

# Augusto Pinochet and the Support of Chilean Right-Wing Women

Written by Amelia Guy-Meakin

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### Augusto Pinochet's (1974-1990) Most Loyal Supporters: The Case of Chilean Right-Wing Women

#### Introduction

This essay asks why Chilean right-wing women actively supported and empowered Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship (1974-1990), even though it was characterised by strongly patriarchal authority structures that seemed to denigrate them or assign them to subordinate social and symbolic roles within their society.

For the purposes of this essay, the "right-wing" (both centre and far) are defined as groups that "presuppose tradition as an essentialist, ahistorical entity and... preserving or reviving it".[1] They are radicals but not necessarily extremists. The right in Chile was characterised by their anticommunist stance, opposition to class struggle, and the favouring of hierarchical survival strategies like patron-clientelism.[2] They generally opposed the imposition of equality by the state, favouring individual justice over social justice. Additionally, the right-wing supports distinct gender roles for men and women, embracing an essentialised version of gender and conventional norms. Both function as a source of collective identity.[3] Accordingly, Chilean right-wing women mobilised on the basis of their identities as women, specifically their role as mothers. They did so by rejecting feminist claims. As scholar Maxine Molyneux has identified[J1], right-wing women organise to meet their basic needs that are the result of a gendered division of labour, such as childcare. Their practical interests are distinct from left-wing women's strategic interests in explicitly organising to counter systems of patriarchy.[4]

The premise of this essay, therefore, is that Chilean right-wing women supported Pinochet's dictatorship that appeared to subordinate them because it secured their privileged position within Chile's existing gender and class hierarchies that may have otherwise been disturbed by left-wing government policies. Chilean right-wing women justified these class and gender hierarchies by exploiting ideas of motherhood, patriotism, religion (Catholicism), pre-existing traditional Chilean class structures, and militarism. The right-wing women's movement *Poder Femenino* (*Feminine Power*) in particular supported Pinochet's neoliberal and autocratic aims.[5] They alleged that socialist reforms would lead to the breakdown of family, the place that affirmed them as mothers and, therefore, as women. This essay will demonstrate how right-wing women, mostly as *Poder Femenino*, helped consolidate support for Pinochet's military regime, which ruled Chile for seventeen years.

The fact that Chilean right-wing women actively adhered to the traditional roles expected of them under dictatorship questions whether they were in fact subordinated by right-wing males at all. Instead, they exercised a choice to conform to normative conceptions about femininity. Scholar Margaret Power asserts that right-wing women were "more than mere pawns" in that they, at a time when other women around the world were mobilising along feminist lines, directly contributed to the downfall of Salvador Allende's left-wing Popular Unity government and its replacement by Pinochet's military dictatorship. [6] They were not manipulated by the Catholic Church, the military, nor by the United States of America (USA) government, as is often presumed by academics. Rather, they were the manipulators of these institutions. This essay particularly rejects the idea that the Chilean military, the "quintessential bastion of male supremacy", imposed their vision of gender roles on reluctant women that were too scared to

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question them.[7] As a result, this essay challenges the stereotype frequently promulgated by academics and the general public that men are inherently violent and women are peaceful. It thus has the alternate aim to its thesis to dispel the idea that women are naturally more inclined than men to seek social justice and work for peace.

This essay's topic is important because women throughout history have engaged with right-wing movements. Women who endorsed racism and fascism and committed atrocities in Nazi Germany provide one infamous example. More recently, there has also been a visible rise in the number of right-wing women politicians in the USA. Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann have both gained notoriety by identifying with the libertarian and conservative values of the USA's Tea Party. They have given conservatism "the look of a white, middle-American suburban soccer mom with first-hand experience of raising a family in tough times".[8] In this sense, American right-wing women mirror the Chilean right-wing women who campaigned for the instalment of Pinochet. Both groups share the commonalities of being white (in societies that are multi-racial), predominantly wealthy, and had faced hardship *vis-à-vis* left-wing policies at some point in their lives. These right-wing women turn feminist scholarship on its head because they make informed decisions to uphold, as opposed to attempt to remove, patriarchal structures in modern society. They reject what they perceive to be feminists' attempts to eliminate gendered distinctions between men and women because it is "an attack on their identity as women and their biologically determined destiny to be wives and mothers".[9] Hence, these right-wing women encourage male politicians to leverage on their mobilisation because it means that they can portray their actions as a response to the "natural" will of the people, rather than an effort to gain political power.[10] Arguably, right-wing women thus cause more harm to the feminist cause than men do because they engage in sexist behaviour and "create the belief that women really do not mind having their choices restricted".[11]

This essay seeks to address the lack of scholarship on Chilean right-wing women. Currently, a single scholar (Power) dominates the writing on the topic. Academic scholarship tends to centre on the importance of left-wing women in promoting democracy. This is perhaps because their emancipatory aims 'fit' with feminist scholarship, which presumably also reflects these academics' own value systems. Academics may have also paid little attention to Chilean right-wing women because of their belief that the principal actors during the years of Pinochet's rise were men. This research, therefore, confirms the importance of women's agency in this period. Given that this essay only focuses on Chile as a case study, it might encourage further study of other states where right-wing women agitate for their subordination. Overall, the broader implication of this research is to aid understanding about why women reject feminist claims, revealing how these women benefit from upholding patriarchal structures.

