CHILDREN *of* FATE

Childhood, Class, and the State in Chile, 1850–1930

NARA B. MILANICH

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FOR MY PARENTS

FOR NICOLA, GIACOMO, AND LUCA

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I hope that this book succeeds in communicating some of the richness of the historical materials I worked with and the great fun I had while doing so. At the Archivo Nacional in Santiago, I wish to thank Mario Monsalve, Ricardo Valenzuela, and Marco Reyes Collao for their assistance and for permitting access to uncatalogued materials in the basement of the archive. I also thank Dionisio Ortiz and Guillermo Torres for their cheery forbearance on chilly winter mornings in the reading room. These highly capable staff members consistently went beyond the call of professional duty. Mr. Monsalve also collaborated in the transfer of judicial documents from a closet in the First Criminal Court of San Felipe, where they lay in danger of imminent deterioration, to a safer home in the Archivo Nacional. The late Germán Rosales Pérez provided transportation, and Mauricio Silva Pizarro, Judge of the First Criminal Court of San Felipe, and Max Cancino, Secretary of the Court, also assisted in the matter. The staff of the Archivo del Siglo XX (Archivo Nacional de la Administración) was similarly helpful. I am grateful to Dr. Ricardo Cruz-Coke Madrid, director of the Museo Nacional de Medicina "Dr. Enrique Laval," housed in the Faculty of Medicine at the Universidad de Chile, for his personal interest in this project. Until her retirement, Mireya Olivares, the library's indefatigable *bibliotecaria,* was a true model of professional dedication as well as a pleasure to work with. In the Biblioteca Nacional, Liliana Montecinos ran a tight ship in the reading room. Hugo Castillo Palacios and Jimena Rosenkranz assisted with photographic reproduction, as did Marina Molina of the Museo Histórico Nacional's photographic archive. Ivonne Urriola Pérez and Soledad Zárate generously shared source materials. Finally, Priscilla Rocha Caamaño, a master's student in history at the Universidad de Santiago de Chile, provided extremely thoughtful research assistance.

When I ventured out of libraries and archives and into convents and welfare asylums in search of research materials, Madre Luz Galdames of the Congregación de las Hijas de San José, Protectoras a la Infancia, welcomed my interest in her congregation and generously facilitated access to documents relating to their early history. I also acknowledge the warmth of Madre Augusta Meza B. of the Congregación de las Hermanas de la Providencia, who in addition to allowing me to browse through the correspondence of Madre Bernarda Morin, the congregation's founder, cajoled me with cups of hot tea. Madre Augusta and I were both immersed in overlapping research projects: Mine was of course an academic study. Hers was the case for the beatification of Madre Bernarda, an effort that continues. At the Sociedad Protectora de la Infancia, President Alicia Amunátegui de Ross generously gave of her time to help me understand the Protectora and her family's role within it. I also acknowledge her husband, the late Jorge Ross Ossa, for his encouragement in this project. Whether or not they would agree with the conclusions of this study, I was impressed by the strength of their convictions and the depth of their dedication to their cause. I hope that my respect for them is evident here.

This study would have turned out very, very differently were it not for a fateful encounter with the 1999 Santiago phonebook. There I discovered that the Casa Nacional del Niño, the contemporary incarnation of the Casa de Huérfanos, Santiago's historic foundling home, was alive and well, located on the same site as its nineteenth-century predecessor in Providencia, a neighborhood that takes its name from the congregation that ran the asylum. I approached the Casa Nacional in a distinctly un-Chilean fashion, unidentified and unannounced, seeking research leads.

Director María Cristina Rojas took a chance on a stranger and graciously agreed to share with me the extraordinary cache of nineteenth-century documentation that had been stored for decades in a closet behind a playroom. The Casa Nacional's nutritionist and historian, Carlos Eduardo Sánchez Aravena, assisted in this project in many ways. He cheerfully clambered up the ladder to reach the dustiest tomes in the farthest reaches of the closet, allowed me to stay after hours, and was always interested to hear about my day's findings. Were it not for Carlos and his abiding commitment to the institution's past, the documents so generously shared with me might well have been disposed of long ago.

Working with these extraordinary materials was a privilege, not the least because of the circumstances in which I did so. The Casa Nacional is, after all, not an archive or a library: it is a children's asylum that at any given time houses some 100 infants and toddlers. I was provided with an office across the hall from a playroom and so found myself poring over the institution's nineteenth-century history with the hubbub of its present-day wards in the background. Leonardo, Mateo, and Aurora, among many other young people, certainly enriched that research experience.

Books have genealogies as sure as people do. I locate the origins of this project in a course I took at the Universidad de Santiago de Chile in 1995. The seminar, team-taught by Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt and Julio Pinto, was titled "Los de Arriba y Los de Abajo en Chile Decimonónico" (Rich and Poor in Nineteenth-Century Chile). It was there I first read Augusto Orrego Luco's essay "La cuestión social," from which the title of the book derives, and began to think about structures of hierarchy in Chile. While this project has undergone many incarnations since its life as a dissertation, the distinctive intellectual mark of each of my graduate advisors, Nancy Cott, Gil Joseph, and Stuart Schwartz, remains unmistakably palpable throughout. It is only in retrospect that I can say how truly formidable their influence has been. I thank them as well for support and encouragement that has endured long after graduate school. More recently, this project has benefited from new intellectual communities. I did not originally conceive of this book as a history of childhood. Thanks to the small but extraordinarily dynamic intellectual community that is the Society for the History of Children and Youth, including Paula Fass, Steve Mintz, and Bengt Sandin, it became one.

