

**Gender, Modernity, and Technology:
Chile during Four Different Political Regimes, 1964-2000**

*by Margaret Power
Illinois Institute of Technology*

I conducted research for my project, “Gender, Modernity, and Technology: Chile during Four Different Political Regimes, 1964-2000,” at the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) for three weeks in June 2003. This project examines how four very different Chilean governments, ranging from the socialist government of Salvador Allende to the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, understood and employed ideas about modernity, gender, and technology. My research at the RAC focused on the 1960s, the period during which Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei was president. I examined records in four different RAC collections: the Population Council records, the Rockefeller Foundation Archives, the records of IBEC, and the papers of John D. Rockefeller 3rd.

The records of the Population Council contain a vast amount of material that was highly relevant and useful to my research. The records offer a window into the attitudes, resources, policies, and relationships of the family planning community in the U.S. and Chile during the 1960s. The records consist of letters between officials of the Chilean and U.S. family planning organizations and the Chilean medical community; grant proposals from Chilean scholars and doctors, primarily directed to the Population Council; the responses of the Population Council to these proposals; studies conducted by Chilean scholars and medical personnel and reactions to them; detailed planning notes, letters, papers, and the program related to the 1967 International Family Planning Conference held in Santiago, Chile; records of CELADE, the Centro Latinoamericana de

Demografía; overviews and detailed reports on the status of family planning, methods of birth control, and the rate and incidence of abortions in Chile, to name only some of the topics covered in these files.

Family planning was a very contentious issue in the 1960s, around the world and in Chile, a Catholic country. These documents help to illuminate why Chile became a focal point for family planning in the latter part of the 1960s. First, Chile had two significant and prestigious universities -- the Universidad Católica and the Universidad de Chile -- that served as centers of scholarly, scientific, and medical research and practice. The Universidad de Chile enjoyed a well-established and highly-respected medical school, many of whose scientists and doctors supported family planning. Second, the Christian Democratic government of Eduardo Frei, elected in 1964, also supported family planning. Third, CELADE, the Centro Latinoamericana de Demografía, with its forceful director Carmen Miró, was located in Santiago. Fourth, different U.S. foundations, principally the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation, backed the Chilean family planning, scientific, and medical community with money, resources, technical support, and personnel.

What do these files tell us about family planning and the medical, political, and scientific community in Chile at that time? These files dispel the belief that family planning was simply a tool used by policy planners in the U.S. to eliminate population growth and decrease the population in poor countries. Certainly, as the discourse used by Agency for International Development (AID), the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Population Council officials reveals, sectors in the U.S. viewed the “demographic explosion” with alarm. They linked the increase in population with poverty and

backwardness and defined smaller families and family planning as central to modernity and an improved standard of living. But less well known is the fact that a substantial portion of the Chilean medical, scientific, and political community also advocated reducing the size of families and the judicious use of family planning. Although both Chilean and U.S. forces supported family planning, they did not necessarily do so for the same reasons. The writings of U.S. officials indicate a uniformity of motivation: reduce the growth in population and thereby tackle the issue of poverty. Some Chileans backed family planning for this reason, while others, reflecting perhaps the influence of the Catholic Church, promoted it because they felt it would reduce the alarmingly high rates of induced abortions that were then prevalent in Chile.

What these documents further show are the similarities and dissimilarities in purpose between Chilean and U.S. actors. Some of their values differed, but they worked together because they shared some goals. This insight, which I had not had before looking at these archives, indicates that the Chileans were more than just pawns in a politic of family planning and population control designed and imposed by the U.S., which is the common assumption about U.S. family planning policies in Latin America; they were also critical actors whose desires and expertise shaped the family planning programs in Chile, and possibly elsewhere in Latin America.