## Background

Chile's military dictatorship arose in the context of a developed, urbanised, and democratic society. When the military overthrew the socialist government of President Allende that had governed from 1970 to 1973, the installation of a militarist regime was justified internally and externally as a solution to the anarchy inherent in left-wing democracy[12]. Pinochet's regime took power in 1973 by means of a bloody military[J2] coup prompted by the failure of Allende's socialist reforms and the consequent economic and social problems. For example, inflation under Allende's government rose from 119 to 138 per cent in 1970, and 314 per cent by December 1973.[13] Pinochet's regime introduced a new order into Chile, replacing civilian leaders with military officials, opening up the economy to the free market, and implementing a campaign of repression to stabilise the political institutions of the state. Pinochet's legacy of abuse included the death of at least 3,197 people and torture of around 29,000 people, according to successive government reports.[14] Pinochet died before he could be brought to justice.

Pinochet's militarist government regime differed in almost every respect to Allende's government. The Allende government had implemented Marxist reforms within a democratic framework. Industries were nationalised, agriculture was reformed, and peasants and workers were incorporated into the political system.[15] The rationale behind their economic programme[J3] was to gain control of production and redistribute the profits among the lower and working classes in order to achieve greater equality in Chile's highly hierarchical society[J4]. However, Allende lacked majority support from the beginning of his political career. He was only ever elected by a small margin. More men voted for Allende than women, consistent with the convention that women tend to vote more conservatively than men.[16] Allende received only 30 per cent of the female vote overall compared to 41.6 per cent of the male vote.[17] Amongst working-class women, however, his support was substantially higher.[18] This is why wealthy Chilean right-

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wing women proactively solicited their support.

Chilean right-wing women largely petitioned for the military's instalment through apolitical means, outside of traditional democratic institutions. Nonetheless, it is important that they were still able to impact their country's political landscape through their suffrage rights. Property-owning women first gained suffrage in 1931[J5] . Later, Chilean President Gonzalez Videla granted full voting rights to women on January 14, 1949.[19] Men and women voted in separate places, still doing so today. As noted by political science scholar Lisa Baldez, this practice has reinforced the extent to which Chilean "people perceive politics as a gendered activity and has contributed to the establishment of women as an important electoral constituency".[20] As a consequence, right-wing women capitalised on the gender gap, using it to lobby politicians and the military on behalf of what they believed to be collective women's issues.

## Methodology

This study utilises the methodology of case study analysis, adopting international relations scholar Robert Yin's definition. He states that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates: "a) a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident".[21] In other words, the case study method is being used because it studies a real-life phenomenon in depth, drawing understanding from important contextual conditions. A case, or unit of analysis, can be "some event or entity other than a single individual".[22] As aforementioned, this essay will examine the single case of right-wing women agitating for Pinochet's Chile. Case study analysis is appropriate because these findings may then contribute to understanding the motivations of women in similar circumstances but different contexts, historically and contemporaneously. Of course, it could also erroneously generalise the intentions and actions of right-wing women.

Drawing on the work of other academics, this essay attempts to develop a qualitative understanding on "why" and "how" similar women support right-wing claims that seem to be counterproductive to women's rights.[23] This work includes academics' documented interviews and speeches of individual Chilean right-wing women. [J6] These interviews cover the years 1970 to 2009. It is acknowledged that interviews can be biased where interviewers have posed badly articulated questions, interviewees have given inaccurate facts due to poor recall, or interviewees give the interviewer what they want to hear. [24] This essay is problematic because it relies on other academics' interviews, having no primary data and no control over interviewer bias. In support of its thesis, therefore, this essay will further draw information from cited Chilean newspapers and magazines, paying attention to media coverage of right-wing women's activities as well as the spin that they put on them. Alternative rival theories, perspectives and arguments by academics to this essay's thesis will also be considered in accordance with critical case analysis that tests, extends and challenges previous academic propositions with new propositions that are believed to be true.[25]

## Theoretical Framework

The premise of this essay is framed and underpinned by Deniz Kandiyoti's concept of "patriarchal bargains" and, more generally, by Andrea Dworkin's argument that right-wing women choose to internalise patriarchal values in order to secure the role of subservient wives and to avoid male aggression.[26] Right-wing women accommodate to patriarchy because they "see no way out from under"[J7] it.[27] In the context of a patriarchal society, they consciously decide to be treated by men as precious objects as opposed to worthless objects. By committing themselves to male values, women seek to acquire meaning. After all, "no one can bear to live a meaningless life".[28] Dworkin argues that the right offers women a simple, fixed, predetermined social, biological, and sexual order. It also protects their homes and place within it, gives them economic security, ensures that men and women will follow specified rules, and lends order and stability to a society, with formal areas of mutual accountability.[29] Above all, it gives right-wing women respect.[30]

Dworkin contends that right-wing women support patriarchal order because they believe that left-wing politics will, by contrast, not reserve a place for them in society. They "do not buy the partial truths and lies that constitute the positions of various liberal and so-called radical groups on women's rights".[31] Dworkin explains that this is because many left-wing governments fail to implement policies that benefit women, at least in the short-term. She thus

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identifies that it is anti-feminism that convinces right-wing women that the system of sex segregation and hierarchy is immovable, unreachable, and inevitable – and therefore the logic of their worldview is more substantive and compelling than any feminist analysis.[32]

