

The Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship Program in Chile (1938-1970)

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The Rockefeller Foundation (RF) Fellowship Program is a relevant phenomenon through which the role of this philanthropic institution in the structuring of the Chilean academic-scientific field can be scrutinized. The analysis of this academic mobility program presents an insight into the academic dependence in the relationships between donors and recipients. In the “Research Program on Academic Dependence in Latin America” (PIDAAL),¹ we define dependence as a complex and dynamic process generated by the dominant academic centers, but critically received by the peripheral academies.

In this work I make a first analytical approach of the Chilean scholars who benefited from the RF grants between 1938 and 1970. The creation of this database was possible through a stay at the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) in February 2013. On this occasion the access to a variety of documents (application forms and fellowship cards) allowed me to build a prosopographic matrix of Chilean grantees and their social, cultural, academic, and institutional features.

The Chilean Higher Education Field

During the period under examination (1938-1970), the Chilean university field consisted of eight universities: public (University of Chile and Technical State University), and six private (Catholic University of Chile, Valparaíso Catholic University, Northern University, University of Concepcion, Technical University Federico Santa María, and

Southern University). One common feature is that the funding of both private and state universities was mostly fiscal. The universities with the largest enrolment were the University of Chile, in first place, followed by the Catholic University of Chile, both located in Santiago.

The University of Chile was the first academic institution established in post-colonial Chile. Due to different factors, it enjoyed important national prestige, and even though it had political autonomy, it was linked to the Chilean Government through several channels, its educational system in particular. From the beginning of the 1950s, under the Rectorship of Juan Gómez Millas (1953-1963), the University of Chile started an accelerated modernization process which boosted its prestige at the regional level.

The Catholic University of Chile was founded at the end of the 19th century. In the 1950s it also started a process of modernization, though with a lower impetus than the University of Chile. However, it consolidated its autonomy compared to the latter, to which it was subordinated to, both in the awarding of some graduate degrees and in the control of certain academic aspects.

Organization of Variables

The prosopographic database includes the careers of three hundred two Chilean scholars awarded RF fellowships. The total number of RF grants in Chile between 1938 and 1970 does not coincide with the number of grantees because thirty-seven of them received grants twice and one of them three times.² Therefore, the number of fellowships awarded by the RF Program in Chile was three hundred thirty-nine. Those scholars who received a grant, but were unable to use it for different reasons—personal, work, administrative, etc.—were not included in the database. The prosopographic matrix consists of a set of analytical variables, studied from a specific number of modalities or categories. The first one is *gender*.

The first observation is the low female representation in the total number of fellowships; twenty-nine women versus two hundred seventy-three men. Thus, females

represent only ten percent of the grants awarded. Considering the increasing number of female applicants in Chile's Higher Education System, which according to Brunner³ went from twenty-five percent in 1940 to thirty-six percent in 1950, and forty percent in 1967, the RF Fellowship Program did not mirror the female matriculation process. If we focus on the *marital status* of the twenty-nine women, we can see that only three of them were married and the rest were single, a situation related to several obstacles (family, work, marital, etc.) which females encountered in facing the possibility of academic mobility, such as that offered by the RF.

The variable *undergraduate college* is an indicator of some structural aspects of Chilean universities. Out of the total number of scholars included in the study pertaining to the RF Fellowship Program, two hundred twenty-four (seventy-three percent) were undergraduate students at the University of Chile, fifty-six (nineteen percent) pursued undergraduate level studies at the Catholic University of Chile, thirteen scholars (four percent) at the University of Concepcion, and seven at foreign universities. In turn, the Southern University and the Technical University Federico Santa María had only one graduate each.

The *university studies by discipline*⁴ variable leads us to another aspect of the structuring the Chilean sciences: the unequal distribution of academic resources. In a restructuring process, philanthropic foundations and international cooperation agencies played an important role, in part due to the components available to them in the field (grants, fellowships, scholarships, etc.) and in the establishment of mechanisms of competition to obtain them. As a result of this particular structuring, in the 1950s the medical, health, and biological sciences were in the middle of a sustained modernization process. Those were the first disciplines to generate graduate programs, to receive funding for scientific technology, and to set up laboratories with modern equipment. It is also symptomatic that in 1962, one of

the scholars of these disciplines was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology.⁵ In turn, the agricultural sciences were also considerably funded by several agencies and philanthropic foundations.