Books, I discovered, are as much about talking as writing. This one has benefited from conversations with and feedback from friends, colleagues, and *miembros del gremio*, including Azun Candina, Consuelo Figueroa, Igor Goicovic, Tobias Hecht, Liz Hutchison, Ivan Jablonka, Deborah Meacham, Joe Miller, Jolie Olcott, Catalina Policzer, Jorge Rojas, René Salinas, Shobana Shankar, Rebecca Wilkin, and Soledad Zárate. Amy Chazkel, Bryan McCann, Tori Langland, and Mark Overmyer-Velásquez continue to be wonderful and important *compañeros* long after graduate school. I thank as well my friends in Davis, Chuck Walker, Zoila Mendoza, Andrés Resendez, Tom Holloway, Krystyna von Hennenberg, Luis Guarnizo, and Marisol de la Cadena. I express gratitude to the Barnard History Department for the supportive environment they provide for junior faculty. My colleagues at Barnard and in the broader Columbia and New York Latin American History communities read parts of this book in supportive, thoughtful, and dynamic seminars. Individual chapters of this book greatly benefited from the feedback of Constanza Castro, John Coatsworth, Debbie Coen, Betsy Esch, Federico Finchelstein, Carlos Gálvez, Abosede George, Paul Gootenberg, Tom Klubock, Dorothy Ko, Ariel Mae Lambe, Claudio Lomnitz, José Moya, Julia del Palacio, Pablo Piccato, Caterina Pizzigoni, Thom Rath, Lisa Tiersten, Carl Wennerlind, and Carlos Zúñiga-Nieto. I am grateful to Linda Lewin and Steve Mintz for reading an earlier version and to Joe Miller for helping me think through issues of tutelary servitude. Amy Chazkel provided an extremely thoughtful reading of the final manuscript, as well as a welcome dose of camaraderie, even as she was finishing her own book. Nicola Cetorelli and my mom brought an economist's and anthropologist's sensibility, respectively, to their reading of the manuscript and were ever mindful of the big picture. Betsy Kuznesof and Heidi Tinsman deserve special thanks for working through this manuscript not once but twice. I am very grateful for their exceptionally constructive and generously rendered critiques. Thanks as well to Valerie Millholland, Miriam Angress, Leigh Barnwell, and Neal McTighe, at Duke University Press, as well as to Ariel Mae Lambe, Sonya Manes, and Lynn Walterick, for their expert guidance, patience, and good humor in shepherding this book to completion.

I have Luis Ortega, Diana Veneros, and their daughter Antonia to thank for many of my best memories of Chile. Santiago would have been a much hungrier city were it not for the many, many *cazuelas de ave* I enjoyed at their home, and a much lonelier one were it not for the many conversations about history and politics we shared beneath the backyard *parra*. At key moments, they also provided crucial institutional assistance that furthered this project.

This is a book about kinship and the material and symbolic benefits it confers. It is therefore only fitting to recognize my family's myriad and immeasurable contributions to its making. It is sometimes said that a historian's personal familiarity with the subjects of inquiry facilitates his or her scholarship. This may be true for some fields, but I am not convinced it is true for the history of children! Neither Luca nor Giacomo helped me finish this book any faster. Giacomo impatiently inquired when I would write a book *for* children instead of *about* them. On the other hand, thanks to them I developed tremendous empathy for the mothers, fathers, caretakers, and *comadres* I encountered in the historical record. And of course they provide daily opportunities to appreciate dimensions of childhood not explored in this book. Nicola Cetorelli's devoted support, unwavering encouragement, and superhuman forbearance over more than ten years have been truly instrumental to this book's journey. He will be possibly even more relieved at its completion than I am. Finally, I express profound gratitude for the steadfast and loving support of Jerry Milanich—personal assistant, babysitter extraordinaire, and dad—and Maxine Margolis—critic, trailblazing role model, and mom. In the spirit of nineteenth-century Chilean elites' genealogical veneration, I dedicate this book, with love, to all of them.

INTRODUCTION

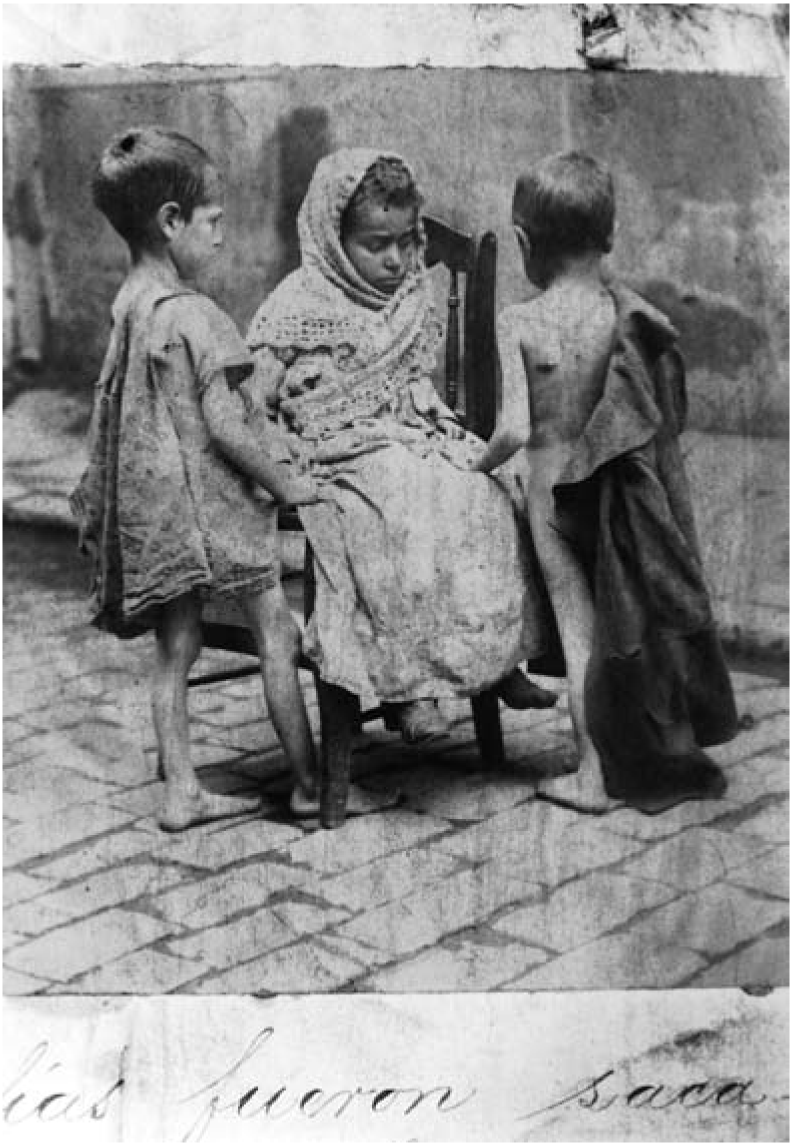
State, Class Society, and Children in Chile

The Children, the Judge, and the Doñas

The initial report brought to the judge's attention in November 1894 concerned three neglected and abused children living in a poor neighborhood of Santiago. An official was dispatched to 66 Maipú Street, but, as he recounted in his report, the woman who opened the door was singularly uncooperative. At first she refused to present the children in question and then produced three healthy-looking ones. Eventually, the official was shown a girl whose "sickly condition made me suspect [the report of abuse] was true." After ordering the arrest of the woman and several other inhabitants, he searched the house and found two other children who had been hidden under a bed.

