

Chapter 21: Sexual Abuse in an Ecclesial Context and Gender Perspective: Challenges for the Ethical Administration of Power

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The relative failure of organizations to control the use of power is suggested by numerous data points and phenomena. Among these is the Corruption Perceptions Index, which, in its latest publication, notes the incapacity of a majority of nations to control corruption, understood as the use of public power for private ends.¹ Additionally, the Accountability Index, despite having remained at high and relatively stable levels, nonetheless shows a slight but sustained decline since the year 2012.² This suggests a stagnation or weakening of the restrictions on the use of political power by governments, such as requiring justification of their actions or subjecting them to possible sanctions.

Even if these differences in the above global indices can be considered moderate and refer almost exclusively to the administration of power in the public sector, the reality in Chile presents a more critical situation, one which extends to diverse sectors. The situation in Chile takes place against the backdrop of the profound crisis which we, as a society and moral community, are experiencing as a result of the allegations of sexual abuse in the Chilean Catholic Church,³ as well as serious cases of business

¹ Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2018* (Transparency International, 2019), www.transparency.org/files/content/pages/CPI_2018_Executive_Summary_EN.pdf.

² For more information, see the database *Country-Dem: V-Dem V9*, www.v-dem.net/en/data/archive/previous-data/data-version-9/.

³ “Mapa chileno de los delitos de abuso sexual y de conciencia cometidos en entornos eclesiales,” Red De Sobrevivientes Chile, www.redsobrevivientes.org/post/mapa-abusos; Comisión UC Para El Análisis De La Crisis De La Iglesia Católica En Chile, *Comprendiendo La Crisis De La Iglesia En Chile* (Santiago, Chile: Pontificia Universidad Católica De Chile, 2020), www.uc.cl/site/assets/files/11465/documento-de-analisis-comprendiendo-la-crisis-

corruption,⁴ irregularities in municipalities and the police,⁵ and significant increases in the number of complaints of sexual harassment since 2017.⁶

In this essay, I examine the exercise of power through the lens of disciplines such as psychology, ethics, and theology. I put these disciplines in dialogue with each other with the goal of fundamentally diagnosing the flaws present in the usual evaluation of the exercise of institutional power, which are emphasized when we focus on the phenomenon of sexual abuse. Based on this diagnosis and the reflections of some Latin American ecclesiologists, I propose the necessity of incorporating a gender perspective into the analysis of power. This not only enables an understanding of abuses of power when women exercise or suffer it but also overcomes two incorrect comprehensions regarding abuses of power: first, the assumption that, in order to do away with abuse, it is enough to destroy the site of power, and second, understanding the abuse of power as a horrible or monstrous phenomenon alien to our daily experience of social life.

Some Considerations from Organizational Psychology

Power is intrinsic to social life and, as such, quintessential for organizations.⁷ For this reason, it is difficult to delimit power as an object

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⁴ Umut Aydın and Nicolás Figueroa, "The Chilean Anti-Cartel Experience: Accomplishments and Challenges," *Review of Industrial Organization* 54, no. 2 (2019): 327–352.

⁵ Eduardo Engel, "Políticas anticorrupción en Chile: ¿Cómo estamos?" *Mensaje* 67, no. 668 (2018): 16–19.

⁶ Pía Toro, "Denuncias por acoso sexual en el trabajo suben 34% en primer trimestre de 2019," *La Tercera*, April 22, 2019, www.latercera.com/pulso/noticia/denuncias-acoso-sexual-trabajo-suben-34-primer-trimestre-2019/623951/.