Yet, even if the Chilean medical and scholarly community shared a unity of purpose with U.S. foundations and agencies, these two sectors did not operate on an equal footing. Certainly, the letters between Chileans and North American members of the Population Council reveal an extraordinary degree of mutual respect and friendship. Nevertheless, it is also clear that the relationship involved a certain amount of

dependency. The files contain numerous requests from Chilean doctors to the Population Council for research and travel money; anti-contraceptives, primarily IUDs; and even advice. These repeated petitions for resources make it clear that to a large extent, the Chilean medical personnel relied on the Population Council (and other U.S. foundations and government agencies) for financial support; they would have found it difficult, perhaps impossible, to carry out their studies, attend conferences, or distribute IUDs without the monetary and material donations of the North Americans. However, it is equally true that the North Americans depended on the Chileans. Without their cooperation, their knowledge of the culture, their ability to conduct research and distribute the means of birth control, the North American family planning programs would have failed.

Since my research project seeks to illuminate the connections between modernity, gender, and technology, I paid particular attention to discussions of, or references to, technology and gender. Gender was seldom directly addressed, yet it was present nonetheless. All but one of the studies proposed to the Population Council assumed that family planning programs were to be directed at women. The professionals carrying out the studies viewed women, not men, as the gender responsible for and most interested in controlling reproduction. One of the key sites frequently mentioned for educating Chilean women about family planning were the Mothers' Centers. These were women's centers established by the Frei government, a fact that also indicates government backing of the program. Notably, many of the studies implicitly proceeded as if most Chilean women wanted access to family planning, and failed to consider the response of Chilean

men. They operated as if Chilean women were free agents who could make their own choices about the use of birth control, a belief that I am not sure was accurate.

Some scholars have investigated the connections between U.S. population policies and U.S. government policies towards poor Latin Americans in general, and the Chilean family planning movement and government policies in particular. However, the relationship between family planning and technology in Chile has not been researched as far as I know. In order to understand family planning, it is important to understand social attitudes, but it is also critical to learn about the technology of family planning. What methods were used? What means were available to practice family planning? How were people trained to carry out family planning? What resources were available to them? Little to no research has been done on the local manufacturing or importation of birth control methods; the companies in Chile or elsewhere that produced or distributed these products; or the Chilean scientific and medical community's relationship to the development of methods of contraception. These files reveal that these issues vitally concerned both U.S. and Chilean family planners. The Population Council encouraged the manufacture of contraceptives in Chile (and in the U.S.) and funded their importation. A Chilean doctor who worked closely with the Population Council, Dr. Jaime Zipper invented the Zipper IUD, which was used in Chile.

Another insight from my research was the formation and existence of an intellectual network between scholars and medical professionals; members of U.S. foundations; U.S. government agencies such as AID or the Inter-American Development Bank; and transnational institutions, such as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). The principal members of this community were officers of the Ford and

Rockefeller Foundations and the Population Council; doctors and professors from the Universities of Chile and the Catholic University; and academics from FLACSO (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales). These records clearly show the connections that flourished between intellectuals, think tanks, and funding sources and their role as gatekeepers in the creation and maintenance of an intellectual community. This elitist grouping relied on each other for funds, opinions, recommendations, and knowledge. Since they controlled money and resources, to a large extent they determined what research was or was not able to be conducted. They thus set the policy for Chileans who had very little input, if any, into their deliberations or conclusions.

The Population Council records contain proposals from Chilean doctors and scientists for funding. These proposals, and the commentary on them, indicate the types of medical and scientific research that was being carried out in Chile, the questions they asked, the reasons they were conducting their studies, what they hoped to achieve, the resources available to them, and the connections that existed between them and their North American counterparts.

One factor explaining the apparently widespread support for family planning among both the medical community and the Christian Democratic government of Eduardo Frei was the high incidence of abortions. Studies repeatedly refer to the high rates of abortions and the need to reduce this figure. They also explicitly argue that offering women methods to control reproduction would reduce the number of women who turn to abortions to prevent the birth of children.

The files also contain material on the debates that emerged concerning the best method of birth control to use. These papers offer a fascinating account of corporate

attempts to encourage the Population Council to adopt their product, the attempts to develop the 28-day birth control pill to replace the 21-day pill, the efforts of the Population Council to determine the most effective method of birth control, and the increasing popularity of the birth control pill and declining support for the IUD.