The official identified the youngsters as Delia, Ricardo, and José Manuel Puelma, siblings between the ages of approximately seven and ten. He described the children's "sad state" in detail: dressed in filthy rags, they exhibited "hunger in the true sense of the word." Delia had worms on her scalp, and José Manuel and Ricardo displayed "a thinness that provoked horror." Photographs taken at the judge's instruction show the children posed on a cobblestone street with a wooden chair as a prop, barefoot, swathed in rags, staring plaintively at the camera or rotated to expose their scars.

The judge paid for the children to be clothed and fed at his personal expense and the next day questioned them about their situation. They confirmed they were orphans living with relatives and described, in a statement that would later be excerpted in lurid detail in the newspapers, how they habitually ate garbage out of a canal. The threesome could not say how old they were and did not know the identity of their mother or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1. Children of fate: the Puelma children when they first arrived at the court in November 1894. *Source: Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile.*

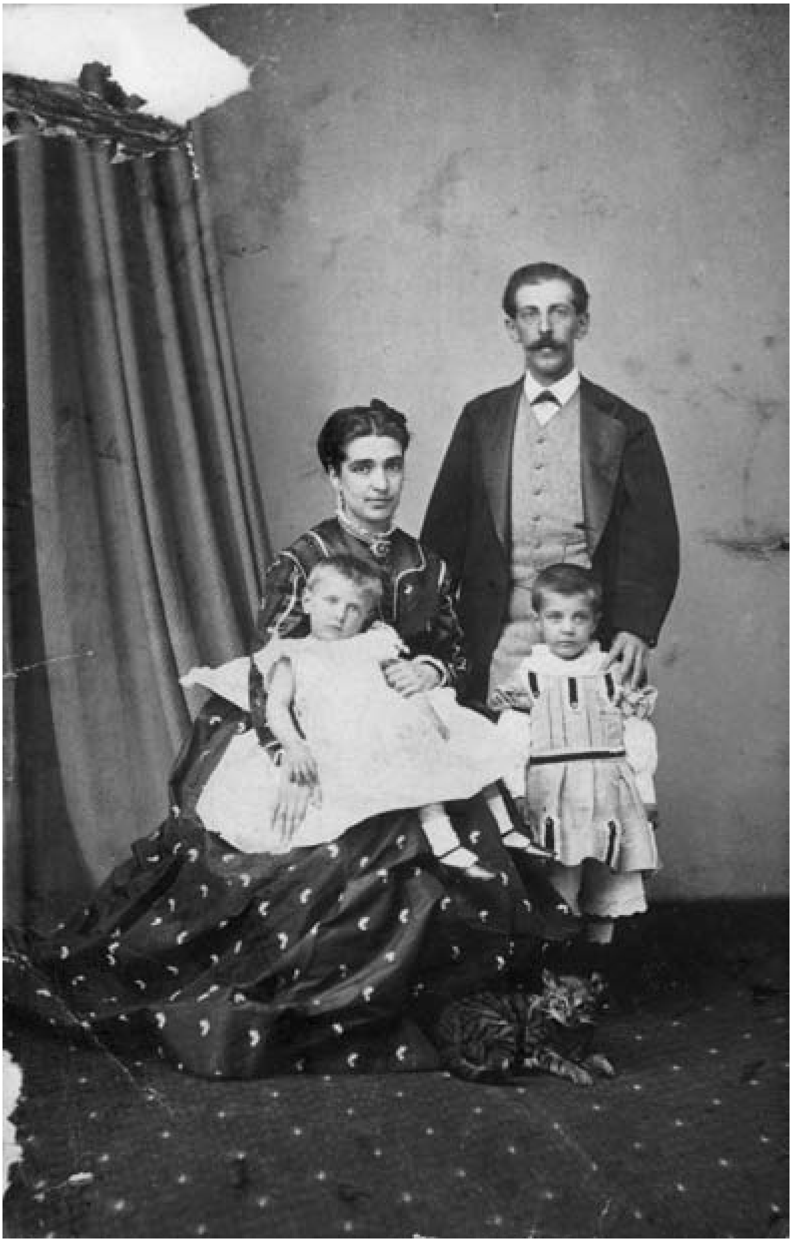
how long their parents had been dead. Subsequent testimony confirmed they were illegitimate, born of an adulterous and possibly incestuous union of a well-off father and a poorer woman to whom he was related. The "crime of Maipú Street" generated extensive press coverage at a moment of blossoming public preoccupation with poor children. Eventually, two caretakers were convicted of attempted homicide.

And what became of the children? Several days after they were taken into court custody, Doña Emiliana Subercaseaux appeared before the judge, requesting that they be delivered to her care. A prominent member of the Santiago elite and widow of Don Melchor Concha y Toro (of viticultural fame), Doña Emiliana had no personal connection to the case. But she wished to place the children in the asylum that she and an associate, Doña Josefina Gana de Johnson, had recently founded. The judge granted her request, and the logs of the Sociedad Protectora de la Infancia record the Puelma trio as the very first wards admitted to an institution that, in succeeding decades, would succor tens of thousands of poor children. After a stay of unspecified duration, the asylum placed Delia and José Manuel with a "trusted señora," for whom they probably worked as servants in exchange for material sustenance and moral tutelage. According to the logs, José Manuel and his brother Ricardo were eventually sent to workshops associated with Santiago's main orphanage, where they would receive instruction in artisanal trades. Thereafter all documentary traces of the Puelmas vanish, but a probable fate can be reconstructed from the experiences of countless other poor and parentless minors in this society. Delia would come of age as a domestic servant, the dependency of an impoverished childhood morphing seamlessly into the subordination of adult servitude. After a few years in the workshops, her brothers would emerge with few prospects for becoming independent artisans, landing casual employment in an urban household or perhaps a rural estate. They too would join an unskilled and dependent underclass.[1]