Kandiyoti advances similar arguments to Dworkin, claiming that women in a “classic patriarchal bargain” accede to subordination and offer deference to men in exchange for protection, economic security, class privilege, and social integration.[33] This bargaining also allows women autonomy in the domestic sphere. They actively collude in their own subordination because “they would rather adopt interpersonal strategies that maximise their security through manipulation of the affections of their sons and husbands”.[34] As noted by academic Margery Wolf in her study of the Taiwanese family, this strategy can be effective as it can result in the aging male patriarch losing power to his wife unknowingly.[35] However, right-wing women’s power tactics usually fail to alter the structurally unfavourable terms of the overall patriarchal script. Nevertheless, they become experts in maximising their own life chances within it.[36] Despite the obstacles that classic patriarchy puts in women’s way, women often resist any process of transition posed by feminists who seek to transform it in favour of gender equality because they “see the old normative order slipping away from them without any empowering alternatives”.[37] This essay, therefore, argues that Kandiyoti’s ideas are applicable to the case of right-wing women in 1970s Chile, especially because they sought to retain the “old normative order” by installing Pinochet’s dictatorship. Their role in this installation suggests that their “classic patriarchal bargain” with Pinochet’s dictatorship was a form of passive resistance which empowered them as women.[38] [J8]

### **For Their love of Motherhood**

The principal reason that Chilean right-wing women supported Pinochet’s dictatorship was because his regime protected their maternal role in society, which was based on gender division. Their worldview was predicated on their belief that their capacity to give life formed their identity and destiny, adopting an essentialised version of gender that presupposed that biology determined the role they played in Chilean society.[39] This belief is attributable to the traditional concepts of machismo and marianismo. Scholar Evelyn P. Stevens asserts that machismo portrays men as macho, dominant and sexually aggressive, and women as weak, submissive, and requiring men’s protection. On the other hand, [J9] marianismo is “the cult of feminine spiritual superiority, which teaches that women are semi-divine, morally superior to and spiritually stronger than men, and committed to domesticity”.[40] Both concepts underpinned long-standing gender norms in Chile. Baldez affirms that these norms were present in public discourse throughout Chile’s history, including the Wars of Independence in the early 1800s.[41] This is why Stevens argues that Chilean (and Latin American) women have been willing and able to gain power only through their roles as mothers and the manipulation of males through marianismo.[42] Right-wing men firmly respected women’s marianismo roles in Chile, unlike left-wing men. As argued by Dworkin, “the right praised women”, respecting and affording them a voice, even if only as mothers.[43]

For Chilean right-wing women, motherhood represented not only what women did, but also who they were. They thus thought that being a woman was synonymous with being a mother, and motherhood signified heterosexuality and marriage.[44] Allende’s left-wing government threatened these notions because it aimed to establish gender equality in Chile, dismantling gender divides that privileged them as mothers. At the same time, however, the Allende government hypocritically maintained sexism in their institutions, disillusioning many women. This argument is endorsed by Camilla Townsend who contends that Chilean left-wing “socialism... was largely born in the all-male world of the nitrate fields and its language of liberty was in many ways intimately connected with machismo, not marianismo”.[45] Allende’s government also offended women by suggesting that they were “backward and unproductive”.[46] Conversely, dictatorship structured Chilean society along patriarchal lines for men, reserving autonomy in domestic sphere specifically for women. This argument is consistent with and rationalised by Kandiyoti. Motherhood thus proved politically advantageous to the right because it afforded women a political space not available to men. Karen Beckwith’s contention is applicable in that “where women’s standing emphasise[s] their relationships as mothers and wives, it serve[s] as a resource that protects them against certain kinds of reprisals by men” and enables women to do things that would be “unimaginable” for other groups to undertake.[47]

Chilean right-wing women articulated their demands in terms of motherhood to justify political activism because it

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traversed the political spectrum and united women of different classes, races, and cultures. In this sense, women's concern for their own children was expanded to a concern for other people's children.[48] Mothering is defined by Sara Ruddick in three ways: nurturing, protecting, and socialising children.[49] Chilean right-wing women assumed their own experiences as mothers were common and universal, like Ruddick. It created a shared identity for women as mothers. More importantly, it also offered them an ideological rationale for their actions and made them morally superior to other Chileans. They charged left-wing women with immorality since they did not value motherhood, supposedly inherent to all women. As Power notes, right-wing women alleged that "any woman who rejected or failed to achieve motherhood was, they believed, denying her true nature and [was] doomed to lead a miserable and frustrated life".[50] They further accused left-wing men as being immoral by suggesting that they dismissed women's natural role in society, especially through government policies. This moral superiority gave credibility to their statements and demands, enabling them to support a dictatorship that was ironically devoid of morality itself.[51] This is perhaps because, similar to Ruddick, Chilean right-wing women convinced themselves and others that maternal practice was "superior to dominant ways of thinking", acquiring the ability to criticise other practices.[52]

A dictatorial regime appealed to Chilean right-wing women because the Allende government's policies failed to provide them with the resources they needed to rear nuclear families. From 1972 until Pinochet's military coup in September 1973, Chileans could not access goods to sustain their families, including toilet paper, toothpaste, diapers, flour, meat, and cooking and heating oil.[53] The burden of these shortages was arguably felt worse by poor women.[54] However, this fails to explain the rise of a predominantly middle- and upper-class right-wing women's movement. It can be argued, therefore, that the shortages deprived these wealthy women of their luxury supplies, which they saw as similarly inhibiting their ability to care for their families in the way that they believed to be their duty. Many wealthy women used the shortages to encourage poor women to also back Pinochet's rise. They argued that the shortages in Chile affected women more directly than men because it was their responsibility to feed and clothe their children and husbands. This is shown in the statement: "When the artificial scarcities were engendered and the long lines began to form, it was the women's time which was used up and their days which thus automatically became much harder".[55] Sara Navas, a leader in women's opposition to Allende, also recounted that "for the mother trying to defend her children it was impossible to be responsible".[56] Like Power, this essay contends that Chilean right-wing women's "inability to be good mothers – rather than their rights as citizens, demands for their own liberation, or concern for social justice – spurred them to action".[57]

