiveness, which might have helped protesters gain attention of a broader (international) audience (see also Simon & Klandermans, 2001).

Limitations of the Present Research

Our data shows the sociopsychological factors associated with a stronger prochange group consciousness and collective action, yet longitudinal studies should provide a more robust test of causality. Moreover, future studies could compare the context of the Chilean protests with social movements for sociopolitical changes throughout Latin America in particular, and the world in general, to determine factors that make movements successful in their claims.

The current study set out to explain how the multiple subgroups with their heterogeneous demands in Chile got together to fight for social change. Our sample, however, consists of mainly highly educated people with only some (9%) reporting, for example, an indigenous identity, and our survey did not include any questions about specific personal interests in the protests. This kind of additional data might have provided a more nuanced understanding of specific motivations of activists. Besides, some participants suggested that a measure of the socioeconomic situation (SES) of participants should have been included in the survey. Future studies may expand on the role of sociodemographic variables such as SES, education, and urban/rural residence as well as specifically examining the role of demands of the various subgroups in an overreaching social movement.

We based our theorizing on a contextual analysis of the social movement and on the psychological literature on collective action. We accept that there are additional predictors that were not included in the study. In case of our measure of social-mobility beliefs, we relied on the validated scale that assessed participants' beliefs about various means necessary to get ahead in society (Kuhn, 2019). The nonsignificant paths between social mobility beliefs and group consciousness/collective action may stem from the choice of this particular kind of measure. Some comments at the end of the survey indicated that the wording of this measure was unclear to participants. Thus, future studies may use either different social mobility measures or effectively consider the difference between actual and aspired social-mobility criteria.

Conclusion

The *Chile despertó* movement not only represents an interesting case of analysis because it is the one of the first countries in Latin American in which protests succeeded in bringing about prosocial change in form of a new democratic constitution, but also because many heterogeneous groups united to demand social change and protested side by side. Our research capitalizes on the group-consciousness model showing that it is a simple, precise, and highly useful conceptual model that can offer explanations for a variety of social movements including the *Chile despertó*. Our study suggests that it was their perception of inequality, illegitimacy of authorities, and family norms that propelled so many Chileans to *wake up*, and collectively challenge the status quo through mass protest. Moreover, the movement drew on left-wing ideology that opposed the right-wing government and its supporters. The findings of our case study indicate unique factors behind the occurrence of the *Chile despertó*, but they also make the role of the core social-psychological processes visible. Our research thus offers a situated, yet potentially generalizable, understanding of the mechanisms behind a grassroots social mobilization.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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