My research on children and family in nineteenth-century Chile led me in 2000 to the offices of Doña Alicia Amunátegui de Ross. The member of a prominent family, Doña Alicia was the president of the Sociedad Protectora de la Infancia, the asylum inaugurated by the Puelmas, which had celebrated its centenary several years before. She had presided over la Protectora, as it was known, for more than twenty-five years and displayed a passionate commitment to its mission. When she talked about the organization, which provided services to more than 5,000 needy children and employed a staff of hundreds, she used the first-person singular. Doña Alicia's bond with the Protectora was not just a product of the years she had devoted to its good works, however. Her relationship was more intimate and profound: It was familial. For as she explained to me, Doña Josefina, the Protectora's second founder, was her great-grandmother. And Doña Emiliana, who had solicited the Puelmas from the court, was the great-grandmother of her husband. For over a century, four generations of women from the same tightly knit elite clan had led the Protectora. Prompted by my questions about the asylum's history, Doña Alicia and her husband, Don Jorge Ross, provided a careful exegesis of their respective genealogies. The couple's knowledge of their family histories was striking: they could spontaneously name most of the twelve children of a great-grandmother. This genealogical veneration, shared by earlier generations of Chilean elites, is particularly conspicuous given that asylums like the Protectora have historically received children like the Puelmas—poor, abandoned, illegitimate, or orphaned minors with little if any knowledge of their natal identity.

Doña Alicia, Don Jorge, their great-grandmothers, and the Puelma children embody the significance of family for Chileans of all social levels. In the present but especially in the past, membership in a family had broad cultural meanings and important social and legal consequences, implying access to resources both material and symbolic. For elites, kin networks were a fundamental basis of economic and political power; for plebeians, they were a source of support and a buffer against a precarious existence. Familial belonging also harbored status associations. Elites' conceit of class was rooted in genealogy, but for the poor, the capacity to sustain social reproduction across generations could never be taken for granted, and many individuals were cut off from natal kin ties.

This book examines the linkage of two categories of social relations usually considered separately, those of class and those of family. The articulation of social hierarchy and family is a theme running through the social, cultural, and political history of Latin America. From the colonial period to the present day, patterns of marriage, child rearing, kinship, sexuality, and household structure have diverged widely between social groups. This book argues that familial patterns emerge in, are sustained



2. Doña Emiliana Subercaseaux, her husband Don Melchor Concha y Toro, and two eldest sons, Carlos and Daniel, ca. 1865. *Courtesy of the Museo Histórico Nacional.*

by, and help reproduce the profound social hierarchies that have characterized Latin American societies historically. Such dynamics are clear enough in a colonial society of castes in which, to give a well-known example from eighteenth-century Spanish America, imperial authorities managed racial mixing through marriage regulation. But they were also operative in the context of a liberal, constitutional republic of formal, legal equality. Drawing on evidence from Chile in the latter half of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth, I argue that the republican reconfiguration of rights and entitlements, dependencies and differences, was rooted in cultural ideologies, social practices, and legal structures surrounding family. Although the connection between class and family has been deeply embedded in Latin American cultures and histories, scholars have not systematically probed this relationship.

My analysis focuses on a particular dimension of family, namely, the status of children, practices of child rearing, and filiation. *Filiation* refers to "relations of descent from parents to children," but this definition is deceptively simple.[2] Neither a natural nor a priori category, filiation was defined socially and legally, its definition varied across classes, and its meanings changed over time. Filiation demarcated proximity to some but also difference and distance from others, for in delineating who was kin, law and social practice simultaneously defined who was an *ajeno* or an *extraño*, an outsider or stranger. The logic by which some people came to be defined as kin and others as outsiders illuminates gender and generational relationships within the family but also relationships of hierarchy and class beyond it.

The distinction between kin and ajeno was most immediately consequential for children, because it determined who would rear them and in what capacity. While all children began their lives dependent on others, all forms of dependency were not equal. Children like the Puelmas, with no natal kin, were forced to rely on charitable largesse. Even as the tutelage of benefactors safeguarded early survival, it tended to ensure lifelong subordination. The distinction between individuals reared within kin networks and those reared beyond them also had a legal dimension. Kin dependency conferred legal rights (and obligations) on those considered sons and daughters, but the dependency of those reliant on charitable largesse was entirely extralegal. Child-rearing practices thus implicated different modes of dependency, different textures of social and legal relations. They referenced alternatively inclusion and exclusion. As such, children provide a privileged vantage point for exploring the making of subordination and the operation of postcolonial social hierarchies in general.

As the distinction between rights versus largesse suggests, the state, and in particular the law, is central to this story. The codification of civil law in the nineteenth century transformed law and legal culture surrounding filiation, enhancing the power of men over women and fathers over children. In shaping hierarchies of gender and generation, family law also reinscribed those of class. Yet the state did not just "regulate" kinship; it employed kinship as a central category of legibility and legal personhood, reading the identity of individuals through their family relations. This reliance on kinship was profoundly paradoxical, for the state's bureaucratic protocols simultaneously undermined the legal and social ties of certain children to their kin origins. For example, the Civil Code, civil registry, and child welfare asylums systematically expunged the familial identities of children who were illegitimate. State policy, in other words, deployed kinship but generated "kinlessness," helping create an underclass of individuals bereft of the entitlements of family, dependent on the charity of others, and marginalized from public bureaucracies that defined legal identity with reference to kinship.

While the Puelma children's passage through the courts and publicly subsidized welfare asylums reflects the protagonism of the state, public institutions were hardly the only contexts relevant to their lives. Most of the Puelmas' early years were actually spent in private households. Indeed, in managing their plight, the court and the asylums repeatedly recurred to private patrons, such as the "trusted señora" who took in Delia and José Manuel. From the last decades of the nineteenth century, in Chile as in other modernizing societies, poor children were branded a matter of urgent public concern. But shifting the focus from the grandiose rhetoric of children's welfare to the reality of their lives reveals the persistence of private, informal, and extralegal forms of social provision. Indeed, the nineteenth-century liberal legal regime reflected conflicting impulses between greater and lesser state control over families and the domestic sphere.