Chilean right-wing women's beliefs in motherhood are seen by their exploitation of images of the 'selfless mother' to overthrow Allende. These images empowered them.[58] For example, an article in the journal *Amiga* counselled women to breastfeed their babies. It described how they were primed from childhood to adulthood to be mothers. The article reads: "from the first years of a woman's life her body begins to prepare the marvellous task which nature has assigned her, and that is maternity".[59] Power argues that "the biological imperative is so powerful that, in some instances, it is the active agent, while women are merely the passive receptacles in which it takes place".[60] Similar articles suggest that their bodies' natural mechanisms, such as the ability to breastfeed, trump their consciousnesses. This mirrors Chilean right-wing women's beliefs because they understood that their bodies were geared towards motherhood above all.[61] These women supported Pinochet's dictatorship because his beliefs echoed theirs. This is evidenced in one of his speeches to women where he declared: "When a woman becomes a mother she does not expect anything more on a material plane; she searches and finds in her own son the purpose of her life, her only treasure and the finishing line where her dreams come true".[62]

Chilean right-wing women's central focus on motherhood is also made obvious in the culmination of the 'March of the Empty Pots' (March), which they used to highlight their inability to be responsible mothers because of the shortages created by the Allende government. The March was also instigated to protest against the growing climate of violence and to embarrass the government in front of Cuban communist leader Fidel Castro, who was in Chile for an extended visit.[63] Women protested through the streets of Santiago banging pots and pans. As activists, Chilean right-wing women [J10] described how they "had seen through the lies of those who wanted to impose a Marxist dictatorship".[64] These actions underlie Dworkin's contention that right-wing women's beliefs spring from the inaction of leftist governments, who fail to implement women-friendly policies. The March confirms that Chilean right-wing women protested free from male association. It was only the first in a series of determined mass mobilisations organised by women against Allende. This makes *Washington Post* reporter Marlise Simon's 1974 article

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problematic. In it, she wrongly maintained that the March “made it clear how far women could be used and pushed [by men] without their full knowledge to produce the desired results”.<sup>[65]</sup> Organisers of the March went on to create *Poder Femenino*, a women’s group that specifically coordinated anti-Allende mobilisations. The name *Poder Femenino* echoed the language of liberation movements then sweeping the globe: power to the people, youth power, and black power. <sup>[66]</sup> *Poder Femenino* perhaps chose the name because they wanted to push these same ideas of liberation; however, theirs was a right-wing brand that equated motherhood with liberation.

The absence of men in the March further reinforces the fact that Chilean right-wing women set out to restore men to power via dictatorship because they construed Allende as having weakened men, which similarly weakened their maternal role in society. Chilean right-wing women believed that men were not doing enough to prevent Allende from taking office: “The men are feeling the same thing [we are]... they don’t have the courage to do the audacious things we are doing now”.<sup>[67]</sup> Women’s ability to work across party lines in the March indirectly prompted men to do the same. Chilean right-wing women formed *Poder Femenino* despite supporting different parties, including the National Party and the Christian Democratic Party as well as other socio-political groups.<sup>[68]</sup> Baldez argues that this made Chilean right-wing superior and more successful to their male-counterparts, who were factionalised along party lines.<sup>[69]</sup> Carmen Sanz, one of the organisers of the March, summarised the overall intentions of women’s actions, claiming that the March was intended to “dare [men], to incite them. It was like lighting a flame, in which the women... woke up men and said to them, ‘Hey, listen, where are you guys?’”.<sup>[70]</sup> *Poder Femenino* additionally engaged in a campaign to convince opposition politicians to unify against the Allende government, in which women directly addressed electoral issues: “We women will not permit the party leaders to abandon the country in this way. It is also our land and the land of our children, and we women outnumber the men. Either you achieve the unity that can save us from Marxism, or we will never vote for you again”.<sup>[71]</sup>

Accordingly, Chilean right-wing women also supported Pinochet because they believed motherhood was women’s patriotic duty. It was a way for them to participate in the nation, and they considered it their responsibility as citizens.<sup>[72]</sup> This mirrors women suicide bombers’ motives, which are nationalistic and religious. Many of them stated in interviews with Israeli researcher Yoram Schweitzer that they believed that a suicide attack was the only way open to them to take part in their national struggle.<sup>[73]</sup> Chilean right-wing women hence viewed the March as demonstrating their willingness to risk their lives in order to defend Chile against threats to its sovereignty. For them, the Allende government’s physical and verbal attacks on women during the March seemed to have symbolised the deplorable condition to which the country had descended. The March was important, therefore, because the acts of violence committed against women by the Allende government – during it and outside it – came to represent attacks on the nation, which women embodied.<sup>[74]</sup> Moreover, Chilean right-wing women saw it as their duty to produce children who would provide loyal and patriotic support to the Pinochet regime. Carmen Grez was an upper-class right-wing woman who Pinochet eventually named the director of the *Secretaría Nacional de la Mujer* (*The National Secretariat of Women*). A speech she gave in 1978 at the closing ceremony of the *Secretaría Nacional de la Mujer* illustrates the connection she believed existed between motherhood and the nation. She maintained that “Chilean women [must] understand... the responsibility that falls upon them to form future generations of Chileans. Their children must love the fatherland and be willing and able to defend it against all dangers. Their children must grow up to be healthy and strong, in a family that inculcates in them moral, social, and cultural values”.<sup>[75]</sup> Grez’s beliefs were widely held by other right-wing women. This is seen in conservative women’s magazine *Eva*, which emphasised Chilean right-wing women’s “heroic activities” given that they “undertook to recover the liberty of their country”.<sup>[76]</sup> Clearly, they understood the family as a site where women should pair the social and biological reproduction of their children to simultaneously accomplish two patriotic goals: first, their development into citizens of a right-wing regime and, second, the construction of the nation as a heterosexual family unit writ large.<sup>[77]</sup>

