

Social Policy and Collective Action: Unemployed Workers, Community Associations, and Protest in Argentina

CANDELARIA GARAY

Unemployed and informal workers seem an unlikely source of large-scale collective action in Latin America. Since 1997, however, Argentina has witnessed an upsurge of protest and the emergence of unusually influential federations of unemployed and informal workers. To explain this puzzle, this article offers a policy-centered argument. It suggests that a workfare program favored common interests and identities on the part of unemployed workers and grassroots associations, allowing them to overcome barriers to collective action. State responses to demands for workfare benefits generated a pattern of protest and negotiation that strengthened those groups and dramatically expanded social policy.

Keywords: *social policy; collective action; protest; unemployed; Latin America*

Unemployed and informal workers seem an unlikely source of large-scale collective action in Latin America.¹ Lacking the work ties that have typically fostered common interests and identities, and marginalized by labor unions that have often seen in their large numbers a threat to the formal workforce, unemployed and informal workers have remained at the margins of major working-class organization and

I am grateful to Ruth Berins Collier and Jonah Levy for comments on different versions of this article. I would also like to thank Alejandro Bonvecchi, David Collier, Sebastián Etchemendy, Peter Evans, Tasha Fairfield, Maia Jaskoski, Germán Lodola, Paul Pierson, Margaret Weir, and the Editorial Board of *Politics & Society* for their comments and suggestions, as well as Reilly O'Neal for her editorial assistance.

POLITICS & SOCIETY, Vol. 35 No. 2, June 2007 301-328

DOI: 10.1177/0032329207300392

© 2007 Sage Publications

social conflict.² In recent years, however, Argentina has witnessed a dramatic emergence of collective action by unemployed and informal workers. Between 1997 and 2003, Argentina experienced an annual average of 137 acts of protest, including roadblocks, demonstrations, and occupations of buildings.³ Furthermore, these mobilizations resulted in the formation of national-level unemployed federations and fronts⁴ composed of hundreds of community associations that focused on work-related issues and national policy demands.⁵

The upsurge of mobilization in Argentina is puzzling not only because barriers to collective action seem formidable for unemployed and informal workers⁶ but also because the political landscape in the wake of market reforms was not expected to foster sustained popular protest and organization. After all, contemporary scholarship on Latin America frequently asserts that the shift to the market has produced dramatically adverse effects on popular-sector collective action.⁷ Mainstream scholarship has indeed found a sharp decline in the capacity of the popular sectors—understood as the lower and lower-middle classes—to form organizations, engage in protest, and influence public policy, because of economic changes that began in the 1980s.⁸

Collective action in Argentina is also remarkable because it has produced fundamental effects on public policy, popular-sector interest intermediation, and partisan politics. As an outcome of protest and organizing, social policy for labor-market outsiders (here defined as unemployed and informal workers) underwent crucial changes and expanded massively. In particular, in-kind benefits typically directed to labor-market outsiders (i.e., food programs) have lost centrality vis-à-vis more generous cash transfers. For example, beneficiaries of national workfare programs increased from less than 100,000 in 1996 to a record 2.2 million in 2003.⁹ Furthermore, significant changes favoring broader access have occurred in health and pension policy.¹⁰ At the same time, transformations in interest intermediation have materialized both in direct access to the state on the part of unemployed associations and in the formation of alliances with opposition unions, which have undermined the historic separation of interests between labor-market insiders and outsiders.¹¹ Finally, once the unemployed formed powerful organizations capable of mobilizing specific constituencies and of exerting influence on policy, political leaders sought to integrate them into partisan politics. Linkages to political parties have facilitated ongoing coalitional and ideological adjustments within the labor-based Peronist Party, or *Partido Justicialista* (PJ), have fostered the appointment of some unemployed leaders to public office, and have reinforced access to policy making and organizational resources.¹²

What explains the unexpected emergence of protest among the unemployed and informal poor and the consolidation of their organizations? Existing research has highlighted a number of factors to account for the upsurge of collective action, including the context of deprivation in which it emerged (i.e., grievances about high unemployment rates and poverty), lack of labor union support to the unemployed,

and growing dissatisfaction with partisan clientelist practices that manipulated access to social benefits.¹³

Without denying the importance of those factors, this article offers a policy-centered argument to better account for the two related puzzles of how collective action emerged and how it evolved to the point of consolidating in permanent and influential organizations. This policy-centered approach includes two elements: (1) the features of the policy design that encouraged collective action and (2) state responses to policy demands. Specifically, I argue that a national workfare program, *Plan Trabajar*, created in 1996 to demonstrate public concern on the issue of unemployment, had fundamental effects on collective action among unemployed and informal poor workers.

As presented in the next sections, three features of the program's design—namely the short supply of benefits relative to demand, the lack of clear rules for selecting beneficiaries, and the administration of workfare benefits by community associations (which could use benefits as selective incentives to recruit members, implement community projects, and collect membership dues)—encouraged collective action.

When the state responded to protests with workfare benefit provisions, it triggered further demands, which presented the national state with the choice of either confronting demands or acquiescing to them. In a democratic environment that made repression costly (and hence, made protest less risky), state responses led to a pattern of state-group interaction characterized by protest for and negotiation of workfare benefits. This pattern fostered coordinated action among otherwise isolated unemployed and informal poor workers around a common policy goal and identity vis-à-vis the state. Furthermore, it allowed them to gain crucial allies, particularly opposition unions, and to consolidate their organizations as key actors through access to material resources and members.

The next section of this article introduces existing theories suggesting why popular collective action should be unlikely in contemporary Latin America, and the third section lays out the policy-centered argument that accounts for unemployed collective action in Argentina. The fourth section draws on interviews¹⁴ and on an original data set of nearly 1,000 “acts of protest,” occurring between 1997 and 2003,¹⁵ to trace the origins, evolution, and consolidation of unemployed collective action. The article then presents an analysis of the effects of collective action on social policy, on the modes of interest intermediation between the popular sectors and the state, and on partisan politics. Finally, the mobilization of the unemployed and informal poor workers in Argentina is placed in comparative perspective.¹⁶

CHALLENGES TO POPULAR-SECTOR COLLECTIVE ACTION: EXISTING EXPLANATIONS

Popular-sector collective action can be understood as action taken by organizations formed by popular sectors with the goal of (1) advancing the interests of

popular-sector constituencies, (2) mobilizing members, and (3) attracting state attention.¹⁷

An extensive comparative literature has attributed the declining capacity for popular-sector collective action in Latin America to a number of factors. In particular, scholars emphasize the role of structural change. Starting after the debt crisis in the early 1980s, a dramatic increase in informal and precarious employment, together with growing labor-market segmentation, made the workforce more heterogeneous and arguably more difficult to organize around common interests and demands.¹⁸ In Argentina, a country that by Latin American standards had a large formal labor market, informalization reached more than 30 percent of the workforce by 1990, and unemployment peaked at 19 percent in 1995, remaining double-digit throughout the following decade.¹⁹ Informalization and unemployment dramatically debilitated the bargaining power of unions and reduced their membership base.²⁰ Scholars have suggested that because of informalization, declining labor union strength, and heterogeneous interests, high levels of popular collective action—organization and mobilization—were less likely to occur following market reforms than in the past.²¹

Together with structural change, the politics of market reforms affected the power of labor unions. Scholars have demonstrated that in the face of dramatic transformations and declining membership, labor unions in Latin America often negotiated their organizational survival instead of engaging in militancy or were outright neutralized by market-reformers.²² In the case of Argentina, unions extracted important organizational payoffs in exchange for their political support for market adjustment. These side payments favored union leaders and labor-market insiders over the swelling informal sector and the unemployed, which bore the brunt of economic transformations.²³ By leaving labor-market outsiders to themselves rather than forging encompassing antireform alliances, unions removed incentives for their mobilization and organization.²⁴

Social programs introduced to reach the growing informal sector were also believed to offer few incentives for collective action. Scholars have suggested that the political manipulation of targeted programs by rising neo-populist leaders, a characterization frequently used to describe Argentine President Carlos Menem (1989–1999) of the PJ, served the purpose of preventing horizontal links and organizing among the informal poor as well as winning their votes.²⁵ In his seminal study of the PJ, Levitsky suggests a different mechanism through which social benefits were politically manipulated and affected popular organization in Argentina: instead of distributing resources in an unmediated top-down way, the governing PJ transformed itself into a mass-patronage party, distributing benefits selectively to the informal poor and the unemployed through clientelist networks. These networks allowed the PJ to retain the loyalty of that constituency during market adjustment while simultaneously forestalling discontent and antireform mobilizations.²⁶