⁷ Cf. Miguel C. Moya Morales and Rosa Rodríguez Bailón, "Relaciones de poder y procesos cognitivos," in *Psicología Social*, ed. José Francisco Morales (Buenos Aires: Editorial Médica Panamericana S.A., 2002), 177–199; Francisco Díaz Bretones et al., *Psicología de las organizaciones* (Barcelona: UOC, 2004); Stephen P. Robbins, Timothy A. Judge, and Javier Enríquez Brito, *Comportamiento organizacional*, 15th ed. (Nuacalpan de Juárez, México: Pearson, 2013); Antonio Marrero Hernández, Leonardo Romero Quintero, and María

of study. Power is often confused with or closely linked to similar constructs such as influence, leadership, status, or authority. However, power differs from these other constructs. Influence does not necessarily suppose the asymmetric capacity of the actors to control the possible results of behavior,⁸ something that occurs in the predominant definitions of power. Leadership is distinguished by the implied congruence of goals or objectives between leader and followers, something that does not necessarily occur in the exercise of power.⁹ With respect to status and authority, both constructs refer to the position of a subject within a hierarchy. Status is perceived on the basis of criteria such as wealth, prestige, privilege, or honor and is not necessarily structurally determined.¹⁰ Authority, understood as the “degree of power associated with a position according to the formal design of the organization,” is, however, structurally determined¹¹

The definitions of power are many. Nonetheless, we may summarize its predominant characteristics. Power is the potential or capacity to influence, which may or may not be enacted, which an actor or set of actors possesses over another actor or set of actors, such that the ideas of the former be accepted by the latter, or that the behavior of the latter be exercised in a form instrumental to the interests of the former. John French and Bertram Raven identify five bases of power:¹²

Magdalena Castaño Trujillo, *El poder en las organizaciones* (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, España: Imprenta Pérez Galdóz, SL, 1995).

⁸ Analia Kornblit and Mónica Petracci, “El acoso sexual en el escenario laboral,” in *Psicología Social*, 167–171.

⁹ Robbins, Judge, and Brito, *Comportamiento organizacional*.

¹⁰ Kornblit and Petracci, “El acoso sexual.”

¹¹ Andrés Rodríguez Fernández and Francisco Díaz Bretones, “La organización y la red de organizaciones como unidad de análisis,” in *Psicología de las organizaciones*, ed. Andrés Rodríguez Fernández (Barcelona, España: UOC, 2004), 233–283.

¹² John R. P. French and Bertram Raven, “The Bases of Social Power,” in *Classics of Organization Theory*, ed. D. Cartwright (Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, 1959), 311–320.

1. Expert power: influence that an actor may exert over others as a result of experience, ability, or knowledge;
2. Referent power: influence that an actor may exert over others based on the admiration that these others develop toward the actor. This type of power is enjoyed by a person who displays characteristics, values, or resources that make others want to be like that person;
3. Legitimate power: power based on norms and expectations. Those who possess legitimate power have the right, for example, to impose orders on others based on cultural values that legitimize their exercise of power, either by the position they hold or by appointment/designation by a legitimate authority;
4. Coercive power: power based on the application, or perceived threat, of possible sanctions in response to disobedience;
5. Reward power: influence that is founded on the capacity of one person to facilitate the successful results desired by others.

In this typology, there tend to be brief—but constant—references to Jeffrey Pfeffer, the principal author on the subject.¹³ Pfeffer is cited by Robbins and Judge, by Marrero Hernández, and by Rodríguez Fernández and Díaz Bretones.

The authors differ in their focus regarding the factors that guide the ethical administration of power. However, the idea of complexity appears as a constant motif for the following reasons.¹⁴ First, the bases of personal power—that is, referent power and expert power in French and Raven's typology—have been shown to be more efficient than the bases of formal power. This means that the most effective types of power are those that are due to individual actions and attributes, which evade organizations' formal mechanisms of control and the assignment of power. In contrast to authority, power, especially personal power, does not demand formal

¹³ The texts that correspond to the references are Jeffrey Pfeffer, "Merger as a Response to Organizational Interdependence," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (1972): 382–394; Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Power in Organizations* (Toronto: Pitman, 1981); Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Power: Why Some People Have It—And Others Don't* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010).