Consistent with seeing motherhood as their patriotic duty, Chilean right-wing women thought it necessary to uphold patriarchy because it was equally a patriotic duty. Scholar Julie Shayne defines patriotism as a concept derived from the Latin *pater* which means father.<sup>[78]</sup> This is perhaps why states are often referred to as Fatherlands and why patriotism is inextricable from patriarchy. As such, Chilean right-wing women saw Pinochet as personifying the patriarch, making him the head of the fatherland.<sup>[79]</sup> The *pater* concept indicates “a filial relationship with the fatherland equivalent to the relationship between the concepts of filiation and familiar paternity”.<sup>[80]</sup> In this sense, Chilean right-wing women thought it their filial responsibility to restore patriarchy as the prevailing social structure in

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Chile. They arguably viewed left-wing politics as unnatural and unpatriotic. *Poder Femenino* commissioned Anti-Allende advertisements along these lines, for instance. One advertisement in the newspaper *El Mercurio* headlined “Where is Daddy?” above a photograph of a mother and her son. It continued: “In many communist countries, this question has no answer. Hundreds of men have been seized from their homes and in jail, concentration camps or disappeared for having criticised the government”.<sup>[81]</sup> It is ironic that right-wing women enabled a dictatorship to replace the Allende government and exact this same heinous fate on dissenting left-wing men.

### For Their Protection From Men

It is further conceivable that Chilean right-wing women supported Pinochet’s dictatorship because it afforded them protection from men. Traditional and predetermined social and biological orders presumably made men subject to standards and obligations, meaning that they would be frowned upon by society if they failed to live up to them. This in turn would have safeguarded women. For instance, many Chilean right-wing women supported the curfew imposed by Pinochet’s dictatorship because it meant that their husbands would be home with them and their children, not out drinking with friends and returning home violent.<sup>[82]</sup> Additionally, supporting a dictatorship may have meant that women did not have to fight for equality with men, which they were unsure they would succeed in achieving.<sup>[83]</sup> As Dworkin found, right-wing women accommodate to a patriarchal structure because they “see no way out from under”.<sup>[84]</sup> This is supported by feminist scholar Barbara Ehrenreich’s argument that “it is as if, facing the age-old insecurity of the family wage system, women chose opposite strategies: either to get out (figuratively speaking) and fight for equality of income and opportunity, or to stay home and attempt to bind men more tightly to them”.<sup>[85]</sup> Arguably therefore, Chilean right-wing women supported Pinochet’s dictatorship to retain this status quo, rather than upsetting men. They feared that the uncertainty of left-wing values, morals and policies would render men violent. It has further been suggested by Anita Superson that right-wing women knew that they could not compete with men’s physical strength and, by extension, thought that they could not compete with men generally.<sup>[86]</sup> In this sense, they arguably preferred to bargain within a patriarchal order because it was a form of passive resistance that afforded them the most political and social power in a world where men’s strength predominated.

### For Their Beliefs in Catholicism

Chilean right-wing women supported dictatorship because it secured a role for Catholicism in society, which was the fundamental spiritual force that guided most of their lives and gender privilege. Like the venerated Virgin Mary, they sought to obey the Catholic teachings with which they had been brought up. In turn, they allied themselves with conservatives who embodied many of the beliefs and teachings of the Catholic Church. Right-wing activist Maria Correa’s poem, which she read aloud in an interview with scholar Nina Donoso, emphasises the importance of Catholicism to these women and the military’s role in preserving that importance: “Sobbing, we knocked on the doors of the barracks, calling to the blue sailors, begging the soldiers, the air force pilots, to those born here, by God rescue the country we once had from this ignominy”.<sup>[87]</sup>

Chilean right-wing women supported dictatorship because they sought to push their own brand of Catholic values separately from the Church, which had become increasingly liberal. Hence, they were not manipulated by the Catholic Church, but rather its manipulators. The Catholic Church in Chile had become committed to progressive social change by the mid-1960s. It was tolerant of Marxism, largely because of a series of reforms in Church doctrine agreed upon by the Second Vatican Council between 1962 and 1965.<sup>[88]</sup> While the Church softened its opposition to communism, reactionary right-wing movements within the Church retrenched anti-Marxist views, which found expression in conservative Catholic groups such as *Poder Femenino*.<sup>[89]</sup> Chilean right-wing women viewed the Church’s progressive turn “as a betrayal of the religion they were brought up to honour, revere and defend... the most notable aspect of their social doctrine is a belief in the absolute sanctity of private property, combined with a healthy appreciation for the virtues of social inequality”.<sup>[90]</sup> Thus, they rejected Allende’s communist government because it sought to instigate class equality, which they saw as anathema to their religious beliefs of hierarchy, feudalism, and class inequality. Communism was perceived to be devoid of morality given its generally secular nature, and the right wing activists were afraid that it was influencing the Catholic values that defined them as women.<sup>[91]</sup>

Moreover, this group of right-wing women supported dictatorship because they thought it would restrict sexuality and

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promiscuity in society, in line with their Catholic beliefs. Allende's Popular Unity government encouraged public health and emphasised sex education. These programmes challenged Chileans to openly address the subject of sex and endorsed the benefits of speaking "about [human] biology and human couples".[92] Allende's government especially lobbied for the widespread use of contraceptives in Chile.[93] This arguably ran contrary to right-wing women's beliefs because they believed that population growth would drive the Chilean economy, but widespread contraceptive use would jeopardise this growth. Pinochet's dictatorship, on the other hand, advocated the use of natural family planning, such as the Billings Method.[94] It saw population growth as the answer to Chile's labour shortage problems.[95] Allende's programmes similarly threatened the sanctity of marriage. For women who treated the subject of sex with secrecy and deplored sex out of wedlock, contraceptives and sex education were likely perceived as encouraging immoral behaviours and unacceptable social outcomes.