Some analysts have nonetheless noticed a proliferation of community associations in Latin America.²⁷ Growing informalization and recurrent economic crises propelled the formation of self-help groups seeking to cope with basic needs such as food provision and housing. Despite the importance of these groups as problem-solving associations, scholars have often suggested that they were either co-opted into partisan clientelist networks or were too fragmented and/or resource-poor to engage in coordinated action and exert influence on public policy.²⁸

EXPLAINING COLLECTIVE ACTION: A POLICY-CENTERED APPROACH

What explains the outbreak and evolution of unemployed collective action in Argentina? The mainstream literature on social movements suggests that collective action develops out of a combination of three factors: framing processes (shared understandings and meanings),²⁹ mobilizing structures (networks and organizations),³⁰ and political opportunities (including “the opening up of access to power, shifting alignments, availability of influential allies”).³¹ These factors fail to account for the emergence of unemployed contention. Except for preexisting organizations that did play some role in the emergence of the unemployed movement, collective identities, further organizational structures, and alliances occurred only *after* collective action had been decisively triggered by a specific policy and by state responses to movement demands. Given that public policy is central to understanding the emergence of unemployed collective action, this study addresses patterns of contention and group formation by focusing on two policy issues that have been less systematically explored by social movement scholars: policy designs and state responses to policy demands.

This article advances a policy-centered approach to collective action. By placing policy structures at the center of analysis, it draws on a growing body of research that views policies as important causes of political change.³² Influential work on policy feedback by Theda Skocpol and Paul Pierson shows that once in place, policies reconfigure the political context; they may affect group formation, state capacity, and the prospects for expanding or retrenching specific policies.³³

Policies may spur the emergence of new groups and coalitions. They may generate constituencies of support around them, helping groups to organize and shaping their goals and strategies.³⁴ Public programs may inspire a new self-understanding among beneficiaries. For example, work by Soss has shown that different social-program designs shape beneficiaries’ beliefs about their capacity to assert themselves vis-à-vis the state in different ways, thereby favoring or discouraging political activism.³⁵ Policies may also help beneficiaries to construct a collective identity, which is central for collective action since collective identities can help to make organization and mobilization legitimate and allow for connections and alliances among previously unrelated groups.³⁶

A growing literature has identified the influence of specific policy designs on collective organization. Of crucial importance, scholars have found that programs

that allow social actors to administer program benefits are particularly consequential for their political organization. Associative administration of benefits provides groups with selective incentives that help overcome barriers to collective action.³⁷ For example, Rothstein has shown that union administration of unemployment benefits (the Ghent system) has had fundamental implications on union strength, as it has allowed them to build especially large membership bases.³⁸ Scholars have further found that administration of benefits has oriented the policy preferences of unions toward the continuity and expansion of those programs vis-à-vis other policy options.³⁹

Policies, once in place, can set off bounded trajectories of policy change.⁴⁰ In her work on employment policy in the U.S., Weir suggests that initial policy decisions can affect the ways in which policy makers and social actors perceive their interests and address specific public issues, thereby circumscribing subsequent policy choices.⁴¹ A policy-centered approach to collective action therefore entails identifying the programmatic designs that encourage collective action and the process and mechanisms by which collective action takes shape and evolves over time in relation to policy decisions.

The emergence and evolution of collective action among the unemployed in Argentina provides empirical support for this approach. Collective action started around a national workfare program, *Plan Trabajar*. Two policy factors favored the emergence and development of collective action: (1) the program design and (2) state responses to unemployed demand making. Outlined below are the mechanisms by which the policy design and the policy process affected collective action, creating a novel constituency around workfare benefits.

Program Design and Collective Action

Faced with double-digit unemployment and the need to show some concern about the issue, the national government created the *Plan Trabajar* in 1996.⁴² The program required nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and municipal governments to organize labor-intensive community infrastructure or community service projects and to hire unemployed workers, whose salary was paid for by the program, for a limited term.⁴³ Community associations and/or municipalities partially financed the materials needed to implement the projects and had discretion over the hiring and firing of unemployed workers as well as their workfare activity.

Three features of the program's design encouraged collective action. The first was the low supply of benefits relative to demand, as workfare benefits initially reached only 8 percent of the unemployed.⁴⁴ This fact, combined with the absence of clear criteria for beneficiary selection and for determining the renewal or non-renewal of benefits when contracts terminated,⁴⁵ encouraged groups of unemployed workers to engage in demand making and/or protest. The third fundamental feature encouraging collective action was that popular associations

could administer program benefits by setting up community projects in which the unemployed fulfilled their workfare obligations (i.e., soup kitchens, small manufacturing workshops, orchards). This feature created allies and even “co-beneficiaries” in preexisting community groups⁴⁶ and new popular associations formed by unemployed workers, both of which sought to access program benefits.⁴⁷

Associative administration of benefits empowered unemployed groups in a number of ways. It increased their membership base, as benefits could be used as selective incentives to recruit members. Moreover, it provided financial resources, as several groups began to collect membership dues from workfare beneficiaries to finance community projects and protest activity.⁴⁸ Furthermore, administration of benefits raised the critical distributional issue of how to determine the allocation of scarce benefits among participants. To solve this problem, associations developed decision-making processes such as submitting decisions to popular assemblies and/or creating specific rules to determine eligibility. Among these rules, some organizations began to score their members based on whether they joined protests (a principal mechanism for obtaining benefits) and allocated resources according to those scores. These procedures fostered consensus and helped to prevent internal conflict or exit.⁴⁹ In short, administration of benefits provided members and membership dues and led to the definition of rules and decision-making procedures that encouraged the growth of a novel and often participatory organizational infrastructure. Compared to workfare programs run directly by state agencies or in which beneficiaries work in firms, associative administration of program benefits generated stronger incentives for collective organization on the part of unemployed and community groups.

Of central importance, protest and participation in the workfare program helped groups to develop a collective identity around unemployment. That identity made protest legitimate and partly facilitated connections among otherwise disparate and geographically distant groups. Because they came to share common goals and demands and perceived their situation of joblessness vis-à-vis the state in similar ways, groups could more easily coordinate joint strategies and protests and coalesce in fronts and federations that, despite enduring differences with respect to broader political issues, formed the basis of the unemployed movement.

Coordination decisively boosted the mobilizational capacity and strength of unemployed groups. Indeed, building ties and joining forces across neighborhoods facilitated the survival of small and newly created associations in an environment in which isolated groups tended to face fierce competition from local partisan machines.⁵⁰ In the words of an unemployed leader, “you may have a small organization in a district and the municipality [municipal authorities] smashes it. If it is a bigger group, then they respect it and avoid confrontation. . . . The municipality was a problem when we were isolated movements.”⁵¹

At the individual level, participation in protest and involvement in community work increased individuals’ political activism. As an unemployed leader observed,

“we get them [workfare benefits] using direct action, and that educates, makes the popular sectors aware of the fact that they have to fight for their rights.”⁵² Another unemployed leader reports that “in the first years, our problem was to make people lose their fear of mobilizing and blocking roads to obtain a right. Today that fear does not exist anymore. You do not need to persuade anyone.”⁵³

State Responses and Collective Action

Mobilization in demand for workfare benefits met different responses from the national government, which could either negotiate with protestors and grant them workfare benefits in exchange for demobilization or confront them by repressing protests, withdrawing benefits, and altering program conditions.

Confrontation backfired. In a democratic setting, political authorities faced electoral punishment if they resorted to repression. Acts of protest enjoyed media coverage, and repression generated subsequent and more massive mobilization against violence. Removing benefits or not renewing them also resulted in broader protest, granting visibility to unemployed demands, helping to unify unemployed groups, and promoting joint protests with opposition unions. The national government could also confront protestors by granting benefits but denying associative administration, thus making protestors work in state-run projects or in municipal agencies. That strategy often led to further protest in demand for associative administration of benefits.⁵⁴

Negotiation strengthened unemployed groups as it provided them with key resources. Although negotiation initially fostered more mobilization on the part of groups seeking benefits, it gradually led to conflict resolution through institutionalized channels. Negotiation over benefits eventually transformed the unemployed into key actors, with access to the national state and to policy resources.