In recent years, state formation has occupied a privileged place in analyses of Latin American society and culture. This book contributes to that literature by showing how the Chilean state both absorbed and shaped a key category of social and cultural practice: kinship. It shows how the liberal state's engagement with kinship and childhood oscillated between asserting new powers of intervention and conspicuously abdicating others. But this analysis also partially displaces the abiding focus on state formation. Probing social practices and power relations beyond the state, I suggest that far from seeking to commandeer the private, liberal state formation perpetuated this realm of social practice. Children thus elucidate the dynamics, but also the limits, of liberal state power in relation to a reconfigured private sphere.

State and Class Society in Nineteenth-Century Chile

Chile was one of more than a dozen independent nations to emerge from the collapse of the Spanish Empire. But as contemporaries and historians alike have long observed, its republican trajectory, which began with the declaration of independence in 1810, diverged in significant ways from that of its neighbors. The political anarchy of the independence period gave way to a centralized and relatively stable state. As in other Latin American polities, political debate was framed by the conflict between liberals, who advocated a secular, constitutional republic and (at least in theory) a society of equals, and conservatives, who as defenders of Catholicism and the colonial legacy of order and hierarchy espoused a more authoritarian political vision and a less democratic social one. Yet despite their intensity, in Chile these ideological debates rarely led to open violence. The country would experience relative political stability and economic expansion for much of the rest of the century. Compared to the weak states, acute and persistent political violence, and caudillismo that characterized much of nineteenth-century Latin America, the Chilean nation-state was by most measures a uniquely coherent and consolidated entity.

The demise of imperial rule marked the end of a colonial society in which individuals had been legally classified by color and caste, as free and enslaved, noble and plebeian. And it heralded the rise of a constitutional republic grounded in a formal commitment to equality before the law; it is in this sense that we can talk about a "liberal" state even in the context of enduring conservative power. The nascent republic abolished noble titles and coats of arms (1817), civil discrimination against Indians (1819), and slavery (1823), making it the first Hispanic American republic to declare emancipation. Even the frankly authoritarian Constitution of 1833 pledged to "ensure to all inhabitants of the republic . . . equality before the law. In Chile there are no privileged classes."[3] The new republic was free of the all-pervasive legacy of racial slavery of Brazil—the scope and economic significance of slavery in Chile had been limited—as well as the enduring ethnic distinctions of the Andes. Racial categories were eliminated from bureaucratic practice by the 1850s, and discourses on race tended to emphasize and extol the homogeneity of a mestizo populace born of conquering Spaniards and vigorous "Araucanian" Indians.[4] Racialized and racist ideas deeply inflected social and political discourse, but racial difference was not the tortured crucible of national identity that it would become elsewhere in the hemisphere.

Yet against this backdrop of formal, legal equality and a rhetoric of ethnic homogeneity, social distinctions of class were entrenched, persistent, and profound. Rather than eliminating the relations of dependency that organized society, as we will see, liberalism in some ways strengthened them. Whether critics or defenders, most contemporary observers concurred that society was divided into two distinct groups, the rich and the poor. They usually regarded the poor as an undifferentiated mass, labeled *los de abajo*, *el pueblo*, *el bajo pueblo*, or, in more paternalistic moments, *nuestro pueblo*. This mestizo underclass was overwhelmingly rural and landless. Most rural dwellers were dependent on *haciendas*, the great landed estates that controlled perhaps 75 percent of agricultural lands. Bound to the estates by customary arrangements steeped in paternalism, *inquilinos*, or tenant farmers, exchanged their labor and that of family members for access to land and perquisites. Their relative stability contrasted with the itinerant *gañanes*, peons who worked, according to the census definition, "for a daily wage without fixed residence or employment." Fueled by the growing commercialization of the agrarian economy, by 1865 this great, unskilled "errant mass," as it was frequently styled, accounted for a third of workers. By the 1880s, urbanization was accelerating, and migration between countryside, cities, and mines, as well as circulation among occupational categories, increasingly blurred the distinction between rural and urban poor.[5]

Plebeians, in turn, were starkly distinguished from their social superiors, *la gente decente* or *los de arriba*. Thanks to the increased profitability of traditional economic activities like agriculture and mining and new opportunities in banking and commerce, the late-nineteenth-century Chilean upper classes were considerably wealthier than their colonial predecessors. They also maintained a grip on the state that was seriously contested only in the early twentieth century. Landownership was particularly central to elite power, according status, political control, and a sense of identity.[6] The Chilean upper classes readily absorbed immigrants and others made wealthy through new economic opportunities, but their limited numbers and tendency toward economic and commercial diversification made them a remarkably cohesive group.[7] Multistranded webs of kinship and marriage further enhanced elite unity.

Indeed, the story of the Chilean elite is inevitably a story of families. It is not by chance that the nineteenth-century upper classes are referred to not only as the "aristocracy," the "bourgeoisie," and the "oligarchy" but also as "influential families," "the most important families," and the "great families."[8] It is impossible to account for the Chilean elite's enduring political and economic power without reference to kinship. Kinship helped shape how elites weathered the transition to independence as well as patterns of property ownership and business leadership among twentieth-century "landlords and capitalists." The nineteenth century may well have marked the apex of kin-based elite power in Chile and in Latin America. The classic example is that of the Errázuriz family, which between the 1830s and the 1920s boasted two presidents, two archbishops, and fifty-nine parliamentarians (with as many as six serving simultaneously). As the historian and statesman Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna noted, Santiago in the 1860s "was not a city of men but of relatives." The intimacy of a political class composed of "relatives" may help explain how Chile, in spite of sometimes acute ideological conflict between liberals and conservatives, largely avoided the internecine political violence that plagued neighboring republics. Meanwhile, kinship has historically proven crucial not only to elites' economic and political power but to their identity as a class. To this day, "aristocratic sentiment" among the Chilean upper classes is profoundly rooted in notions of *estirpe*, or lineage.[9]

The standard characterization of nineteenth-century Chile as a society of rich and poor inevitably misses some of its nuances. It obscures the

3. The power of lineage: the Errázuriz family on the Hacienda El Huique (Colchagua), ca. 1895. Pictured is President Federico Errázuriz, his wife, two children, and unidentified relatives and friends. *Courtesy of the Museo Histórico Nacional.*

slow rise of a small but growing middle class. More pointedly for our purposes, it obscures how hierarchy and dependency pervaded all levels of this social order and the significance of status distinctions *within* the popular classes. Manifestly subordinate to his hacendado, an inquilino might nevertheless serve as *patrón*, or master, to a young, landless peon residing in his household. Artisans were masters to their apprentices. Modest wives and widows benefited from the presence of young *criados*, child wards they reared as household servants.