¹⁴ Fernández and Bretones, "La organización."

legitimacy. Therefore, its ethical exercise is difficult to oversee. Second, diagnosing power in an organization demands the evaluation of that body's perception and accuracy of judgement, according to Greiner and Shein.¹⁵ However, these aspects are difficult to determine, since power tends to be hidden and may express itself in various forms, many of which can be deceiving, such as manifestations of status. Third, Rodríguez Fernández and Díaz Bretones recognize that "the exercise of power always implies an ethical attitude which, in the context of organizations, will be determined by the value-system that dominates the concrete culture of each organization."¹⁶ Because changing the culture of an organization is a long and difficult process, according to Robbins and Judge, we interpret the above statement to indicate that the ethical use of power depends on a variable that is difficult to introduce. Culture should be understood as something relatively fixed in the short term. Furthermore, the essential aim of culture in organizations, setting the predominant values, norms, and beliefs of its members, "turns out to be hardly easy, since culture is not a unit and is not shared in the same way by all, on the contrary, there exist different subcultures that seek to be established within dominant ones."¹⁷ Fourth, considering that both the structures of an organization and its activities can be explained in terms of the context in which the organization exists,¹⁸ we cannot expect organizations to be able to absolutely control the values and principles which internally govern the exercise of power, as if they were impermeable to the values and customs of their surroundings. Finally, power differences tend to generate cognitive biases that are difficult to control. These biases operate unconsciously and affect interactions between those with unequal power, tending to encourage social distancing and the maintaining of power differences.¹⁹ Examples of the latter include the negativity bias that often occurs when a

¹⁵ Cited by Fernández and Bretones in "La organización."

¹⁶ Fernández and Bretones, "La organización," 233.

¹⁷ Fernández and Bretones, "La organización," 235.

¹⁸ Allusions to Pfeffer in Fernández and Bretones, "La organización."

¹⁹ Morales and Bailón, "Relaciones de poder."

superior evaluates subordinates. The anxiety that afflicts persons with very little power can reach the point of representing a cognitive demand that diminishes the capacity to process information, worsening performance and hindering empowerment.

Given the aforementioned difficulty in defining an ethical administration of power, it is unsurprising that little attention has been paid to analyzing the abuse of power. However, we identified some elements. First, studies suggest that there are individuals with a so-called *exchange orientation*, in which power activates behaviors with selfish ends, while there are also others with a so-called *communal orientation*, in which power activates behaviors with communitarian ends.²⁰ These orientations result from differences in unconscious associations. Some tests indicate that, in experimental conditions, evaluated persons' orientations correlate significantly with the types of conduct that power activates in them.²¹ Along the same lines, the variable of the *necessity of power*, studied with projective and neurophysiological techniques by McClelland, correlates positively with the interest in using power for one's own benefit and negatively correlates with the use of power to help others.²² Second, studies demonstrate that, in certain men, there is an unconscious link between power and sex.²³ This explains in part, according to Bargh and Raymond, the phenomenon of sexual harassment. Under experimental conditions, the existence of this unconscious link has been successfully evaluated based on the LSH (Likelihood to Sexually Harass) scale, which predicts conduct of sexual harassment.²⁴ Women are sexually harassed by men more

²⁰ Serena Chen, Annette Y. Lee-Chai, and John A. Bargh, "Relationship Orientation as a Moderator of the Effects of Social Power," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 80, no. 2 (2001): 173–181.

²¹ Chen, Lee-Chai, and Bargh, "Relationship orientation."

²² Cited in Fernández and Bretones, "La organización."

²³ Morales and Bailón, "Relaciones de poder."