The policy design and state responses to collective action therefore produced the emergence of unemployed federations that boast a novel organizational infrastructure, a collective identity, and mobilizational capacity and experience.

The following propositions summarize the logic of this policy-centered argument (see Figure 1):

- Short supply and discretion in beneficiary selection encouraged demand making and/or protest for access to workfare benefits. Associative administration, in turn, encouraged organization, providing associations with members, labor, and financial resources.
- When the state chose to confront the unemployed (i.e., through repression, removal of benefits, and/or changes in policy rules), it triggered (further) protest, which in turn led to negotiations to end contention. When the state chose to negotiate, access to benefits—and the negotiation process itself—fostered unemployed organization. After workfare benefits became a target of demand making, the national state could choose to confront protestors, but it would eventually negotiate to end protest.

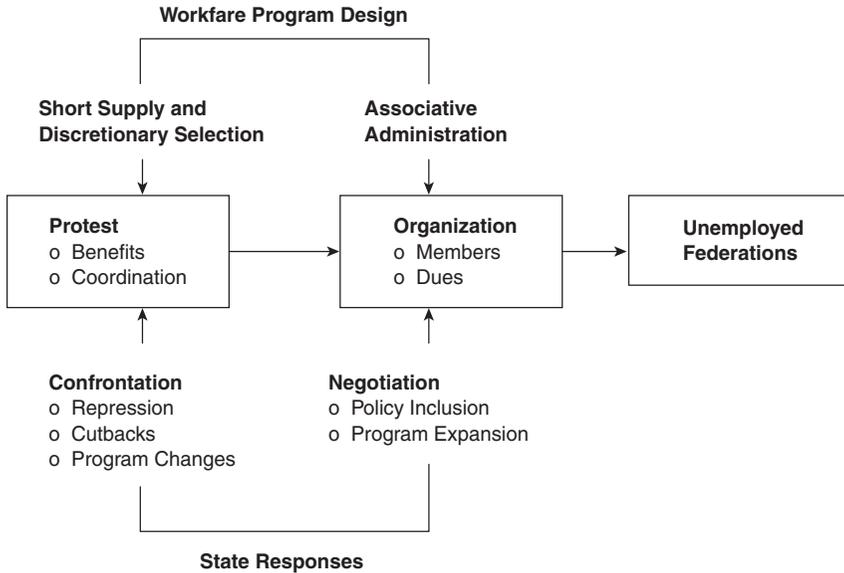


Figure 1: Program design, state responses, and unemployed collective action.

- Protest and organization resulted in the formation of powerful unemployed federations with a collective identity, mobilizational capacity, and organizational infrastructure, which pushed in the direction of further policy expansion.

Table 1 depicts the evolution of protest (number of acts of protest, duration of protest measured in days, and average participants) and socioeconomic data from 1993 to 2003. These data allow the assessment of two alternative explanations to unemployed collective action, linking the emergence of the movement either to the 2001 crisis or to grievances and structural change.⁵⁵ Data on the evolution of protest in Table 1 make it possible to rule out the 2001 crisis as the principal cause of contention, as unemployed protest began well before. At the same time, Table 1 reveals that an earlier financial crisis, which produced unprecedented unemployment in 1995, did not trigger unemployed protest.⁵⁶

A second potential explanation for collective action that highlights the role of grievances and structural change can be found in a number of essays on the movement.⁵⁷ Some of those essays also underline the importance of workfare benefits, but they do not view them as driving the emergence of the movement.⁵⁸ If we measure structural change and grievances using the indicators presented in Table 1 (poverty and unemployment rates and economic context), we can see that these factors do not successfully account for the emergence of and variation in protest over time, as different levels of protest correspond to similar levels of poverty and unemployment and comparable economic conditions.

Table 1
Intensity of Unemployed Protest and Socioeconomic Context (1993–2003)

	Intensity of Protest			Socioeconomic Context		
	Acts	Duration (days) ^a	Participants (average)	Unemployment Rate	Poverty Rate	Economic Context
1993	0	0	0	9.5	17.7	Growth
1994	0	0	0	11.5	16.1	Growth
1995	0	0	0	17.5	22.2	Financial crisis
1996	1	6	n/d	17.2	26.7	Growth
1997	66	183	625	14.9	26.3	Growth
1998	20	22	171	12.8	24.1	Growth
1999	21	49	796	14.2	27.1	Recession
2000	103	180	672	15	29.7	Recession
2001	157	273	1,921	17.3	32.7	Recession, financial crisis
2002	394	570	1,587	19.6	49.2	Financial crisis
2003	200	224	1,649	17.2	51.7	Growth

Sources: Intensity of protest data are from author's data set of protest; data on poverty are from http://www.trabajo.gov.ar/left/biblioteca/files/estadisticas/distribucion_%20del_%20ingreso.pdf (accessed April 2006); unemployment rate, year averages are elaborated from <http://www.indec.gov.ar> (accessed June 2006); economic context assessment is based on GDP data from <http://www.indec.gov.ar> (accessed June 2006).

a. Sum of the number of days that each act of protest lasted in a given year.

EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION OF UNEMPLOYED COLLECTIVE ACTION

This section analyzes the origins and evolution of unemployed collective action, tracing the causal steps that link program characteristics and state responses (confrontation, negotiation) to unemployed protest and organization.

Workfare Program as a Trigger for Collective Action

As shown in Table 2, unemployed protest began in 1997. The national government used benefits from *Plan Trabajar* to dampen an isolated protest by unemployed workers in the Province of Neuquén, sparking a wave of large-scale mobilization.⁵⁹ The protest in Neuquén attracted the attention of the media, and the resolution of that conflict encouraged groups and individuals in other provinces to engage in contention in demand for workfare benefits and jobs.⁶⁰

The first wave of protest was fundamental to the formation of the unemployed movement for several reasons. First, preexisting but resource-poor community associations in marginal neighborhoods and newly formed groups inspired by the unfolding of contention began to demand workfare benefits, making *Plan Trabajar* a common policy target.⁶¹ Second, the protest movement pushed the state authorities into negotiation to dampen protest and prevent its spread. In the words of an

unemployed leader from the periphery of Buenos Aires, “in 1997 we were an unemployed workers’ organization, but we did not know what to do, how to tackle the issue. Then came the events in Cutral-co [Neuquén]. We were organized, so we went to the municipality [municipal office] and said, ‘either you give us workfare benefits or we block the roads.’ To prevent roadblocks, they gave us workfare benefits.”⁶²

Third, negotiation led to a decline in unrest and to an expansion of benefits. As shown in Table 2, 1997 saw a dramatic increase in workfare beneficiaries. Monthly variation is even more striking: total beneficiaries of national workfare programs jumped from 62,000 when protest began in April 1997 to nearly 200,000 later that year.⁶³ At the same time, several provinces inaugurated their own workfare programs along the lines of *Plan Trabajar*.⁶⁴

Finally, the wave of protest saw the emergence of the first groups identified as unemployed movements, fronts, or federations (Table 2). Access to benefits empowered these groups, helping them to grow. Furthermore, their mobilizational capacity made them attractive partners for opposition labor unions, which sought to leverage discontent against the national government. By mid-1998, two of the rising unemployed groups had forged alliances or integrated into two opposition unions—*Central de Trabajadores Argentinos* (CTA) and the *Corriente Clasista y Combativa* (CCC)—to form the *Federación Tierra y Vivienda* (FTV) and the *CCC–Trabajadores Desocupados*, respectively.