### For the Advantages of Class Privilege

Chilean right-wing women supported Pinochet's dictatorship because they sought to secure their privileged class position within Chilean society. In the 1970's, class still influenced many aspects of Chilean women's lives, defining the resources available to them, the education they received, the social, political, and economic power they had, and their sense of who they were and what they could expect from life. It also prejudiced how women understood the causes and purposes of their political activity.[96] *Poder Femenino* particularly embodied the conservative upper-class that was defending its economic interests.[97] It manipulated women in poorer classes to help realise Pinochet's rise, taking particular advantage of the shortages to persuade poorer women to join their cause, as previously noted.[98] Chilean right-wing women proactively targeted poorer women because they sought to diminish support of the Allende government, who these women normally voted for as constituents. Feminist scholar Julietta Kirkwood still characterises Chilean right-wing women as feminists because they had a "feminist impulse... born as a defence of class".[99] This seems wrong given that they lacked women's solidarity.

Chilean right-wing women mobilised against Allende because his path to socialism threatened the traditional class hierarchy of Chile. Communism had gained traction in Chilean politics because of its success in the Cuban Revolution. As noted by Baldez, communism ushered in a new era; for the left, "this era was one of hope; for the [right], it was one of fear".[100] Allende was a Marxist, believing that capitalism, with its inherently exploitative structure against workers and peasants, was responsible for the impoverished state of the third world. He was concerned with the transformation of the class and ideological structures in Chile.[101] Allende thus directly challenged those who were pro-capitalist, the right-wing. Conversely, Chilean right-wing women believed class stratification was justifiable and necessary to enable Chile's prosperity. Unlike Allende, they believed privatising state-owned companies would encourage competition and an economic boom.[102] This is demonstrated by the fact that women disagreed with the Allende government's intervention in the running of shops and small businesses. In October 1972, they took part in the *Paro de Octubre (October Strike)*, avoiding shopping and boycotting shop-owners who agreed with the Allende government's policy of nationalising businesses.[103] Their actions prompted leftist Senator Maria Elena Carrera to comment that "hate has been disseminated by the [rightist] reaction and the people who support them. They are our enemies and they have their reasons for doing what they're doing".[104] Therefore, Chilean right-wing women supported dictatorship as democracy had enabled anti-capitalist forces to come to power.[105]

Chilean right-wing women's 'scare' campaigns encouraged the overthrow of Allende, further demonstrating the extent to which class privilege was a principal motivation for their support of Pinochet's dictatorship. These women's groups employed similar tactics to the USA government's 'scare campaigns' of the 1960s, which utilised propaganda – posters, leaflets, letters, and radio announcements – with binary definitions of gender to communicate its message.[106] The basic message it conveyed – that Allende equals communism, and communism means the destruction of the family – was adopted by *Poder Femenino*. [107] They suggested that communism would desex women because they would be absorbed by the tasks delegated to them by communist authorities.[108] This threatened the privileged domesticated role of the wealthy. The advertisement "Chile at the Crossroads" shows this, reading: "for you, the word FREEDOM means the right to express your opinion, to live with your family, to live in your neighbourhood. Are you willing to sacrifice the rights to which freedom entitles you for the Marxist adventure?"[109] It highlights how important living in privileged "neighbourhoods" was to Chilean right-wing women. These



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advertisements were effective in reaching wealthy women because they were the primary consumers of radio broadcasts since they stayed at home during the daytime.[110] They explain why many wealthy women were “shrill, insistent, even hysterical” about their need to uphold the class hierarchy of Chile.[111]

Moreover, Chilean right-wing women saw it as their duty to maintain their houses, not wanting to work like poor women did in their society. [112] They believed that a wealthy woman should “devote herself to her home... await the arrival of her husband, take care of her children, [and] know how to run her home”. [112] Poorer women, on the other hand, worked in low-paying service jobs. About 24 percent of these women held factory jobs, compared with 61 percent of men.[113] Poorer women lacked the support of maids or nannies, having to work in paid employment in addition to keeping the home by cooking, cleaning, laundry, and caring for children. [114] For them, communism arguably represented an additional burden, not liberation. These fears meant that wealthy women could manipulate and win their support easily, undercutting the leftist men’s attempts to organise the poorer women. Scholar Maria de los Angeles Crummett seems correct to argue that wealthy women created “an imaginary community of interests [that] unite[d] ‘housewives’ of all social classes”. [115]