The Rockefeller Foundation Papers

The records of the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) document the critical role that the RF played, often in close cooperation with the Ford Foundation, in supporting the development of the social sciences in Chilean universities. The foundation understood that in order to promote “development” and “modernization” in Latin America, the region needed a trained body of professionals who could analyze problems, determine solutions to them, design the programs needed to overcome them; in addition, the Rockefeller Foundation perceived the importance of establishing academic units capable of training others to carry out this work. To that end, in the 1960s the RF invested resources and time into the creation, expansion, and professionalization of social science academics in the University of Chile and the Catholic University.

Specifically, these records contain a variety of grant proposals made by Chilean scholars located in these universities, or in FLACSO, to the Rockefeller Foundation. They also include materials that detail the programs, analyze the achievements or weaknesses of the university programs, and suggest future directions. As a result, they provide the reader with rich insights into academic life and thinking in the social science divisions of these two Chilean universities; the values and goals of Rockefeller Foundation officers, whose attitudes reflect the developmental framework in which they

operated and which shaped the late 1960s; and the nuts and bolts of how Chilean universities and academics functioned.

As these papers reveal, the influence of Chilean universities, academics, and scholarship extended far beyond Chile. Both the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations saw Chilean universities as highly sophisticated and successful sites of learning. They assessed Chilean academics as some of, if not the, best in the whole region. As a result, they believed that their financial investment in Chilean universities would have a ripple effect far beyond Chile. In fact, they calculated that students from all over Latin America would attend Chilean universities so that by building the Chilean universities they were, in reality, developing scholars and policy makers from the whole continent.

IBEC (International Basic Economy Corporation) Files

The IBEC files primarily consist of reports on the specific projects that IBEC managed in Chile. In the late 1960s IBEC projects in Chile included the Ready Mix concrete company, a national mutual fund, an Arbor Acres poultry importation and distribution project, a recently established concrete block and mine project. IBEC Chile also directed the IBEC Management Services Inc. and offered various services to both the Chilean and foreign business community, such as marketing surveys, financial studies, and other management studies. IBEC Chile worked with the American Technical Assistance Corporation, an organization I knew little about.

The files on IBEC operations in Chile were not particularly helpful to me. IBEC investment in Chile was limited and occurred in fields that were not very relevant to my research. I believe that the IBEC files should be much more interesting to people doing

research on the Rockefellers' or U.S. investment in Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Peru, or Mexico. However, the IBEC files do contain documents from a variety of sources writing about development policies and philosophies. For example, one paper from the Inter-American Social Development Institute discusses "A New Approach to Social and Civic Development Assistance in Latin America and the Caribbean." These papers offer insights into the mindset, attitudes, and proposals of policy makers and scholars in the 1960s who worked on or formulated "development" plans.

These records can offer a more or less explicit commentary on Chilean politics. They are peppered with comments about an "oyster venture which was grabbed last week by Unidad Popular extreme leftists" or the efforts undertaken by IBEC in December 1970 to "extract" itself from the Chilean situation following the September electoral victory of Salvador Allende and the Unidad Popular.

Rockefeller Family Archives, John D. Rockefeller 3rd Papers

The diary of John D. Rockefeller 3rd consists of daily entries chronicling his 1966 trip to South America. I found his descriptions of politics and personalities in Chile fascinating. Sharing the Rockefeller Foundation's concerns with and politics on family planning, he met with many of the key figures active in the family planning movement in Chile. His careful notes described his personal impressions of these individuals and offered a cogent analysis of the family planning movement. He paid close attention to the Catholic Church, and commented that it, like the Frei government, supported birth control in order to decrease the high rate of abortions. His diary provides both personal insights into his personality -- he appeared to be, among other things, a very precise

person -- as well as that of key political figures in Chile. As a Rockefeller, he had access to top-level politicians, including President Frei, who favorably impressed him. He extolled Chile's family planning policy, which he notes has been included in the nation's public health program, "the first time this has happened in Latin America."