In our matrix, the variable *university majors* are made up of seventeen categories. Medicine majors obtained the greatest number of grants with a total of ninety-six, followed by agricultural engineers with eight-four grants. In a smaller number are economics majors (public accountants, economics bachelors and commercial engineers), thirty-nine in all. The large number of grants allotted to economics majors is an indicator of the growing relevance of this discipline to the RF.

In Chile, the institutionalization of the economic sciences was marked by a tension between the country's two major universities: the University of Chile and the Catholic University of Chile. In 1924 the latter opened the School of Trade and Economic Sciences. The University of Chile founded one in 1935. The degrees awarded by both universities did not differ much, and neither did the professional training they provided. Since the end of the 1930's, another form of concurrence between both institutions took place with the institutionalization of research practices and with the creation of institutes devoted to economics.

The 1950's marked an important turning point in the history of the economic and social sciences in Chile. At that time, a *foundational* period started for the economic sciences, and tensions and concurrences grew again between the University of Chile and the Catholic University of Chile. It must be remembered that in 1948 the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was established in Chile. This institution contributed to the modernization of the social sciences.

One of the strategies of the University of Chile was the institutionalization of graduate level studies in economics, an academic level that did not exist in Chile for this discipline. In

1956 the University of Chile created the School of Latin American Studies (ESCOLATINA), devoted to graduate studies.

In turn, the strategy of the Catholic University of Chile was the internationalization of disciplines related to economics. To this end, in 1956 the university signed an agreement with the University of Chicago, funded by the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), of the U.S. State Department. The explicit goals of the agreement were to conduct research studies in Chilean economy, to train specialists in “modern economy,” and to exchange faculty members and students.⁶

Thirty-nine scholars in the field of economic sciences obtained RF fellowships between 1956 and 1970. It must be noted that the beginning of the RF’s fellowship program in economics occurred the year in which both universities developed strategies of institutionalization and professionalization of the discipline, and at the same time that they implemented their most significant projects. Those who benefited the most from RF fellowships were the scholars from the University of Chile. There were twenty-five scholars in all who received grants, three of them twice. On the other hand, thirteen scholars from the Catholic University of Chile received a fellowship, three of them on two occasions. Only one scholar from the University of Concepcion was awarded an RF grant.

The careers of Sergio de Castro and Carlos Mario Cortés present a clear picture of the strategies undertaken by both universities in order to consolidate academic economic studies. Born in Chile in 1930, Sergio de Castro studied economics at the School of Economic Sciences at the Catholic University of Chile and graduated with honors as a commercial engineer from that institution in 1956. He was granted a fellowship to pursue a master’s degree program in economics under the supervision of Arnold Harberger at the University of Chicago, within the framework of an agreement between the Catholic University of Chile and the University of Chicago. Later, in 1961, he received a RF grant, which he could not use

until 1962, due to family problems. Once again he went to the University of Chicago, this time to pursue his Ph.D. degree. When he completed his RF fellowship, he started teaching at the Valley University in Colombia. In 1965 he was appointed dean of the School of Economic Sciences at the Catholic University of Chile, a position he held until 1968. Between 1972 and 1973 he wrote, in collaboration with other economists, *El Ladrillo (The Brick)*, a recipe book of neoliberal ideas meant to reorganize Chilean economy. Later on, De Castro played a key role in the definition of the neoliberal political economy of Augusto Pinochet Ugarte's military dictatorship. Between 1974 and 1976 he was Minister of Economy, and in 1977 he was appointed Minister of Finance until 1982.

Carlos Mario Cortes was born in Chile in 1929 and studied economics at the School of Economic Sciences, University of Chile. In 1959, while he was working as associate researcher at the Institute of Economics, he received a RF fellowship to study at Yale University where he received his master of arts in economics in 1962, under the supervision of Lloyd Reynolds and Joseph Grunwald. In 1967 he obtained a second RF fellowship to pursue his Ph.D. studies at Stanford University, where he graduated in 1970. After returning to Chile, he was appointed director of the ESCOLATINA Graduate School.