Chilean right-wing women were concerned that the fact that the Allende government was redistributing power from the wealthy classes and putting it into the hands of the lower classes would create social unrest and lead to anarchy. It would also render them unprotected from different classes of men. One right-wing woman revealed that the election of Allende impacted on her sense of identity as a member of the upper-class: “the lower classes, who were like your domestic employees, who had always been submissive and respectful toward their Patrón, all of a sudden... they began to try to be your equal”. [116] Similarly, many women who lived in the wealthier neighbourhoods of Chile’s capital Santiago became convinced that “Marxist hordes” planned to assault their homes, rob them, and seize their property on behalf of the government. [117] This perception was not helped by the Allende government’s programmes that sought to break down clearly delineated traditional class divisions that had provided them with a sense of security. One programme enlisted women as volunteers in state-run day-care centres, health clinics and hospitals. The requirements of this programme would have compelled all women between 16 and 21 to provide three months of volunteer service, which was the equivalent of compulsory military service. [118] This requirement ran contrary to the accepted belief amongst the wealthier sectors of society that “doling out money constituted volunteering”. [119] Perhaps it also threatened their privileged position because it meant that they would have to mingle with and be on the same terms as women and men of poorer classes, which they had not been before. Moreover, the Allende government established the *Secretaría de las Mujeres (Women’s Secretariat)*, which attempted to create women’s health care, day-care centres, public food programmes, and public laundry facilities. These services provided wealthy women with reason to overthrow Allende because they alleged that these services were reserved for the upper classes. [120] This is analogous to Republican right-wing women’s beliefs in the USA where a key reason for their rejecting state provided medical care is that they consider privilege as entitling them to better healthcare, which is not supposed to be equitable.

In addition, Chilean right-wing women supported the instalation of a dictatorship as a response to left-wing policies of redistributing Chile’s wealth more equitably through land reform. Land reform directly threatened their economic interests and position because it appropriated land from their husbands and fathers, who were responsible for their past and future privilege. Kirkwood observed that right-wing Chileans “were terrified that... [their] grandchildren would become poor and vice versa”. [121] The Christian Democratic government, led by Eduardo Frei, had previously taken away property rights in the period from 1964 to 1970 prior to Allende’s tenure. [122] By giving property to those who had none, agrarian reform intended to restructure the balance of power between the lower and upper sectors of society. By 1972, Allende’s government had expropriated nearly half of Chile’s farms and distributed more than nine million hectares to landless peasants. [123] While the government initiated most of the expropriations, peasant organisations increasingly seized land on their own (as in modern-day Zimbabwe). This was because workers and the urban poor saw government policy changes and redistribution as slow. [124] These land seizures created resentment amongst the wealthy right-wing landowners. They maintained that “the [Allende government] robbed us. They robbed us and paid us with bonds that were worth nothing”. [125]

Contrary to this essay’s thesis, scholars have dissimilarly argued that poor and working-class women, not just middle- and upper-class women, participated in the instalation of Pinochet. For instance, Power maintains that

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Allende's programmes [J13] , especially agrarian reform, restructured the balance of power within the households of the rural poor and weakened the position of women, causing poor women to also support the rise of dictatorship. Before the agrarian reform, many women had earned salaries as domestic employers and workers on the farms. However, agrarian reform reduced women's work to the status of "unpaid household help" within rural households.[126] Townsend makes a similar argument to Power, asserting that "working women's political consciousness must have been tied to their daily experiences".[127] Working class women hoped for better employment terms under Pinochet's dictatorship, which were never realised. Power and Townsends' arguments seem correct in that some poorer women did support the political right because of the "general inattention" they received from leftists; the left had failed to offer them an appealing or viable alternative.[128] Women from all classes, therefore, supported the right-wing because it had "delivered more" in their past experience than the Allende government had in their present experiences.[129] However, Power and Townsends' arguments fail to acknowledge that wealthy women predominantly made up the rightist parties. This is demonstrated by the fact that "these same [women] from the right carried out their attack on working-class women" as soon as Allende was overthrown.[130] Therefore, it seems that wealthy women exploited the votes of poor women to undermine the votes of the working-class who predominantly supported left-wing politics. Ultimately, wealthy women used working-class women for their own ends, seeking to secure their privileged positions in society. It was thus the ideals of the wealthy that drove the Chilean right-wing women's campaign, not the ideals of poor women.

The March supports the contention that wealthy Chilean right-wing women wanted to protect their privilege by supporting a regime change effected by the military because it was orchestrated without widespread support from poorer women. They organised their demonstrations by telephone at a time when most poor Chileans lacked phones. [131] They also garnered the support of other wealthy women by posting flyers in beauty salons and supermarkets, not accessible to the poor.[132] Throughout their recruitment campaign, wealthy right-wing women emphasised the nonpartisan character of their initiative, claiming that women generally needed to set aside their differences in order to challenge Allende's government.[133] In reality, however, the musical group *Quilapayun's* song demonstrates how wealthy women feigned class equality because it was advantageous to their cause. The song accused right-wing women of "having two pots [in the March], a little one and a big one": "the little [pot] was just bought, and used only for banging on" while the "ugly rich protester" had kept at home "the big [pot] filled with chicken, potatoes, and meat".[134] Moreover, after the March, several of the wealthy marchers remarked that they "could not wait to get home and take a hot bath", a luxury not available to the majority of the Chilean population, many of whom lacked indoor plumbing, let alone water.[135]

## For the Might of the Military

Chilean right-wing women supported Pinochet's dictatorship because they conformed to militarism, which is militarist ideology that presumes and ontologically assumes military action is the best way to solve a problem. The military advocated views about gender and sexuality that closely matched right-wing women's ideas. Power asserts that far from acting as "an agent of sexual repression, in the eyes of right-wing women, the military dictatorship promulgated their fundamental beliefs".[136] Scholar Ximena Bunster agrees that "women will remain society's camp followers so long as the military as an institution and militarism as ideology are widely accepted as guarantors of the social order".[137] However, these claims run contrary to feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe's argument that all women are affected by the military's need to exploit and ideologically marginalise them.[138] Her argument seems incorrect in the context of 1970s Chile because this group of women were not exploited by the military, but rather exploited it for their own gains. Arguably, their use of organised protest was aimed at provoking and shaming the military into taking power from Allende. Chilean right-wing women sought to challenge soldiers to assume their roles as protectors.[139]