Confrontation, Protest, and Expansion of Unemployed Networks

Massive mobilizations of unemployed workers broke out again in response to cutbacks and instability in workfare benefits in 2000 (see Table 2).⁶⁵ These measures were undertaken by the newly inaugurated administration of Fernando De la Rúa of the center coalition *Alianza* (Alliance for Jobs, Justice and Education). Two main factors led to social policy retrenchment: first, facing a recession that began with external shocks, the government passed sharp austerity measures,⁶⁶ and second, state authorities saw targeted programs as integrated into PJ clientelist networks. Between March and August 2000, workfare beneficiaries decreased from 150,000 to 50,000, and other social assistance programs were also scaled back.⁶⁷

Confrontation led to intense mobilization, which granted high visibility to unemployed demands and eventually forced the government to negotiate with protestors. The new wave of protest and negotiation substantively changed the unemployed movement in two principal ways. First, new associations emerged. Existing networks grew by integrating or creating new community associations, and left-minority parties began to mobilize unemployed workers in poor neighborhoods, often in vertical ways. As shown in Table 2, protest expanded geographically, occurring in more than half of the provinces. Moreover, the number of unemployed federations doubled. Second, although the movement did not

Table 2
National Workfare Programs, Unemployed Protest, and Organization (1993–2003)

	National Workfare Programs				Protest			Organization	
	Benefits (average)	Major Policy Development	Acts	Duration (days)	Participants (average)	Scope (provinces with protest $N = 24$) ^a	Major Organizational Development	Number of Groups ^b	
1993	26,263	Scattered job programs	0	0	0	0	No groups identified as unemployed associations		
1994	33,365	Scattered job programs	0	0	0	0			
1995	48,909	Scattered job programs	0	0	0	0			
1996	62,083	<i>Plan Trabajar</i>	1	6	n/d	1			
1997	126,264	<i>Plan Trabajar</i> used in protest	66	183	625	7	First unemployed groups, alliances with unions	6	
1998	112,076	Program stability	20	22	171	6			
1999	105,895	Program stability	21	49	796	12			
2000	85,665	Program instability	103	180	672	14	Expansion, nationwide coordinated protest	13	
2001	91,806	Program instability	157	273	1,921	13			
2002	1,172,871	Program instability	394	570	1,587	20	Expansion and fragmentation	34	
2003	2,171,265	Program stability	200	224	1,649	18			

Sources: Workfare benefits are elaborated using data provided by the Office of Statistics and Research of the Ministry of Labor. Intensity of protest and organization data are from author's data set of unemployed protest.

a. Twenty-three provinces and the city of Buenos Aires.

b. Federations, fronts, movements, and blocs that organized acts of protest.

consolidate in a single organizational structure, unemployed associations coordinated nationwide protests, some of which enjoyed the support of opposition unions and gathered record-level numbers of participants.⁶⁸

Negotiation, Policy Expansion, and Institutionalized Access

A deep political and financial crisis prompted President De la Rúa to resign in December 2001 and led to the installation of Eduardo Duhalde, of the PJ, as the interim president.⁶⁹ The financial collapse intensified unemployed unrest. Facing record-level protest (see Table 2), President Duhalde made two crucial decisions. First, despite dramatic austerity, he passed by decree a massive expansion of national workfare benefits, creating the Unemployed Heads-of-Households Program (UHHP), and unified several targeted social schemes into two large food programs implemented through community associations.⁷⁰ Second, he created informal and formal arenas of negotiation with unemployed organizations. Specifically, the government set up policy councils in several municipalities and granted seats to the largest unemployed federations in the UHHP's advisory council, which was in charge of supervising the implementation of the program.

Protest did not end immediately, however. Broader access to benefits and the climate of contention fostered the emergence of new groups as well as divisions that fragmented the movement (see Table 2). Protest declined considerably after the distribution of workfare benefits had been accomplished, and more particularly, after presidential elections were held and Néstor Kirchner of the PJ took office in May 2003. The Kirchner administration successfully managed to increase unemployed access to policy making and to integrate some of the largest federations into partisan politics, which facilitated a decline in contention.

EFFECTS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

Unemployed collective action produced three fundamental effects: it redefined social policy for labor-market outsiders, produced significant changes in the modes of interest intermediation between the popular sectors and the state, and led to the creation of linkages between unemployed groups and political parties that have produced relevant and still fluid intraparty transformations.

Social Policy Change

The most significant change has been the creation of the UHHP in 2002, which is unique compared with prior social programs reaching labor-market outsiders. First, to the program is a "social right" available to all of the eligible population (unemployed and informal poor heads-of-household with children younger than

eighteen years of age). Therefore, its creation has signified a dramatic expansion of coverage: the number of workfare beneficiaries rose to two million in 2003, compared with 62,000 in 1996 (see Table 2). Second, the creation of the UHHP entailed a reorientation of social programs away from in-kind benefits, namely foodstuffs, and toward monetary transfers, which became the principal tool for addressing poverty. Indeed, out of total national spending on food and workfare programs, the share of workfare spending jumped from 38 percent in 1997 to 68 percent in 2002.⁷¹ Third, benefits ceased to be temporary; instead, beneficiaries remain eligible until a household member obtains a formal-sector job.⁷²

Another distinctive feature of policy change is that the national state came to control the budget and decision making over the distribution of workfare benefits. Two mechanisms limited the role of the national state before the creation of the UHHP. First, provincial authorities received a quota of national workfare benefits to distribute in their provinces and controlled that distribution on the ground.⁷³ Second, some provinces ran their own small workfare programs, most of which started after the protests in 1997, and financed them with national and provincial funds. Reversing that trend, allocation of benefits became demand-based, which meant an elimination of provincial quotas, and the national government recentralized all federal funds available for workfare.⁷⁴

Recentralization of resources and their dramatic increase has provided the national executive with substantial social-policy authority vis-à-vis subnational units. Indeed, governors initially complained that the national state was controlling the UHHP and claiming all the credit for the program.⁷⁵ Moreover, since 2003 the UHHP has begun to integrate newly created housing and public works programs in some districts. These initiatives have reinforced the presence of the national state at the local level in two ways: the national state finances and runs these programs, and public works are administered by local governments and cooperatives, some of which belong to unemployed federations that are close to the Kirchner faction in the PJ.⁷⁶

Overall, the UHHP has exhibited two major limitations. Despite the fact that the program is a “social right,” access has been constrained because the national government set a deadline for applications. Furthermore, benefit levels are low and standardized, irrespective of household size. Such features have made the UHHP an ineffective tool for lifting people out of poverty.⁷⁷

Changes in Interest Intermediation

The emergence of collective action produced fundamental transformations in the modes of interest intermediation involving the popular sectors. It generated direct access to the state and social benefits on the part of unemployed and grassroots associations, produced alliances between unemployed groups and labor unions, and challenged the bases of support of traditional clientelist parties. Four major changes deserve attention.

The first transformation in interest intermediation is obviously the emergence of the unemployed movement. Considering type of leadership (community-based, militant, partisan) and basic organizational features, the movement has three components.⁷⁸ Table 3 summarizes the characteristics of each.

The first component includes groups with community-based leadership. These groups emerged out of preexisting community associations or networks, which expanded dramatically by incorporating other unemployed groups or helping them to form throughout the country. For example, FTV emerged in 1998 out of *Red de Barrios*, a network of sixteen resource-poor community associations involved in food provisioning and housing in marginal settlements. By 2004, FTV included approximately 3,600 soup kitchens, cooperatives, micro-enterprises, and day-care centers as well as 75,000 workfare beneficiaries.⁷⁹ Federations in the community leadership component (including FTV) boast the highest mobilization capacity, and some have forged alliances with unions and political parties.

The second component includes unemployed federations principally led by social militants. Groups tend to be small, very well connected, and local in scope, operating only in some districts of the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires. These federations are disconnected from political parties and unions, and most of them emerged during the first wave of protest in 1997.

The third component includes federations mobilized top-down by left-party leaders. Compared to other federations, these tend to be less embedded in the community, and their member associations are more dispersed on the ground. Most of these federations emerged shortly before or after the collapse of the De la Rúa administration.

FTV and CCC tend to enjoy the highest mobilizational capacity and geographical scope. Mobilizational capacity has translated into greater power than other groups to negotiate with the state and has allowed FTV and CCC to participate in policy councils in various districts. As shown in Table 3, the pattern of *formal* policy making favors some organizations over others: it privileges or better “fits” the largest federations.