²⁴ John A. Bargh, Paula Raymond, John B. Pryor, and Fritz Strack, "Attractiveness of the Underling: An Automatic Power → Sex Association and its Consequences for Sexual Harassment and Aggression," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 68, no. 5 (1995): 768–781.

frequently,²⁵ and counts vary significantly by country. The concept of power is essential for understanding harassment, and, the more disparate the level of power, the more probable sexual harassment becomes.²⁶ Third, organizational justice appears to significantly moderate intentions to commit sexual harassment, which suggests that a lack of consistent policies and procedures increases the frequency of sexual harassment. Robbins and Judge suggest the following as measures to protect against sexual harassment: a) an active policy in the organization which defines what constitutes sexual harassment, informs workers that they may be dismissed if they harass another person, and establishes procedures for presenting claims; b) assurance for those who complain of harassment that they will not suffer retaliation; c) the investigation of cases and the notification of juridic departments and human resources; d) discipline or dismissal of offenders; and e) the organization of internal seminars to create awareness about diverse aspects of sexual harassment. Finally, it is recommended that certain restrictions on leaders' use of power be in place, since, for example, evidence suggests that leaders with much reward power exercise it in an abusive way to influence others, disregarding the opinions of subordinates, keeping their distance from them, and applying the efforts of subordinates more to the use of their own power than to the motivation of those under them.²⁷

Towards an Ecclesiology of Power

What I have argued thus far may be disregarded by arguing that, in the Catholic Church, power is different than in any other organization. Indeed, many theological sources articulate the legitimacy of ministerial power by contrasting its significance within the Church with the exercise of lay, worldly power. On the contrary, I believe that dialogue with disciplines such as the psychology of organizations leads us to use more

²⁵ Kornblit and Petracci, *El acoso sexual*, 169.

²⁶ Robbins, Judge, and Brito, *Comportamiento organizacional*.

²⁷ Kipnis (1972), cited in Hernández, Quintero, Trujillo, *El poder en las organizaciones*, 69.

precise and sophisticated language to speak about power and, more urgently, helps us to form an “objective suspicion” of charismatic power, that power which is based on personal attributes and which is most common in religious organizations.

Stewardship theory assumes an anthropology that highlights the collaborative and prosocial aspects of people.²⁸ However, evidence from documents focused on the subject put this appealing theory under suspicion and lead to the realization that power tends to change those who possess it in ways that put the morality of conduct at risk. Power reduces one’s tendency to see things from the perspective of others and connect with their emotions.²⁹ Power increases instrumental attention and objectification, understood as the process of relating to others as if they were objects based on how useful they are for one’s own interests.³⁰ Power lowers one’s inhibitions, freeing one from the normative restrictions that usually govern thought, expression, and behavior.³¹

Similarly, Magee, Kilduff & Heath mention other, less direct, mechanisms by which power affects those who possess it by incentivizing immoral conduct within organizations.³² Power may act as a de-socializing

²⁸ James H. Davis, F. David Schoorman, and Lex Donaldson, “Toward a Stewardship Theory of Management,” *The Academy of Management Review* 22, no. 1 (1997): 20–47; Joris Lammers and Diederik A. Stapel, “How Power Influences Moral Thinking,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 97 (2009): 279–289.

²⁹ Adam D. Galinsky, Joe C. Magee, M. Ena Ineri, and Deborah H. Gruenfeld, “Power and Perspectives Not Taken,” *Psychological Science* 17, no. 12 (2006): 1068–1074; Gerben A. van Kleef, Christopher Oveis, Ilmo van der Löwe, Aleksandr LuoKogan, Jennifer Goetz, and Dacher Keltner, “Power, Distress, and Compassion: Turning a Blind Eye to the Suffering of Others,” *Psychological Science* 19, no. 12 (2008): 1315–1322.

³⁰ Deborah H. Gruenfeld, Ena Inesi, Joe C. Magee, and Adam D. Galinsky, “Power and the Objectification of Social Targets,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95, no. 1 (2008): 111.

³¹ Dacher Keltner, Deborah H. Gruenfeld, and Cameron Anderson, “Power, Approach, and Inhibition,” *Psychological Review* 110, no. 2 (2003): 265–284.