Modern nursing in Chile developed within the framework of the modernization and institutionalization process of the national health system. In 1892 the first Organic Law of Public Hygiene was passed and the Public Health Institute was created. The problems related to the prevention of infectious-contagious diseases led to the creation of the Ministry of Health, Social Assistance and Welfare in 1924, and a few years later to the creation of the Institute of Bacteriology (1929). During this process nursing went from being a religion-based practice to a modern discipline connected to medicine. In 1902 the first nursing course was developed, and four years later the School of Chilean Nurses was established. The first university nursing school which belonged to the University of Chile was founded in 1929.

The University of Concepcion in turn opened its school of nursing in 1948, as did the Catholic University of Chile in 1950.

Between 1942 and 1953, eighteen nurses received a RF fellowship, and all of them practiced nursing in universities and hospitals in Canada and the U.S. The RF fellowships contributed to the professionalization process of nursing. Eleven grantees came from the field of engineering (civil, construction, among others), whereas ten had bachelors in sciences (biology, physics, mathematics and chemistry), seven were arts graduates (drama, music, dance and literature). Five historians were granted a RF fellowship, while four came from the fields of law, library science and biochemistry. Three recipients had studied sociology, two studied English as a foreign language, and one scholar from each field—architecture, political science, and dentistry—was awarded a fellowship.

The fact that some disciplines are less represented should not be interpreted as a lack of interest on the part of the RF. If we take the case of history, for example, we will notice that this discipline received only five fellowships, a relatively low number in comparison to other disciplines such as economics. However, the field of history benefited considerably from various funds from the RF.

Institutional Support and Individual Support in the Case of History⁷

The American History Research Center—whose existence was directly linked from its beginnings to RF funding—operated in the University of Chile between 1960 and 1968. Its origins date back to negotiations initiated by an RF officer, John Harrison, and a Chilean historian, Eugenio Pereira Salas.

In 1957 the RF granted \$6,850 to fund a research project on Latin American history directed by Eugenio Pereira Salas. A further grant of \$9,600 was awarded to another project led by Álvaro Jara and Mellafe Rojas to conduct research on slave labor during the Chilean

colonial period.⁸ The findings of these projects prompted Harrison to strongly support opening a research center.

In 1959 the decision was made to open this center whose funding came under a different modality than the first RF funding. Its foundation was framed within the policy of “institution building.” To this end the RF granted a \$75,000 subsidy for a period of four years for the creation of the institution. The formal application and the assigned amount were channeled through the University of Chile.

The subsidies granted to the Center included the purchase of library material, visits of foreign scholars, renting a building, the salaries of administrative and research support staff, the establishment of a graduate school, and scholarships for foreign students, among other expenses. Also included were five fellowships awarded to Chilean historians. The institutional and academic strengthening of the Center led to the opening of a graduate school in 1962, subsequently funded by RF grants, in 1963 (\$32,951), 1966 (\$66,500), and an additional grant of \$25,000.⁹

One of the scholars who benefited from a RF fellowship was Rolando Mellafe Rojas, whose career illustrates the institutional modernization of history as articulated through the diversity of funds granted by the RF. Mellafe Rojas was born in Santiago de Chile in 1929 and studied history at the Institute of Pedagogy of the University of Chile, where he received his undergraduate degree in 1958. In 1960 he obtained a RF fellowship to study at the University of California, Berkeley, under the supervision of Woodrow Borah. In those years Berkeley was a training center in the social sciences and humanities, which brought together the most prestigious historians and social scientists of the time. Regarding history in particular, it represented an academic center of high reputation. Borah in turn was one of the most prestigious historians in the field of historiography, and was even reputed as the

founder, along with Sherburne F. Cook, of the so-called *Berkeley School*, which was devoted to historic demographics.

Due to the experience acquired through his academic trips, Mellafe Rojas was one of the organizers of the American History Research Center, particularly its Graduate School. On his return from the United States, Mellafe Rojas held different positions in academic institutions and international organizations. Between 1963 and 1964 he worked in ESCOLATINA, the Latin American School of Economics, while he was a researcher at the American History Research Center and a lecturer at the School of Philosophy and Education. He also taught the Inter-American Course of Health and Dynamics of the Population of the School of Health in 1968-1969, during which time, he also worked as a lecturer in the School of Sociology. In 1972 he started working as a researcher at the UN Latin American Demographic Center, (CELADE) where he continued working for several years. Later on he was hired by the United Nations to coordinate research programs on demographics during the period 1975-1979.