Within this graded social landscape, family helped define dependency and demarcate difference. In contemporary parlance, a respectable individual was said to be of *familia decente*—as opposed to "the great majority, which is composed of the poor and of people of unknown family [*de familia desconocida*]."[10] This characterization referenced not only the aristocratic genealogies of elites but also the way family structure harbored meaning at all social levels. Take the expressions *padre de familia* and *hijo de familia*. Legally, a padre de familia was a man who exercised paternal authority (*patria potestad*) over his minor children, and an hijo/a de familia was a minor subject to paternal authority. In social parlance, however, the terms accrued additional layers of meaning. A padre de familia was a morally upright authority figure who oversaw a legally constituted household that enjoyed at least a degree of material independence (hence not, for example, an itinerant peon). The term *madre de familia* had no existence in civil law, but it was used in social discourse to refer to a respectable wife and mother who presided over her own household (thus, not an unmarried woman or a domestic servant, even if she had children). An hijo (or hija) de familia, in turn, referenced a minor son or daughter inserted within the household's structures of affect and authority, as opposed to a young person reared in a non-natal household as a servant, or a minor forced to leave home to work at a young age.[11] Thus, the phrase "de familia"—a seemingly redundant qualifier of roles that were by definition familial (padre, madre, hijo)—was in fact not redundant at all. It obliquely referenced the fact that not all fathers, mothers, or children lived in what were normatively recognized to be "families," that is, in patriarchal households. And it alluded to the fact that even in patriarchal households, women and children could be inserted in very different roles (as servile dependents, rather than as wives or hijos). "Family" thus marked a distinct, and distinctly privileged, set of gendered and generational dependencies to which not all progenitors, nor all offspring, belonged.

Discourses of class in nineteenth-century Chile were (and, in historiographic appraisals, are) so hegemonic and categorical that it is easy to forget that "rich" and "poor" were in fact social and historical categories. By showing how status was acquired in the first place, children illuminate the social production of hierarchy and the fact that its logic was neither predetermined nor unchanging. They also reveal hidden vulnerabilities of the Chilean social order, how differences officially deemed innate and immutable were in practice reflexively treated as acquired and precarious.[12] These dynamics are particularly visible at the margins. Examining the life histories of elites' extramarital children, who could be accepted or rejected by their progenitors, explains how and why some offspring became kin and others did not. The experiences of parentless children reared in others' households, sometimes as sons and daughters and sometimes as servile subordinates, are similarly instructive. In a social order formally based on fixed and stable status categories, illegitimates and child servants straddled an uneasy divide between proximity and distance, kin and stranger, intimate peer and lowly subordinate. Such scenarios further reveal the striking power of male household heads to determine the boundaries of the family—and concomitantly, the class status of the individuals included within, or excluded from, its embrace. By showing how social dependencies could prove ambiguous and status categories contingent, children expose embedded social logics at odds with hegemonic articulations of class.

Ultimately, then, this book is a history of children and family. But it is also a history of social inequality and class. It is abundantly clear that in modern Latin America, profound social inequalities have coexisted alongside the promise of formal equality. How have these inequalities been produced and reproduced? This book finds one answer to this question in the generative relationship of status to family. It is a relationship that holds lessons about the nature of inequality in modern Latin America. Hierarchical social modes imply that an individual's position in life is predetermined by birth, by family background, or by other ascriptive characteristics (of race, gender, etc.). Yet hierarchy does not for this reason imply stasis. I show how the production and reproduction of status required continuous, active, and often creative maintenance, particularly when law eschewed overt discrimination and external markers such as color proved unreliable in social practice and unpalatable in republican principle. Class hierarchy, in short, is not a thing; it is a process, one whose dynamism becomes apparent when we attend not only to the consequences of social status but to the ways it is acquired in the first place.

This depiction of class as contingent, experiential, and actively constructed echoes recent analytic approaches to race and ethnicity as well as gender. In the past two decades, rich and revealing threads of scholarship have probed the historical construction of race and gender in general and their intersections with experience, identity, and ideology in particular. This scholarship reflects a broad turn to subjectivities that traditional Marxist frameworks considered secondary to the true motor of historical change, class. In privileging the category of class hierarchy, this book does not seek to reassert the primacy of class. Rather, it seeks to approach its analysis with some of the same critical sensibilities that scholars now routinely apply to those other social categories.

Filiation as "an Unsolvable Problem": Men, Women, and Children in Nineteenth-Century Chile

A brief overview of family and filiation in ninteenth-century Chile sets the stage for this analysis. Explorations of plebeian families usually begin by considering labor and household structure on the hacienda, where contemporaries and historians alike have identified two contrasting familial patterns.[13] The first was that of the stable, sedentary inquilinos, who married, had children, and remained rooted for generations on a single hacienda. As one contemporary critic observed, the system of service tenancy may have been feudal, but at least "that home, that field, those animals, those children are guarantees that the inquilino gives to society." More disturbing were the unmarried, propertyless male peons who migrated perpetually, the "nomadic mass, without family, without a home of their own" whom authorities inevitably associated with social disorder.[14] The enhanced profitability of agriculture, a consequence of new international grain markets and the penetration of railroads, would only exacerbate the distinction. As landowners turned superfluous workers off their property to appropriate land previously dedicated to subsistence cultivation, more people were severed from inquilino household economies and their "guarantee" of order and stability.