³² Joe C. Magee, Gavin J. Kilduff, and Chip Heath, “On the Folly of Principal’s Power: Managerial Psychology as a Cause of Bad Incentives,” *Research in Organizational Behavior* 31 (2011): 25–41.

mechanism, as it reduces the influence of organizational values previously internalized in socialization processes due to increased correspondence between one's own values and conduct. The changes in cognitive processes that usually occur with the acquisition of power can generate a bias toward results. That is, those who hold power can direct and encourage subordinates with an approach that is too goal-oriented, devoting little attention to ethics or adaptation to organizational values in the means that subordinates use to achieve goals.

It should be noted that the authors closely link power to politics. In general, politics and power are considered integral dimensions of organizational dynamics, but political *behavior* is distinguished as something that exists in varying degrees. Politics includes those activities which develop in order to acquire, increase, and use power and other resources, with the end of obtaining intended results in a situation in which there exists uncertainty or tension about the alternatives to be followed.³³ However, political behavior corresponds, in all the consulted literature, to Alcaide's definition: "Those discretionary activities, undertaken by organizational actors, related to the acquisition, development, and use of power to protect or promote their own interests in a situation of conflict with the interests of others."³⁴

The predominance of political behavior is generally morally condemned, not only because it supposes the orientation, promotion, and protection of one's own ends or conflict but also because it consists, by definition, of the use of non-sanctioned means of influence which are not regulated by the organization. Additionally, it implies a deficit of rationality.³⁵ Further, generally, the more politics is used, the more demographic attributes potentially become the basis of alliances, replacing meritocratic attributes and diversity, thereby weakening performance.

³³ Fernández and Bretones, "La organización"; Hernández, Quintero, Trujillo, *El poder en las organizaciones*; Pfeffer, *Power in Organizations*.

³⁴ Manuel Alcaide Castro, *Conflicto y poder en las organizaciones* (Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1987), 47.

³⁵ Castro, *Conflicto y poder en las organizaciones*.

Considering this, even though political behavior in organizations can be adaptive, the literature suggests strategies that may be enacted to reduce the predominance of political behavior in cases where power is being used unethically through informal channels, highlighting:

1. Structuring organizations in a less pyramidal way, favoring less centralization of power;³⁶
2. Establishing clear systems with objective criteria to evaluate performance;
3. Reducing ambiguity in roles by defining expected behavior;
4. Promoting an organizational culture in which confidence prevails and which rejects a zero-sum focus, rejecting a logic that implies, if someone has succeeded, it is because another has failed.

These considerations raise numerous questions and prompt us to distance ourselves from the measures which, until now, have been adopted as a response to the crisis of sexual abuse in an ecclesial context. It will be necessary to recognize that replacing the church hierarchy does not by itself generate transformations that protect the institution from new cases of abuse of power, whether of a sexual nature or any other.

The case in Chile—as Carlos Schickendantz indicates—leaves us with some ecclesiological lessons³⁷ which confirm the importance of a less-idealized conception of the exercise of power. Naivete must not be replaced with distrust but with the aim to better understand the risks and grey areas that human beings experience in their relationships. Contemporary ecclesiology has taken the important step of affirming that one's image of the Church determines one's style of relationship—*ad intra*

³⁶ Eisenhardt y Bourgeois (1988), cited in Hernández, Quintero, Trujillo, *El poder en las organizaciones*.