A second fundamental transformation in the associational world refers to the challenge raised by unemployed federations to partisan machines, especially of the PJ. When unemployed collective action emerged, some PJ activists moved into the unemployed movement.⁸⁰ In particular, unemployed associations grew with the inclusion of neighborhood women (*manzaneras*) who had served as volunteers to implement the Life Plan—a food program often seen as a pillar of the PJ machine in metropolitan Buenos Aires—and who left this program to join the unemployed movement.⁸¹ Although local party bosses still have access to key resources, unemployed leaders agree that in the districts in which unemployed groups are strong, traditional patronage networks have lost the remarkable capacity to mobilize people for campaign activity that they enjoyed in the past.⁸²

Table 3
Main Components of Unemployed Movement

Component by Principal Type of Leadership	Main Federations	Scope	Embedded in Community	Mobilization Capacity ^a	Creation of Main Organization in Federation	Union Links	Political Party Links	Participate in Policy Councils
Community leaders	FTV, BP, CCC, MIID ^b	National	Yes	High	1980s; became unemployed groups in 1997/1998	CTA, CCC	FTV and BP with the Kirchner <i>Partido Justicialista</i> (PJ) faction No	Yes
Social militants	MTDAV, MTR ^c	Local (Buenos Aires)	Yes	Medium	1997	No	No	No
Political party leaders	PO, MTL, <i>Teresa Vive</i> ^d	Local, PO national	No	Low, PO high	2000 (PO), others 2002	Only PO	Left-wing parties	No (except for PO)

Source: Author's database.

a. Based on two indicators: number of people they mobilize and number of protest events since creation.

b. *Barríos de Pie* (BP) is a splinter of *Federación Tierra y Vivienda* (FTV), and *Movimiento Independiente de Jubilados y Desocupados* (MIJD) is a splinter of *Corriente Clasista y Combativa* (CCC).

c. *Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados Aníbal Verón* (MTDAV) is a splinter of *Movimiento Teresa Rodríguez* (MTR).

d. *Polo Obrero* (PO) was formed by Partido Obrero, while *Teresa Vive* was created by the *Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores. Movimiento Tierra y Liberación* (MTL) is a splinter of CCC and is allied with the Communist Party.

A third major transformation has been a greater access to social policy resources and regular interaction with the state on the part of popular associations (i.e., neighborhood associations, communal soup kitchens).⁸³ Greater availability of public funding, moreover, has probably increased service provision on the part of these associations.

A 2003 survey of 240 popular associations carried out in eight working-class districts in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires reveals the extent of service provision, public funding, and interactions with the state.⁸⁴ Specifically, 92 percent of the associations surveyed reported that they provided goods, services, and information (i.e., food, training), and of these associations, 52.7 percent provided them using public funding from such sources as social programs. Furthermore, 68.6 percent of the associations surveyed reported that contacts with state agencies were important, and 38 percent participated in state fora or councils.

In terms of linkages, some of these associations have forged ties with unions, especially local unions, and with unemployed workers' federations. According to the survey, those ties are more predominant than links with political parties. Specifically, 22 percent of the associations reported working with unions, 17 percent with unemployed workers' associations, and 10 percent with political parties.

Related to the linkages previously described, the final significant change in interest intermediation concerns labor unions. Reversing the historic pattern of opposing interests between labor-market insiders and outsiders, the CTA, which gathers public-sector unions and was created in opposition to market-reforms in 1992, forged an alliance with FTV. The CCC, which was created in 1994 and seeks to control shop-floor commissions in traditional industries, integrated unemployed groups in 1997.

These alliances served opposition unions by helping them to differentiate themselves from the traditional peak association *Confederación General del Trabajo* (CGT)—which gathers industrial-sector workers—and join with broader forces against public-sector adjustment, especially at the provincial level. The alliances served the unemployed by helping them to mobilize larger numbers, reach other unemployed and community groups, and occasionally gain access to policy makers.

Partisan Changes

The final transformation concerns partisan politics. Recent scholarship has portrayed the PJ as shifting from a labor-based party to a patronage party in the 1980s and 1990s.⁸⁵ When unemployed groups emerged in the late 1990s, they began to form an alternative structure to the distributional networks of the PJ in some districts. Moreover, not being initially tied to political parties, they were available for mobilization by party leaders.

Partisan linkages took two forms. First, small left-wing parties began to organize their own unemployed organizations, which crystallized in various unemployed workers' fronts. Unemployed federations tied to small left-wing parties suffer from several problems, however. They are weakly rooted in popular neighborhoods, and their member associations are dispersed, which hinders their connectivity and makes them more vulnerable to competition on the ground, particularly after mobilization began to subside. Interviews further revealed that left-party leaders face the fact that the unemployed they organize tend to have a Peronist partisan identity, which has prevented left-minority parties from building any significant electoral support among the bases of the organizations they formed.⁸⁶

Second, after his inauguration as president in May 2003, Néstor Kirchner of the PJ began to build an alternative faction within the party, which materialized in the *Frente para la Victoria* (FPV), and sought to incorporate some of the larger unemployed federations. In this way, he attempted to end protest, obtain support for his prostatist program and antineoliberal political discourse, and mobilize votes in favor of FPV, which stands in opposition to some of the groups dominating the political machine of the PJ in metropolitan Buenos Aires.

Mobilization by the PJ has indeed been more successful than that of small left-wing parties. Some of the largest federations have joined the Kirchner faction and modified their contentious tactics in support for the government, participating in acts and campaigns in favor of FPV. In exchange, they have received significant state funding for micro-enterprises and their newly created housing cooperatives.⁸⁷ Furthermore, some unemployed demands have entered the political agenda (i.e., higher benefit levels, infrastructure programs). Some unemployed leaders have been appointed to public office, and others have been included on the ticket of the FPV. In a context of high levels of presidential popularity, in turn, the FPV, which presented alternative candidates to those of the PJ, obtained a landslide victory in 2005 legislative elections, including the bastions of the traditional PJ machine in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires.⁸⁸

COMPARATIVE CONTEXT

The emergence and effects of collective action among the unemployed and informal poor in Argentina defy dominant expectations in recent scholarship on Latin America and show new patterns of social policy, interest intermediation, and partisan politics.

With respect to social policy, the mainstream literature has suggested that since the beginning of market reforms, social policy has shrunk and governments have prioritized highly targeted, temporary programs to reach poor communities, and that these emergency programs and policy retrenchment have discouraged or weakened popular organization and political activism.⁸⁹

The experience of the unemployed movement in Argentina shows the opposite to be true. The workfare program has been fundamental to the emergence of common interests and identities among unemployed and informal poor workers and to the development of their organizations. Workfare benefits became appealing to individual unemployed and informal poor workers as well as to grassroots associations, which sought to administer workfare benefits and community projects. Demands to access benefits—and state responses to these demands—eventually resulted in the expansion and transformation of social protection, even in a context of sharp austerity. Poverty came to be defined as work-related, and workfare programs expanded to form a system of social protection that contrasts sharply with food and infrastructure initiatives designed to tackle poverty.⁹⁰ By late 2005, after two years of sustained growth and declining unemployment, national workfare benefits reached about 1.8 million households, close to their coverage level at the peak of workfare expansion in 2003.⁹¹

Can this policy-centered approach help to account for other cases of large-scale collective action in Latin America, or lack thereof? Looking at other countries that have experienced high unemployment and informalization since the beginnings of market reforms can be instructive.

Chile saw exceedingly high unemployment and poverty levels under the Pinochet dictatorship (1973–1990).⁹² Unlike the Argentine experience, both the early creation of a broad-reaching public-works program run by municipalities and the authoritarian nature of the political regime, in which the state resorted to open repression, discouraged organization and protest.⁹³ In the 1990s, democratization saw lower levels of unemployment and the absence of large-scale collective action. Labor organizations had been severely weakened under authoritarianism, and political parties sought to reach voters in an unmediated way, sometimes explicitly discouraging or showing little enthusiasm in promoting popular mobilization.⁹⁴ Together with these factors, lack of social policy features encouraging collective action (i.e., short supply, discretionary selection, associative administration) in the main programs reaching the informal poor may help to explain the very absence of large-scale collective action.⁹⁵

Brazil has also witnessed high unemployment and labor informality in the 1990s.⁹⁶ Collective action did occur among informal and unemployed workers, but only in the countryside, remaining low in densely populated metropolitan areas, some of which have been hard-hit by joblessness. The policy-centered argument may help account for *within-country* variation across the urban/rural divide. Rural unemployed and informal workers have mobilized primarily around the demand for land, which embodies their need for work and housing and has allowed them to build a strong collective identity. The most salient among rural movements is probably the Landless Workers' Movement, or *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem-Terra* (MST).⁹⁷ The MST has used contentious methods (roadblocks, land invasions, and demonstrations) to speed up the implementation of the agrarian

reform enshrined in the 1988 constitution and to secure financial support for agricultural production.⁹⁸ When mobilization is successful, it provides rural workers with an individual benefit, namely, land. Furthermore, it provides state support for new settlements (i.e., state-subsidized credit, infrastructure, and education programs), which are frequently administered by the movement.