Women were among the most likely to migrate. Considered dispensable to agricultural production, they found their livelihoods further undermined by the decline of traditional textile production in the face of foreign imports. Women left for provincial towns and urban areas, where a burgeoning market for domestic help generated a protoproletarian legion of servants, laundresses, cooks, and seamstresses. In 1875, these occupations collectively accounted for almost 85 percent of female employment.[15] Such migrants were unlikely to marry, in part because of imbalances in sex ratios: men outnumbered women on haciendas and in mining centers while the reverse was true in provincial towns and cities. In the provincial towns of the central valley, in the suburban settlements ringing Santiago, and, slightly later, in the urban slums of the city proper, female-headed households multiplied.[16]

The social organization of gender profoundly shapes the social condition of children. Yet neither historians of women and gender nor historians of family and childhood have explored this relationship systematically. Particularly conspicuous in the Chilean case, it is a subtext of this study. In a context of gendered migration and settlement patterns, illegitimacy was ubiquitous. According to official statistics, almost certainly significant underestimates, more than 20 percent of children in the 1850s, 30 percent in the 1890s, and between 30 and 40 percent in the 1910s and 1920s were born out of wedlock. In provincial San Felipe, over 50 percent of testators in the 1850s made bequests to illegitimate children or grandchildren or were illegitimate themselves; there is no reason to suppose this community was particularly prone to illegitimacy.[17] By way of comparison, around 1870 France's illegitimacy rate was 7.4 percent; Italy, 6.5 percent; Spain, 5.5 percent; and England 5.4 percent.[18]

"Illegitimacy" is a vague category that masks very different social and sexual arrangements, ranging from serial monogamy, to long-term, "marriage-like" consensual unions, to rape. It is thus less a sociological descriptor than an expression of an elite moral vision that censured all sexuality beyond the bounds of formal marriage. Given the range of unions associated with "illegitimate" birth, its significance for children themselves was never predetermined. Nevertheless, birth status had potentially profound consequences. A historically ubiquitous phenomenon, illegitimacy in Latin America has been explored primarily in colonial contexts, when it figured as an explicit criterion of civil and occupational discrimination.[19] But as I show in this study, natal status not only retained salience in republican society, it emerged as a key category of liberal law and bureaucracy even as other status distinctions were eliminated. Indeed, it was not until 1998 that discrimination against illegitimate children was abolished from Chilean law. Illegitimacy's remarkable

TABLE 1. Illegitimacy in Chile, 1850–1929.

Years, in quintiles	Percent of illegitimate births
1850–1854	22.3
1855–1859	22.9
1860–1864	24.0
1865–1869	25.5
1870–1874	25.4
1875–1879	22.9
1880–1884	24.1
1885–1889	25.5
1890–1894	32.4
1895–1899	31.9
1900–1904	34.3
1905–1909	36.2
1910–1914	37.6
1915–1919	38.2
1920–1924	36.7
1925–1929	34.5

Source: Dirección General de Estadística, *Anuario estadístico*, años 1929–1930, 4.

social and legal persistence speaks to the resilience of particular prescriptive ideals surrounding marriage and sexuality. But it also speaks to the legal and social structuring of hierarchy, for as I will show, natal status affected individuals' status beyond the family as well as within it, and it marked distinctions among different kinds of families as well as between family members.

Illegitimacy was related to, though by no means synonymous with, a broader phenomenon already referenced: the ubiquity of children whose parents were unable to care for them, children who were orphaned, abandoned, or who had otherwise become unmoored from natal kinship. These were the so-called *huachos*. According to contemporary etymologies, a huacho was "an animal that is not reared by its mother" or "a plant that is born by itself" without human intervention. It also referred to a foundling, orphan, bastard, or someone of otherwise dubious origins.

TABLE 2. Children Abandoned to the Casa de Huérfanos of Santiago, 1850–1929.

Years, by decade	1850–1859	1860–1869	1870–1879	1880–1889	1890–1899	1900–1909	1910–1919	1920–1929	1850–1929
Number of children	4,343	6,060	6,091	5,378	5,786	7,013	7,116	8,481*	50,268

*Estimated.
Source: Delgado, "Infancia abandonada," 103.

Deriving from the Quechua word for adultery and used throughout the Andes, Argentina, and Chile from the colonial period to the present, "huacho" was usually derogatory, by turns affectionate in a paternalistic way, and occasionally a neutral descriptor of orphanhood. A figure primarily of colloquial speech, the term captures the cultural significance of natal ties, the frequency with which these ties were broken, and the stigma attached to this condition.[20]

How exactly were children cut off from natal origins? In a three-week period in the winter of 1878, newspapers reported six separate instances of children found abandoned in Valparaíso. At least three more were found that same month in Santiago. One was a toddler left in a church during mass with a note reading, "I cannot feed him and I hand him over to the charity of whoever will take him."[21] Meanwhile, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, overcrowded orphanages were multiplying across the republic. The largest and oldest was Santiago's Casa de Huérfanos, which a foreign visitor remarked in the 1880s was "so extensive that one is led to inquire how there can be so many orphans in the city of Santiago."[22] In the late nineteenth century, the institution received between 5 and 9 percent of children born in the city. By the turn of the century, according to one calculation, for every 1,000 inhabitants of Santiago, 9 were in the Casa de Huérfanos. All told, more than 50,000 children were left there from the 1850s to the mid-1920s, 18,000 of them in the first quarter of the twentieth century alone.[23] In fact, what elite observers condemned as "abandonment" was merely the most visible dimension of the pervasive cultural practice of child circulation, in which youngsters were reared outside natal kin networks.[24]

TABLE 3. Age Groups, as a Percentage of Total Population.

Age group	1885	1895	1907	1920	1930
0–9	29.4	29.4	25.9	26.2	26.2
10–19	21.6	21.8	22.2	22.4	21.9
0–19	51	51.2	48.1	48.6	48.1

Source: Mamalakis, *Historical Statistics*, 66.

Regardless of who reared them, one defining characteristic of children's lives in this society was their brevity. At least a quarter of the population was under age nine.[25] But in the early 1890s, more than a third of children died before their first birthday, and by 1920, the number was still over a quarter.[26] Extraordinarily high even by contemporary standards (generations of critics claimed Chile had the highest infant mortality rate in the "civilized world"), the numbers reflect a classic "premodern" population pattern of high birth and death rates. As we will see, they also refracted strong political meanings. For elite commentators, plebeian children became the essential expression of the material and moral crisis of their class.