Accordingly, Chilean right-wing women supported dictatorship as a means to restore the military's virility, which they believed had been lost as a result of left-wing politics. They perhaps supposed that a virile military would emphasise their feminine difference, legitimating their domestic, maternal, and class privilege. They may have also thought that a virile military would protect Chilean society from androgyny. Dworkin makes this argument, contending that right-wing women "fear an androgynous society" which they view as violent and where they play no part.[140] As a consequence, Chilean right-wing women employed traditional gendered rhetoric and sexist slurs to insult men who opposed their cause. They not only openly challenged the military's ability to do its job, but also questioned the

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masculinity of those in the military by calling them 'maricones' (fags) in public. Additionally, women threw grain at the soldiers of *Academia Militar de Santiago* (*Santiago's Military Academy*). Other women sent envelopes full of feathers to the soldiers to provoke a military coup.[141] Essentially, they accused them of being 'chicken' for tolerating Allende's government, condemning their passivity. These accusations were important because they were provocative and evidence Chilean beliefs in gender essentialism. They were additionally important because the military used women to legitimate their coup, referring to them as proof of Chilean support for overthrowing Allende. Pinochet's military particularly referenced *Poder Femenino's* statement in the newspaper *La Prensa* which explicitly called for military intervention.[142] This is supported by Power's argument that women "served to justify the military's usurpation of power, legitimise its suspension of the political parties, and support its enforcement of patriarchal social relations".[143] The military coup was carried out on September 11, 1973.[144] It disproves the presupposition that women are inherently peaceful because they defended its violence and, later, the violence effected by Pinochet's military dictatorship as a whole.

## Conclusion

This essay has shown that Chilean right-wing women did not agitate to change their subordinate position within their patriarchal society. Rather, they rallied together to support Pinochet's dictatorship because it maintained their existing privileged position in Chile's pre-existing class and gender hierarchies. These hierarchies arose out of the binary concepts of machismo and marianismo, which constituted an essential component of the Chilean culture.[145] Most Chilean right-wing women were from the middle-and upper-classes, and had been since birth. They believed it was their birth-right to remain privileged, which the Allende government threatened with their policies of equitable redistribution of power, money, and land. Moreover, the Allende government's policy of gender equality also threatened Chilean right-wing women because of their fundamental belief that men and women inherently played different roles in society. In this sense, their beliefs reflect those of difference feminists. Motherhood defined their identity, and patriarchy, patriotism, Catholicism, traditionalism, and militarism would ensure that this identity was kept sacred. They claimed that a military dictatorship pursuing market driven economic policies would best retain these age-old normative values whereas they associated left-wing politics with uncertainty. In this regard, historian Heraldo Muñoz seems correct to write that "Chileans [were] fatally divided among a confused, utopian left; an inflexible, short-sighted centre; and an uncompromising, selfish right".[146]

In addition, this essay reveals that Chilean right-wing women were "powerful political actors in their own right".[147] They assumed that any political system would always favour men, including democratic left-wing politics. Fundamentally, the Allende government had not convinced women that they were appreciated and integral in socialist Chile. Therefore, per Kandiyoti, Chilean right-wing women "bargained within the patriarchal order" of Pinochet's dictatorship because it at least prescribed them a place in Chilean society as mothers. They asserted their stance by marching with their pots and pans, using poor women to bolster their support for regime change, and by provoking the military into action after questioning their masculinity. It is clear that "the rhetoric from the right... offered women more honour, according to the prevailing standards of the day, and even more opportunity for self-fulfilment" because it privileged their gender and class statuses.[148] This argument is shared by Dworkin.

The case of Chilean right-wing women's role in the ascendancy of Pinochet shows that women are just as capable as men at exacting violence when it is in their best interests to do so. They contributed to the democratic breakdown of Chile because they legitimated political action outside the arena of conventional democratic political institutions and parties.[149] The lack of a response by leftist women at the time unintentionally served to perpetuate the notion that the right, not the left, represented women's true interests.[150] Chilean right-wing women were violent in the way that they convinced poor women that a military coup was the only way to guarantee them the stability and security they needed to fulfil their roles as wives and mothers. Afterwards, they restricted social mobility, ensuring these same poor women would stay oppressed at the bottom of the social ladder. Chilean right-wing women from the 1970s remain violent, particularly because few have expressed remorse for the human rights abuses committed by Pinochet and his military. Instead, they consider that these abuses were necessary.[151] This perspective was commonly noted by Power amongst the right-wing women she interviewed. Power's interviews even followed the *National Commission of the Truth and Reconciliation's Rettig Report*, which documented the military government's imprisonment, torture, and murder of Chileans during Pinochet's dictatorial rule.

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Ultimately, the academic literature that presumes women's inherent peacefulness within their capacity for childbearing can be defective in that it never holds women to account, just men. Both men and women should be accountable for their support and enablement of an abusive regime. Honest acknowledgment and debate would better fulfil feminist goals of equality because concepts that align women with pacifism reinforce gender dichotomies and, therefore, are antithetical to equality.[152] It is crucial to confront and understand why women in Chile, and worldwide, continue to accept and feel affirmed by an essentialist understanding of gender. Only then can feminists' goals of changing the patriarchal script be realized.

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