Slow-moving implementation of agrarian reform has encouraged contention for access to land. In turn, associative administration of state programs has provided the movement with important organizational resources.⁹⁹ Together with a similar pattern of state responses identified in the Argentine case (negotiation, or confrontation leading to negotiation),¹⁰⁰ policy incentives (slow-moving agrarian reform and associative administration of state programs) may be important factors for understanding the evolution of the MST. Indeed, the movement has succeeded in organizing poor and unemployed workers in the countryside and in forging important alliances with church groups, the largest labor organization (*Central Única dos Trabalhadores* [CUT]), and the Workers' Party, or *Partido dos Trabalhadores*.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the movement has achieved substantial progress on land distribution, expansion of subsidized credit, and education programs in the countryside.¹⁰²

Urban areas have presented a different picture in the 1990s. Lack of policy incentives has probably discouraged the emergence of large-scale collective action among unemployed and informal poor workers. Three different attempts to support or mobilize the informal poor and unemployed took shape in the 1990s. First, some unemployed workers received job-search assistance and job training from labor unions, often with financial support from the unemployment fund for formal workers, *Fundo de Amparo ao Trabalhador*.¹⁰³ Although important, this strategy did not allow unemployed workers to build ties and foster common interests. Second, street vendors and transportation workers carried out the most salient protests among urban informal workers.¹⁰⁴ These protests failed to advance broad-sweeping issues with which to galvanize broader support across the informal sector, and they did not lead to significant organization-building around work-related demands. Third, with support from the CUT, the MST tried to recruit urban unemployed workers in the 1990s. Land, migration, and rural conflict have not been attractive for large numbers of urban unemployed, however.¹⁰⁵ Despite efforts by unions and rural movements, urban organization around unemployment did not emerge.¹⁰⁶

Aside from illustrating understudied effects of social policy on collective action in Latin America, the experience of the unemployed movement reveals new forms of popular interest intermediation. Existing research points to obstacles to the aggregation of common interests not only among the unemployed and informal poor but also across the formal and informal sectors. Unemployed federations in Argentina have nonetheless forged alliances with opposition labor unions around common policy goals. Alliances that cut across the formal-informal divide have also taken shape in Brazil, where the major labor confederation, CUT,

is allied with rural workers' movements. In the case of Brazil, these alliances are longstanding and can be traced back to the emergence of a "new social movement unionism" during the democratic transition of the 1980s.¹⁰⁷

Finally, with respect to party politics, linkages between unemployed groups and political parties in Argentina show a reconfiguration of partisan social basis of support, especially of the PJ, and add variation in the ways in which political parties have mobilized the unemployed and informal poor since redemocratization in Latin America. These linkages have not only mobilized them as *voters* or *clients*—reaching them through patronage networks—but also as *organized actors* seeking to integrate their own associations into partisan politics. Together with an exploration of party linkages, the fundamental issues of whether and why the unemployed and informal poor manage to form national-level organizations—and what kind of social policy reaches them—call for further cross-country research.

NOTES

1. Following Portes and Hoffman, I understand informal workers to be casual vendors, self-employed workers (minus professionals and technicians), unpaid family workers, and noncontractual wage workers not covered by labor laws. Alejandro Portes and Kelly Hoffman, "Latin American Class Structures: Their Composition and Change during the Neoliberal Era," *Latin American Research Review* 38, no. 1 (2003): 50.

2. On working-class organization in Latin America, see Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2002); and Philip Oxhorn, "The Social Foundations of Latin America's Recurrent Populism: Problems of Popular Sector Class Formation and Collective Action," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 11, no. 2 (June 1998): 212–46.

3. I built this data set using online editions of two national newspapers, *Clarín* (1998–2003) and *La Nación* (1996–2003). For some years, I have also used paper and online editions of *Página 12*, online editions of local newspapers *Río Negro* and *Diario El Día*, and a chronology of protest built by *Observatorio Social de América Latina* covering the years 2000 to 2003. The latter sources served to check the reliability of the two national newspapers. For the years 1993 through 1995, I assume absence of unemployed protest based on existing literature, interviews, and data on social and labor conflict collected by the think tank Nueva Mayoría (www.nuevamayoria.com), which sets the beginning of unemployed protest in 1997. The unit of analysis is the *act of protest*, from the point when a particular set of demands is made through mobilization until mobilization finishes. Mobilizations include demonstrations, marches, occupation of buildings, and roadblocks. I gathered and analyzed data on several characteristics of those acts (type, sponsors, location, duration, number of participants, demands, targets, violence, victims, arrests, and policy deals). This data set, which includes 962 acts of protest, is the most comprehensive data set of unemployed/informal poor protest in Argentina that I know for that period. For the construction of data sets of mobilization, see Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 460–87; and Beverly J. Silver, *Forces of Labor* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 180–203.

4. The umbrella groups that form part of the unemployed movement call themselves fronts, federations, or movements. Some fall into what McCarthy calls the "classic national

federation,” a three-level structure, while others are two-level structures, that is, local organizations connected to a national unit. To simplify, I call them federations. See John D. McCarthy, “Persistence and Change among Nationally Federated Social Movements,” in *Social Movements and Organization Theory*, ed. G. D. Davis, D. McAdam, W. R. Scott, and M. Zald (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 196.

5. The unemployed movement is also known as the Piquetero Movement.

6. On informal workers, see Kenneth Roberts, “Party Society Linkages and Democratic Representation in Latin America,” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 27, no. 53 (2002): 24, cited in Steven Levitsky, “From Labor Politics to Machine Politics: The Transformation of Party Linkages in Argentine Peronism (1983–1999),” *Latin American Research Review* 3, no. 3 (2002): 8.

7. Scholarship understands the popular sectors as the lower and middle-lower classes; see Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, 788.

8. For example, Marcus Kurtz, “The Dilemmas of Democracy in the Open Economy: Lessons from Latin America,” *World Politics* 56, no. 2 (January 2004): 264; Kenneth Roberts, “Social Inequalities without Class Cleavages in Latin America’s Neoliberal Era,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36, no. 4 (2002): 5–7; Oxhorn, “Social Foundations,” 220; and Portes and Hoffman, “Latin American Class Structures,” 41–82.

9. In 2003, workfare programs reached 20 percent of total households in the country. Elaborated from Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Seguridad Social, *Impacto del Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar en la Pobreza* (<http://www.mts.gov.ar>, accessed June 2006), and household data from INDEC, accessed June 2006, <http://www.indec.gov.ar>.

10. In particular, the distribution of free outpatient medicine through the program *Remediar*, which is run by the Ministry of Health, as well as flexibilization of pension rules and expansion of noncontributory pensions.

11. See Oxhorn, “Social Foundations,” 218–19.

12. Unemployed leaders have been appointed to two National Under-Secretariats, those of Community Affairs and of Land and Social Habitat. Another leader has become legislator for *Frente para la Victoria*, President Kirchner’s PJ faction. Formal policy making includes the Advisory Council of the Unemployed Heads-of-Households Program, local councils, and the newly created Joint Coordination of Policy for the Conurbano Bonaerense.

13. All of these factors are present in the seminal sociological study by Maristella Svampa and Sebastián Pereyra, *Entre la Ruta y el Barrio* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2003). Another study highlights, instead, the 2001 financial crisis as the trigger for protest; see Edward Epstein, “The Piquetero Movement of the Greater Buenos Aires: Working Class Protest during the Current Argentine Crisis” (presented at the Meetings of the Latin American Studies Association, Dallas, March 27–30, 2003).

14. In 2003, 2004, and 2006, I carried out eighteen interviews with unemployed leaders, public officials, municipal-level union leaders, and academics. Nine additional interviews were conducted by Juan Ignacio Vallejos in 2004.

15. Author’s data set of unemployed protest.

16. The analysis of Brazil is based on fieldwork carried out in Brazil in spring 2006 with support from the Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy and the Berkeley Institute for International Studies.

17. On collective action, see Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965); Claus Offe and Helmut Wisenthal, “Two Logics of Collective Action,” in *Disorganized Capitalism*, ed. C. Offe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press,

1985); Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Ruth Collier and Samuel Handlin, "Shifting Interest Regimes of the Working Classes in Latin America" (manuscript, University of California, Berkeley, 2005).

18. Portes and Hoffman, "Latin American Class Structures"; and Roberts, "Social Inequalities," 22.

19. See Portes and Hoffman, "Latin American Class Structures," Tables 4 and 10. Unemployment available at <http://www.indec.gov.ar>.