³⁷ Schickendantz, Carlos. "Mentalidades elitistas y clericalismo estructural. Algunas lecciones eclesiológicas que deja el 'caso chileno,'" in *Teología y prevención: Estudio sobre los abusos sexuales en la Iglesia*, ed. Daniel Portillo Trevizo (Bilbao: Sal Terrae, 2020): 95–126. See also John Beal, "'Tan inertes como un barco pintado sobre un océano pintado'. Un pueblo a la deriva en la calma chicha eclesiológica," *Concilium* 306 (2004): 111–123.

and *ad extra*—with the community.³⁸ A markedly monolithic, self-centered, and hierarchical image organized around androcentric and patriarchal principles has set in place a style of community relations in which some groups—emblematically, but not exclusively, women—have historically been displaced from pastoral, academic, and administrative spaces. Also in operation is a culture of classes in which those who have received the ministry of orders belong to the first class, while the other members of the faithful belong to the second. Both characteristics of this ecclesial model leave some of its members in a situation of positional vulnerability, a place in which their identity is understood from the vantage point of subordination, independent of their personal characteristics.

Under what conditions and suppositions is it possible to develop an ethos of power modelled after the example of Jesus in the Gospels? This question requires a theoretical framework that permits theology to make use of a phenomenology of church power, a design that is rooted in the content of the typical relations of a Christian community and sheds light on the paradoxes and grey zones to which its members are habitually exposed.

The Female Performance of Power

In accordance with what has been covered thus far, I affirm the general rule that, for better or worse, power makes individuals act more as they are, manifesting and accentuating orientations, traits, and idiosyncrasies, whether pro- or antisocial, embedded both in individual personality and in the culture of which they are a part. However, when considering gender in our analysis, evidence suggests that empowerment tends to take on different forms between men and women. Men in power are more likely to participate in roles that represent others whereas women in power tend

³⁸ Sandra Arenas, “Desclericalización: antídoto para los abusos en la Iglesia,” in Portillo Trevizo, ed., *Teología y prevención: Estudio sobre los abusos sexuales en la Iglesia* (Sal Terrae: 2020): 127–144.

to involve others in the process of organizational decision-making.³⁹ These and other observations suggest that women tend to be more disposed toward participative, voluntary processes. In contrast, men tend to perceive their empowerment as a product of individual actions rather than as a result of investments in complex networks of relations that provide a sense of community.

Sociocultural constructs of gender are often interpreted as tied to representations that are implicitly or explicitly present in the culture, ideology, and architecture of an organization. In this sense, Linstead and Maréchal describe how the metaphors of phallic masculinity manifest themselves negatively in an organization's strict hierarchical control by the imposition of roles, competence, violence, and lack of tolerance for error.⁴⁰ The metaphor of the male phallus is identified with male hegemony, power, and control. Approaching these variables as a partially unconscious symbolic may permit deeper reflection on modes of intervention to counteract the authoritarian qualities of the patriarchal character of organizations. This may allow the recovery of matriarchal aspects, which may allow for a greater sense of organizational humanity.⁴¹

The cultural naturalization of gender differences and roles requires a critical reconstruction that will permit us to name violence and abuse in a more sophisticated way coherent with human experience.⁴² In the global ecclesial context, the analysis of the experiences of abused males, both

³⁹ Itzhaki & York (2000), cited in Paul W. Speer, N. Andrew Peters, Theresa L. Armstead, and Christopher T. Allenm "The Influence of Participation, Gender and Organizational Sense of Community on Psychological Empowerment: The Moderating Effects of Income," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 51, nos. 1–2 (2013): 103–113.

⁴⁰ Stephen Andrew Linstead and Garance Maréchal, "Re-Reading Masculine Organization: Phallic, Testicular and Seminal Metaphors," *Human Relations* 68, no. 9 (2015): 1461–1489.

⁴¹ Höpfl (2008), cited in Linstead and Maréchal, "Re-reading masculine organization," 1470.