His first publications in Chile date back to the mid-1950's: *Diego de Almagro y el descubrimiento del Perú* (1955), *Barros Arana, Americanista* (1958), and his work to become a lecturer was entitled: *La introducción de la esclavitud negra en Chile. Tráfico y rutas* (1959). In 1964, Eudeba published in Argentina the first edition of *La esclavitud en Hispanoamérica*, followed by the second edition in 1972. It was published in Mexico the following year under the title *Breve Historia de la esclavitud en América Latina* (1973). In 1975, the University of California published *Negro Slavery in Latin America*, which was in turn translated into Japanese and published in Tokyo by the editor Iwanami Shoten.

As it may be noticed, prosopography is a method which contributes to structural analyses and makes it possible to compare the careers of scholars from different disciplines, located in different institutions and with diverse capitals. In this paper I have tackled a set of

variables of the prosopographic matrix which is still under construction. Therefore, this is a preliminary work which will allow me to fine tune analytical perspectives, observations on variables, and will provide an analytical portrait of the Chilean academic field between 1938 and 1970.

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ENDNOTES:

¹ PIDAAL (by its Spanish initials) is a research group, of which I am a member, led by Fernanda Beigel and based at the National University of Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina.

² Reference is made to Ignacio Ramírez Araya (1925-2010). He graduated as an agricultural engineer in 1948 from the University of Chile. In 1954 he was recommended for a Rockefeller Foundation (RF) fellowship by the Chilean Department of Agriculture to pursue advanced studies in Mexico where the RF was carrying out an important program of agricultural research and experimentation. In 1961 he was recommended for the second time by the Chilean Ministry of Agriculture and selected once again by the RF to study for a master of science degree at Washington State University, specializing in plant science and plant breeding. In 1965 he was granted a fellowship to pursue a Ph.D. degree at the same university, graduating in 1969.

³ Brunner, José Joaquín. "Educación superior en Chile: entre el Estado, el Mercado y los intereses académicos." *Working Document-FLACSO Program 357* (1987).

⁴ This is a term coined by the author to express a variable that includes a series of disciplines explained in this paragraph.

⁵ The reference is to Humberto Maturana (1928). He graduated as a medical doctor from the University of Chile and worked at the biology laboratory in that institution under the supervision of Gustavo Hoecker and Gabriel Gasic. In 1954 he received a RF fellowship to study experimental biology at the University College of London, under the supervision of J. Z. Young. In 1955 Maturana went to Harvard University to pursue a master of science (1957) and a Ph.D. (1959) degree. In 1959 he was hired by MIT to work in Jerome Lettvin's laboratory. Later on he was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology together with Lettvin, Warren McCulloch, and Walter Pitts for their joint research: Jerome Lettvin, Humberto Maturana, Warren McCulloch and Walter Pitts (1959), "What the Frog's Eye Tells the Frog's Brain." *Proceedings of the Institute of Radio Engineers* 47,

pp. 1940-1951. Another version is in: William C. Corning and Martin Balaban, *The Mind: Biological Approaches to its Functions*. New York: Interscience Publishers, 1968, pp 233-258.

⁶ See Gallardo, Osvaldo. "La institucionalización de las ciencias económicas en Chile. El caso del Convenio Universidad Católica-Universidad de Chicago." Edited by IPGH. *Revista de Historia Americana* 145 (julio-diciembre 2011), pp. 77-102.

⁷ See Quesada, Fernando. "Private Foreign Aid and the Contest for Academic Autonomy: The Rockefeller Foundation at the University of Chile." In Fernanda Beigel, editor, *The Politics of Academic Autonomy in Latin America*, London, U.K.: Ashgate, 2013.

⁸ The Rockefeller Foundation, *Annual Report 1957*.

⁹ The Rockefeller Foundation, *Annual Report 1963*, *Annual Report 1966*, and *Annual Report 1968*.