20. See Roberts, "Social Inequalities," 22.

21. Kurtz, "Dilemmas of Democracy"; and Oxhorn, "Social Foundations."

22. Sebastián Etchemendy, "Repression, Exclusion and Inclusion: Government-union Relations and Patterns of Labor Reform in Liberalizing Economies," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 3 (April, 2004): 273–90; M. Victoria Murillo, *Labor Unions, Partisan Coalitions and Market Reforms in Latin America* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and M. Lorena Cook, "Labor Reform and Dual Transitions in the Southern Cone and Brazil," *Latin American Politics and Society* 44 (Spring 2002): 1–34.

23. For example, unions negotiated unemployment insurance, which only covered formal-sector workers and was created in 1991.

24. Sebastián Etchemendy, *Models of Economic Liberalization: Compensating the "Losers" in Argentina, Chile, and Spain* (PhD diss., Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, 2004).

25. Kenneth Roberts, "Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism in Latin America: The Peruvian Case," *World Politics* 48, no.1 (1996): 105–7; and Kurt Weyland, "Neoliberalism and Neopopulism in Latin America: Unexpected Affinities," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 31, no. 3 (1996): 3–31.

26. Steven Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-based Parties in Latin America* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

27. See Andrés Thompson, *Público y Privado* (Buenos Aires: UNICEF-LOSADA, 1995), Introduction.

28. Among others, see Philip Oxhorn, "Is the Century of Corporatism Over?" in *What Kind of Democracy? What Kind of Market?* ed. Philip Oxhorn and Graciela Ducatzenzeiler (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State Press, 1998), 208–11.

29. McAdam et al. define framing processes as "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and themselves that legitimate collective action" in D. McAdam, J. D. MacCarthy, and M. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6.

30. McAdam et al. define them as "collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action" in D. McAdam et al., *Comparative Perspectives*, 3. See also Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, chap. 8.

31. Tarrow understands political opportunity structure as "consistent—but not necessarily formal, permanent or national—signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements." Signals include "the opening up of access to power, shifting alignments, availability of influential allies, and cleavages within and among elites." Sidney Tarrow, "States and Opportunities," in D. McAdam et al., eds., *Comparative Perspectives*, 54. See also Doug McAdam, "Conceptual Origins, Current Problems, Future Directions," in D. McAdam et al. eds., *Comparative Perspectives*, 23–40.

32. For example, Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1992); Margaret Weir, *Politics and Jobs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State?* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge

University Press, 1994); Kathleen Thelen, "How Institutions Evolve," in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Reuschemeyer (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

33. See Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*; and Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State?*

34. Paul Pierson, "The Study of Policy Development," *The Journal of Policy and History* 17, no. 1 (2005): 45; and Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 58.

35. Joe Soss, "Lessons of Welfare: Policy Design, Political Learning, and Political Action," *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 2 (June 1999): 363–80.

36. Offe and Wiesenthal, "Two Logics of Collective Action," 183.

37. Olson, *Logic of Collective Action*.

38. See Bo Rothstein, "Labor Market Institutions and Working Class Strength," in *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, ed. Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longstreth (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

39. See Karen Anderson, "The Politics of Retrenchment in a Social Democratic Welfare State," *Comparative Political Studies* 34, no. 9 (November 2001): 1063–91.

40. Margaret Weir, "Ideas and the Politics of Bounded Innovation," in *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, ed. Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longstreth (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

41. *Ibid.*, 192.

42. In 1989, faced with hyperinflation, growing unemployment, and poverty, the Menem administration (1989–1999) created a food-stamps program, *Bono Solidario*, and announced the future creation of *Plan Trabajar* (see *Clarín*, December 8, 1989, 10). *Bono Solidario* was short-lived and unevenly implemented, while *Plan Trabajar* did not prosper. Following the implementation of a number of small, short-lived job programs in the early 1990s, growing unemployment resurfaced the idea of designing a more systematic scheme. *Plan Trabajar* was finally introduced in 1996.

43. Community service projects were included in 1997.

44. Unemployment insurance for formal-sector workers covered an additional 5 percent of the unemployed in 1997. See Laura Golbert, "Los Problemas del Empleo y las Políticas Sociales," *Boletín Informativo Techint* 296 (1998): Table 4.

45. Maria Elina Estevénez and Patricia Feliu, *Programa Trabajar II. Evaluación Social. Informe Final* (manuscript, 1998), 15 and 78.

46. Two examples of preexisting groups are *Red de Barrios*, a network of sixteen community associations in marginal settlements, which became the basis of *Federación Tierra y Vivienda* (FTV), one of the largest unemployed federations; and *Centro María Elena*, a community center created in 1989 in a marginal settlement, which ultimately became the principal unemployed group in *Corriente Clasista y Combativa* (CCC).

47. For a description of program rules, see Estevénez and Feliu, *Programa Trabajar II*.

48. About collecting funds from beneficiaries to finance community projects, see Estevénez and Feliu, *Programa Trabajar II*, 15. About that practice in the unemployed movement, see also <http://www.clarin.com/diario/especiales/informes.html>, section on financing.

49. A description of the scoring system can be found in "Ardura: Los Planes Trabajar Son la Comida o el Hambre de los Pobres," *La Nación*, March 3, 2002.

50. See Svampa and Pereyra, *Entre la Ruta*, 44.

51. Interview, Buenos Aires, Argentina, March 8, 2004.

52. Interview, Buenos Aires, Argentina, January 15, 2004.

53. Interview, Buenos Aires, Argentina, March 8, 2004.
54. For example, in an interview, an unemployed leader suggests, “we struggled for a year . . . [and] we obtained the administration [of workfare benefits].” Buenos Aires, Argentina, January 2004.
55. Epstein, “Piquetero Movement.”
56. In 1989, Argentina experienced hyperinflation, growing poverty, unemployment, and a deep political crisis. The crisis did not produce unemployed contention or an immediate full-scale social policy response.
57. Maristella Svampa and Sebastián Pereyra, “La Política de las Organizaciones Piqueteras,” in *Tomar la Palabra*, ed. Federico Naishtat (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2005), 346.
58. *Ibid.*, 355.
59. In June 1996, unemployed workers in the oil enclave of Cutral-co set up their first roadblock, demanding from provincial authorities a solution to their plight. On that occasion, the governor promised to generate private investment, and the conflict remained local. In April 1997, unemployed workers joined a teachers’ demonstration, which ended up in riots after a woman was killed. Given the magnitude of the conflict and facing legislative elections, the national government intervened, offering 1,500 national workfare benefits to protestors.
60. For a description of the first wave of protest, see Candelaria Garay, “Policy Initiatives as a Trigger for Contention: Origins of the Unemployed Movement in Argentina” (master’s thesis, Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, April 2003). See also “Ruta Liberada a Cambio de Trabajo,” *Página 12*, April 19, 1997.
61. On the origins of some associations, see Svampa and Pereyra, *Entre la Ruta*; and Denis Merklen, *Asentamientos en La Matanza* (Buenos Aires: Catálogos Editora, 1991).
62. Interview, Buenos Aires, Argentina, March 8, 2004.
63. Elaborated from Golbert, “Problemas del Empleo y las Políticas Sociales,” Table 4; and Estevénez and Feliu, *Programa Trabajar II*, 19.
64. By mid-2000, fifteen provinces ran twenty-four workfare programs, five of which were created before 1997 and nineteen of which were created between 1997 and 2000. Secretaría de Política Económica, “Informe sobre los Programas de Empleo de Ejecución Provincial,” *Documentos de Trabajo 9* (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Economía y Producción, 2001).
65. Instability involves cutbacks and delays in payments, even if resources are later restituted.
66. See David M. Woodruff, “Boom, Gloom and Doom: Balance Sheets, Monetary Fragmentation and the Politics of Financial Crisis in Argentina and Russia,” *Politics & Society* 33, no.1 (March 2005): 3–45.
67. No official data are available on the monthly evolution of beneficiaries from 1998 through 2001. See “El Gobierno Promete Duplicar los Planes Trabajar en Agosto,” *Clarín online*, July 31, 2000. In Neuquén, beneficiaries dropped 90 percent in March 2000; see “Por Ahora no Reactivarán los Planes Trabajar,” *Río Negro online*, March 3, 2000.
68. Author’s data set of unemployed protest.
69. See Woodruff, “Boom, Gloom and Doom:” 3–45; Steven Levitsky and Maria Victoria Murillo, “Argentina Weathers the Storm,” *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 4 (2003): 152–66.
70. The Unemployed Heads of Households Program was created by Decrees 165/02 and 565/02. About food programs, see <http://www.siempro.gov.ar>, accessed August 2002.
71. Elaborated with data from Dirección Nacional de Programación del Gasto Social, *Caracterización del Gasto Público Social 1980–1997*, accessed June 2006,

<http://www.mecon.gov.ar>; *Síntesis de los Principales Programas Sociales*, accessed August 2002, <http://www.siempro.gov.ar>; and Fabián Repetto, "Transferencias de Recursos para Programas Alimentarios en las Provincias," *Documento 54* (Buenos Aires: CEDI, 2001).