⁴² An interesting exercise of this kind, in the Chilean context, is represented by the Observatorio Contra el Acoso Callejero. Cf. Javiera Arancibia et al., *Acoso Sexual Callejero: Contexto y Dimensiones* (Chile: Observatorio Contra el Acoso Callejero, 2015), www.ocac.cl/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Acoso-Sexual-Callejero-Contexto-y-dimensiones-2015.pdf.

minors and adults, has been emphasized. Only recently has attention been paid to the narratives of women who have suffered abuse at the hands of church agents.⁴³ However, this is insufficient, considering the lack, in both the civil and religious world, of a taxonomy of the exercise of power that highlights the female performance of the male; in effect, there are women who abuse, even though we are still far from being able to speak scientifically of such a phenomenon.⁴⁴

Approaches to the role of the body in the performance of power can be a starting point for an awareness of the implicit dynamics of female power.⁴⁵ Similarly, theological considerations that take on the perspectives of women are slowly starting to permeate Latin American Mariology, a subject that has most likely affected the self-understanding not only of believing women of the American continent but also of Latin women in general.⁴⁶ Based on her studies of Elizabeth Johnson, theologian Blanca Besa articulates some of the paradoxes and questions that we need to revisit.

[T]his reflection on the close link between Marianism and the cult of Mary—as the ideal woman/mother—should take into account the fact that, despite the oppression and androcentrism it entails, in the Chilean case at least, it does not imply a detriment to devotion to the Virgin. On the contrary, to the present day, one of the singular features of the nation

⁴³ Daniela Bolívar and Claudia Leal, “Abuso sexual contra mujeres adultas en contexto eclesástico: evidencia y vacíos,” in *La crisis de la Iglesia en Chile: Mirar las Heridas*, ed., Brahm Sofía, and Eduardo Valenzuela (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica, 2021).

⁴⁴ The Latin American Church carries out an incipient reflection on the matter based on recently revealed cases, such as that of the Sodalicio. See “Camila Bustamante, ‘El abuso de mujeres contra mujeres en la Iglesia no existe, tampoco la víctima, la justicia o la reparación,’” *Religión Digital*, 2022, www.religiondigital.org/libros/Camila-Bustamante-mujeres-Iglesia-reparacion-siervas-sodalicio-libro-investigacion_0_2474452534.html.

⁴⁵ Rainer Bucher, “El cuerpo del poder y el poder del cuerpo. La situación de la Iglesia y la derrota de Dios,” *Concilium* 306 (2004): 151–162.

⁴⁶ Sonia Montecino, *Madres y Huachos. Alegorías del mestizaje chileno* (Santiago, Chile: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 1994); Sonia Montecino, “Símbolo Mariano y constitución de la identidad femenina en Chile,” *Estudios Públicos* 39 (1990): 283–290.

is its veneration of Mary. What is especially curious is that, even if Marian devotion is seen among men, the great majority of those who visit sanctuaries, fulfill religious promises, celebrate the month of Mary, and pray the rosary, among other such activities, are women. One possible explanation is that Chilean women do not feel oppressed by this model, or that they simply accept this as part of the stereotype that they are expected to embody. However, another possible answer is that they see in Mary something more than a model of ideal motherhood. If so, what do they see in her that makes them have recourse to her person to find relief and comfort, strength and hope in their daily struggle for their own, and their children's, survival?⁴⁷

Conclusion

Power, and particularly its relation to abuse in the ecclesial crisis, requires a critical reconsideration which demands a complete understanding of its complex outlines, relationships, and territorialities. The topography of power demands not its sectorization or exclusion but the recognition of its omnipresence. Such a reading requires a de-essentializing reorientation that makes it possible to pay attention to power in its production and exercise. Above all, it must be clarified that power is nothing more than the relationships, networks, and frameworks of power. Power does not come from outside and impose itself on passive subjects. Rather, power is produced by virtue of intersubjectively constructed relationships: power understood as a verb and as an eminently relational exercise.



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⁴⁷ Blanca Besa Bandeira, "La marialogía de Elizabeth Johnson en diálogo con el contexto chileno," *Palabra y Razón* 20 (2021): 67.

studied law (Universidad de Chile) and interreligious dialogue (Russell Berrie Fellowship).