Patterns of illegitimacy, *huachismo* (the phenomenon of huachos), child circulation, and infant mortality arose out of a fundamental disjuncture: patriarchy without patriarchal households. Chilean legal structures, cultural and religious norms, and highly sex-segregated labor markets were premised on the organization of authority, production, reproduction, and consumption within patriarchal households. Yet in Chile and in Latin America, such households have been, to quote Elizabeth Dore, "imagined," since most people lacked the materials resources to marry and establish long-term, economically viable domestic units as bases of social reproduction. Some plebeians—most obviously inquilinos—did form enduring conjugal units and lasting patriarchal households. But for many others, partnerships and bonds of filiation were fleeting. To argue as much is not to embrace elites' patronizing assertions about plebeians' affective deficits and familial anomie. Poor people developed other kinds of affinities—those based on *crianza* (the rearing of unrelated children), for example, and *compadrazgo* (godparenthood or spiritual kinship). In referring to such ties, I avoid the term " 'fictive' kinship" because for the people who developed them, these relationships were no less meaningful

TABLE 4. Infant Mortality in Chile, 1890–1929 (mortality during the first year of life).

Years, in quintiles	1890–1894	1895–1899	1900–1904	1905–1909	1910–1914	1915–1919	1920–1924	1925–1929
Mortality per 1,000	338	290	292	302	285	265	266	233

Source: Mamalakis, *Historical Statistics*, 40; Dirección General de Estadística, *Anuario estadístico*, años 1929–1930, 4.

or "real" than consanguineous or affinal ones. Likewise, other household forms, such as female headship, existed where patriarchal ones did not and may even have afforded plebeian women a degree of autonomy.[27]

Yet it is clear that for poor women the precariousness of patriarchal households could imply not only alternative modes of intimacy, affinity, and perhaps autonomy but also dependency and subordination. For children, they could signal natal alienation and huachismo. More than three decades ago, feminist scholars challenged historical and social science analyses of the Western family that attributed to it a false unity and assumed it to be a harmonious site of uniform interests. Attending to dynamics of gender, they argued that family has harbored dynamics of oppression for women (and children).[28] These insights are undoubtedly relevant to Latin America, except that the patriarchal family must always be read within a broad matrix of social and racial inequality. "Wife" may have been a legally and socially subordinate role, but it was also associated with class entitlement. Where their wealthier counterparts became madres de familia, poor women lacking the requisite social and material resources to establish their own households were often incorporated into others' households as servants.[29] Plebeian children denied the status of hijos de familia grew up as huachos. For poor women and children, in other words, the most acute forms of subordination were not necessarily those of the autonomous, plebeian, patriarchal household. This is not to glorify the patriarchal household or bemoan its precariousness among the poor. It is to highlight its relationship to other, equally significant vectors of subordination and dependency operative in the Latin American context.

Illegitimacy and huachismo harbor particular resonance for Chilean national narratives. Most Chileans know that Chile's "founding father" Bernardo O'Higgins was the illegitimate son of a colonial official who refused to recognize him. His political enemies disparaged him as *el huacho Riquelme*, invoking his maternal surname to emphasize the stigma of fatherlessness. The early republican statesman Diego Portales's multiple illegitimate progeny are similarly common knowledge.[30] If the "birth of the nation" was marked by these high-profile cases of huachismo, so too was subsequent republican history. As I show in this book, poor, marginalized, illegitimate children have repeatedly emerged as harbingers of disorder at moments of heightened class tension.

They have also served as touchstones of some of the most influential critiques of social order and national identity in modern Chile. Augusto Orrego Luco's essay "La cuestión social" (1884), perhaps the most famous of a nineteenth-century genre of social critique, identified the "unsolvable problem of filiation"—the inability of the poor to form families and save their children from the scourge of infant mortality—as a social crisis. More than fifty years later, and an ideological world away, the minister of health, socialist, and future president Salvador Allende penned a study tying Chile's appalling "socio-medical reality" to the world capitalist order. On the book's first page is a photograph of two sleeping street children and the claim, reiterated repeatedly since the 1870s, that Chile's infant mortality rate was the highest in the civilized world. Proletarian child protagonists are a mainstay of twentieth-century Chilean social-realist literature, and concubinage, illegitimacy, orphanhood, and fosterage recur in this genre and in contemporary fiction.[31] Such themes also figure in recent interpretations of national identity, gender, and class politics by leading Chilean scholars. The anthropologist Sonia Montecinos has probed the politics of illegitimacy and mestizaje in the making of Chilean national identity. And in a provocative and influential essay written in 1990 and recently expanded into a best-selling book, the award-winning historian Gabriel Salazar narrates the history of the Chilean poor through the voice of a young huacho.[32]

The patterns analyzed by these writers, while undoubtedly inflected by peculiarities specific to the Chilean historical experience and harboring special social and political resonance within it, are nevertheless not unique to Chile. Concubinage, illegitimacy, low nuptiality, female headship, child circulation, and huachismo are enduring patterns in many

Latin American societies historically. And as in Chile, such patterns have been particularly (though not exclusively) associated with subalterns and have harbored strong associations related to hierarchies of class (and race). As such, while this is a case study grounded in the specificities of Chilean history, politics, and culture, it speaks to broader hemispheric patterns and practices.

States and Families in Chile, Latin America, and Beyond

When a congress on children's health convened in Santiago in 1919, the roster of participants read as a who's who of the political establishment. In attendance were the president of the republic, the ministers of foreign affairs, finance, and industry, the president of the Chamber of Deputies, the intendant of the province, and the mayor of Santiago.[33] The presence of such prominent elite men at a conference whose stated purpose was "propagating knowledge of child care among the lower classes" reflected a growing consensus developed over the preceding seventy-five years about the transcendental public importance of, and acceptability of state intervention in, realms once deemed private or of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Such ideas were of course not specifically Chilean. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, across the Americas and Europe, the material and moral well-being of the poor became a subject of vigorous public critique. Central to this so-called social question was an impetus to domesticate the lower-class family.[34]

The family patterns described above gave Chilean politicians, philanthropists, and medico-legal professionals ample fodder for recrimination. Illegitimate children were the "disruptive seed of our society," and matrifocal households were said to bring about "the slow debilitation of the race." The fact that poor children were raised amid the "vices and bad examples" of their parents was "the worst of the evils of our society." Chile's high rate of infant mortality threatened the nation itself, since every child who died was "a drop of blood that slowly drains the vigor [and] strength from the arteries of the State." Commentators warned darkly that the fall of the Roman Empire was caused by the corruption of its families.[35] These were the estimations not of conservatives but of nineteenth-century liberals and twentieth-century reformists.