72. The beneficiary is the "household" in which children under the age of eighteen reside. The household "chooses" a beneficiary to perform the workfare obligation. The expectation is that adults in the household have low-paying, informal-sector jobs or are unemployed. Interview with Ministry of Labor official, Buenos Aires, Argentina, July 2004.

73. Laura Golbert, "Plan Jefes y Jefas, Derecho de Inclusión o Paz Social?" *Serie Políticas Sociales* (Chile: CEPAL, 2004), 31.

74. Secretaría de Política Económica, "Informe sobre los Programas de Empleo de Ejecución Provincial 2002," *Documentos de Trabajo 14* (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Economía y Producción, December 2003).

75. See Daniel Míguez, "Una Batalla Política en Medio de las Urgencias de la Gente," *Clarín online*, May 22, 2002.

76. Interviews with unemployed leader, Buenos Aires, Argentina, July 1, 2004, and with local-level union leader, Buenos Aires, Argentina, July 31, 2006.

77. In 2006, the national government announced that it would initiate a gradual change in workfare programs, including an increase in benefit levels for workfare beneficiaries moving into a job training program or into an income-support scheme for families with at least three children. See "Reestructuran los Planes Sociales, con Aumentos a Partir de Abril," *Clarín*, February 14, 2006.

78. For further analysis of unemployed federations, see Svampa and Pereyra, *Entre la Ruta*.

79. Daniel Gallo, "Quién es Quién en el Dividido Mapa Piquetero," *La Nación*, June 28, 2004.

80. Interviews with unemployed leaders, Buenos Aires, Argentina, March and July 2004.

81. In 1997, the *manzanas* numbered close to 30,000 women. Gisela Zaramberg, "Alpargatas y Libros: Estilos de Gestión, Género y Política Social en Argentina y Chile," *Serie Políticas Sociales 90* (Chile: CEPAL, 2004), 12. See Svampa and Pereyra, *Entre la Ruta*, 92, 132, and 186.

82. Interviews with unemployed leaders, Buenos Aires, Argentina, March and July 2004.

83. Access to resources on the part of more autonomous associations tended to be difficult before the expansion of social assistance. Organizations that survived autonomously did so by forming networks and/or by having ties with larger NGOs; Svampa and Pereyra, *Entre la Ruta*, 44.

84. The survey belongs to the project "Comparative Infrastructure of Representation in Latin America" (CIRELA), which examines patterns of popular political participation in Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, and Peru. Because the survey relied on chain-referral sampling, data must be interpreted with caution.

85. Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-based Parties*.

86. Interviews with unemployed leaders, Buenos Aires, Argentina, January 2004.

87. Support for micro-enterprises and housing cooperatives also reaches more autonomous federations. Interview with unemployed leader, Buenos Aires, Argentina, July 1, 2004.

88. FPV garnered more than 40 percent of the vote, while the official PJ received less than 20 percent. See “El Mapa del Gran Buenos Aires, Pintado de Color Kirchnerista,” *Clarín online*, October 24, 2005.

89. Kurtz, “Dilemmas of Democracy.”

90. On new forms of state activism and social policy in advanced industrialized countries, see Jonah Levy, ed., *The State after Statism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

91. Unemployment reached 19.6 percent in the first quarter of 2003 and 10.6 percent in the last quarter of 2005 (<http://www.indec.gov.ar>, accessed October 2006). Poverty reached 47.8 percent in the first quarter of 2003 and 33.8 percent in the last quarter of 2005 (<http://www.indec.gov.ar>, accessed October 2006). Data on workfare programs are provided by the Ministry of Labor.

92. In the early 1980s, Chile’s unemployment rate rose to 20 percent. In the late 1990s, it stood at approximately 10 percent. Data available at <http://www.bcentral.cl>, accessed October 2006.

93. Etchemendy, *Models of Economic Liberalization*, 294–317.

94. See, among others, Patricia Hipsher, “Democratic Transitions and Social Movement Outcomes,” in *From Contention to Democracy*, ed. M. Giugni, D. McAdam, and C. Tilly (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 159–60; Roberts, “Social Inequalities,” 23–24; and Etchemendy, *Models of Economic Liberalization*.

95. Workfare programs were eliminated when unemployment went down in the late 1980s. Currently, the main programs reaching poor households consist of monetary transfers (family allowances, family subsidies, water subsidies, and noncontributory pensions). Nearly 19 percent of the households receive at least one of these monetary transfers. See José P. Arellano, “Políticas Sociales para el Crecimiento con Equidad, Chile (1990–2002),” in *Estudios Socio-económicos CIEPLAN* 26 (Santiago de Chile, April 2004), 12–14.

96. In Brazil, the unemployment rate was approximately 9 percent in the late 1990s (<http://www.iets.org.br>, accessed October 2006). However, in São Paulo, it peaked at 19 percent in the late 1990s (<http://www.seade.gov.br>, accessed October 2006).

97. Although groups representing landless workers in Brazil had been formed in the past, the MST, which was created in the mid-1980s, is the first movement representing landless workers throughout the country and the first to target its demands to the national government. On the MST, see João P. Stedile and Bernardo M. Fernandes, *Brava Gente, A Trajetória do MST e a Luta Pela Terra no Brasil* (São Paulo: Perseu Abramo, 1999); and Bruno Konder Comparato, “A Ação Política do MST,” *São Paulo em Perspectiva* 15, no. 4 (2001): 105–18. On rural organization in Brazil, see Peter Houtzager and Marcus Kurtz, “The Institutional Roots of Popular Mobilization: State Transformations and Rural Politics in Brazil and Chile (1964–1995),” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 2 (2000): 394–425.

98. See, for example, Ana C. Torres, “Sem Reforma Agrária, Cresce Luta no Campo,” *Correio Braziliense*, August 19, 1990; and “Pastoral da Terra Estimula as Invasões,” *Jornal do Brasil*, July 1, 1994.

99. Jose Maschio, “ONGs e Governo Federal Financiam MST,” *Folha de São Paulo*, October 22, 1995; and “MST Continua Recebendo Verbas Apesar das Brigas com Governo,” *O Globo*, September 20, 1998.

100. See, for example, “Governo Negocia para Evitar Saques,” *O Globo*, May 27, 1998. On MST-state interactions, see Comparato, “A Ação Política,” 108–9.

101. About the movement's coalitional choices, see Wendy M. Sinek, "Grievances, Resources, and Coalitional Choices: The Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil" (paper presented at the Meetings of the Western Political Science Association, Portland, Oregon, March 11–13, 2004); and Comparato "A Ação Política," 112–17.

102. Fernandes found a positive relationship between land invasions and distribution of land. See Bernardo Fernandes, *A Formação do MST no Brasil* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1999), cited in Comparato "A Ação Política," 108.

103. Interview with national official of CUT, São Paulo, Brazil, June 26, 2006.

104. For an analysis of protests in the 1990s, see Salvador Sandoval, "Alternative Forms of Working-class Organization in Brazil Today" (manuscript, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2004).

105. See, for example, "CUT Lista Desempregados para Invasão," *Folha Online*, November 14, 1995; and Amaury Riberiro Jr., "A Nova Estratégia do MST é Recrutar Desempregados," *O Globo*, February 22, 1999).

106. It should be noted that in recent years, the national and some local governments have introduced programs supporting cooperatives and micro-enterprises to generate jobs. Crucially, in 2001, the Cardoso administration (1994–2002) created income transfer programs reaching poor families (especially Bolsa Escola). The administration of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2002–2006) unified those programs into a single scheme, *Bolsa Família*, and expanded it massively.

107. See Gay W. Seidman, *Manufacturing Militancy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

Candelaria Garay (cgaray@berkeley.edu) is a PhD candidate in political science at the University of California, Berkeley. She is working on her dissertation, titled "The Changing Social Policy Divide: Informal and Formal Workers in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico." The project seeks to conceptualize and explain emerging configurations of social policy in Latin America since the beginnings of market reforms.