

**IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF *CRISTO OBRERO*:  
CHILE'S YOUNG CATHOLIC WORKERS MOVEMENT  
IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, FACTORY, AND FAMILY, 1946-1973**

by

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University of Pittsburgh, 2009

This dissertation examines the history of the Chilean Young Catholic Workers movement (JOC) from its founding in 1946 until the 1973 coup that almost completely destroyed it. The study explores how the JOC, a specialized branch of Catholic Action, formed a significant link in the widespread mobilization of the working classes in postwar Chile, where the movement achieved a depth and influence unmatched anywhere else in Latin America. The JOC reached its peak in the 1950s in the country's booming industrial centers, with the movement's many large-scale events, activities, and campaigns attracting thousands from across the country, but it continued to have a considerable presence in working-class neighborhoods through the politically turbulent 1960s and early 70s. Fomenting a social and political consciousness intertwined with Catholic religiosity, the JOC served as a launching pad for local community activism as well as involvement in political parties and unions. Furthermore, JOC activists' commitment to social justice forged a path for the "popular" or "liberationist" Church that became a cornerstone of resistance to the Pinochet dictatorship.

While connecting the JOC to Chile's broader social and political history, this dissertation focuses attention on how the ideologies and policies of a reformist Church worked themselves out on the ground. Drawing on both oral and written sources, it emphasizes the movement's significance for the young women and men living in Santiago's densely populated slums and

working in the city's factories, workshops, and commercial centers. In particular, JOC activists' personal stories reveal how religion, class, and gender intersected in the movement to empower female workers. Despite being embedded in a patriarchal Church structure, the JOC's social Catholic discourse led working-class women to carve out a unique space for social activism and leadership that deeply influenced female activists' expectations regarding domestic relations and motherhood. At the same time, the JOC's focus on workers and workplace issues also made it attractive to young men, who traditionally shied away from Church participation at the parish level. In a movement in which women had equal authority, this participation provoked a subtle shift in men's perceptions of male power and dominance.

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## 1.0 CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Church in twentieth-century Chile was one of the most progressive in Latin America. Its unyielding support for human rights and social justice during the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990), an era of brutal political repression and economic dislocation that disproportionately affected the popular classes, solidified the Church's reputation as a beacon of reform whose influence expanded far beyond this small country's borders. Under the "umbrella of protection" the Church provided, Catholics and non-Catholics alike found a space in which to rebuild social and political networks at a time when the military had completely erased Chile's rich tradition of party and labor activism.

However, long before the coup that toppled Salvador Allende from power, the Chilean Church had stood at the forefront of religious and pastoral innovations that transformed an institution historically viewed as an ally of the rich and powerful into an advocate for the working class and poor. After World War II, ecclesiastical leaders first began to address the plight of Chile's impoverished urban masses and their alienation from the institutional Church. At the center of new efforts to reach out to the men and women living in the rapidly expanding slums or *poblaciones* was the Young Catholic Workers movement (JOC).<sup>1</sup> A specialized branch

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<sup>1</sup> *Población* (singular for *poblaciones*) frequently is translated into English as slum or shantytown; in Chilean Spanish the term typically refers to any working-class neighborhood, ranging from the poorest shantytown (*población callampa*) to more established housing. However, at mid-century, conditions in Chile's working-class neighborhoods for the most part were uniformly grim, so the term has been translated here as slum.

of Catholic Action sanctioned by the Vatican, the JOC was (and still is) a lay apostolate for and of workers that arose in Europe in the 1920s. The first Chilean JOC group formed in 1946, with strong backing from the country's progressive cardinal. The movement quickly achieved a depth and influence in Chile's booming industrial centers unmatched in any other Latin American country.

The JOC reached its peak in the mid to late 1950s, with its many large-scale events, activities, and campaigns attracting thousands from across the country, but the movement continued to have a considerable presence in working-class neighborhoods through the 1960s. Fomenting a social and political consciousness intertwined with Catholic religiosity, it served as a launching pad for local community activism as well as involvement in political parties and unions.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, JOC militants' commitment to social justice forged a path for the "popular" or "liberationist" Church that became a cornerstone of resistance to Pinochet. From the movement's ranks emerged many of the laity and clergy who during the period of dictatorship played a leadership role in Church organizations such as the Vicariate of Solidarity, the Workers' Pastoral, and Christian base communities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, from the JOC emerged other specialized Catholic Action groups in Chile, including the Catholic Action Workers' Movement (MOAC), the Young Catholic Students (JEC), and the Young Agricultural Workers (JAC). The JOC also formed a national association for domestic workers (ANACAP) and an Institute of Popular Education (CIEP), as well as several smaller organizations.

<sup>3</sup> For information on the role these and other Church organizations played during the dictatorship, see David Fernández Fernández, *La "Iglesia" que resistió a Pinochet: Historia, desde la fuente oral, del Chile que no puede olvidarse* (Madrid: IEPALA Editorial, 1996), 113-287; José Aldunate L. S.J. et al., *Crónica de una iglesia liberadora* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2000); Brian H. Smith, *The Church and Politics in Chile: Challenges to Modern Catholicism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 283-355; Brian H. Smith, "Chile: Deepening the Allegiance of Working-Class Sectors to the Church in the 1970s," in *Religion and Political Conflict in Latin America*, ed. Daniel H. Levine (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 156-186; Brian H. Smith, "The Catholic Church and Politics in Chile," in *Church and Politics in Latin America*, ed. Dermot Keogh (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 321-343; Carol Ann Drogus and Hannah Stewart-Gambino, *Activist Faith: Grassroots Women in Democratic Brazil and Chile*. (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 37-69; Maxine Lowy, *Sembradoras de fe y esperanza: El legado de mujeres de comunidades cristianas populares*. (Santiago: Editorial Universidad Bolivariana, 2008), 33-97; Cristián Parker Gamucio, "El aporte de la Iglesia a la sociedad chilena bajo el régimen militar," *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, no. 482-483 (August-

Besides the JOC's importance as a precursor to the popular Church of the 1970s and 80s, this movement represents a link in the widespread social and political mobilization of the working classes in postwar Chile. Christian Democracy reached heights in the 1960s unequalled elsewhere in Latin America by relying heavily on the promotion of new grass-roots organizations among the urban (and rural) poor. With this support the party captured the presidency in 1964, although its political dominance proved short-lived. The election of the first democratically elected Marxist government in the region followed six years later, with broad support in working-class neighborhoods and labor unions. The JOC's growth and decline is integrally connected to these broader political phenomena. Building on almost two decades of organizing experience in the *poblaciones*, the movement formed a nexus between the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) and its working-class base, especially among youth and women. In particular, JOC militants played a leadership role in implementing the government's Popular Promotion program. Their subsequent defection to political parties on the left, and the movement's ensuing decline, represents a microcosm of the PDC's broader loss of working-class support to the Marxist Popular Unity (UP) coalition, as well as the emergence of the Catholic Left within the Church.

The JOC also offers a window into mid-century social and religious life in the densely populated slums of Santiago and other Chilean cities. During the years of the movement's ascendancy, severe persecution of the Communist Party and other repressive governmental policies limited political organizing, in great contrast to the 1960s. However, as an apolitical,

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September 1990): 31-48; Virginia Marie Bouvier, *Alliance or Compliance: Implications of the Chilean Experience for the Catholic Church in Latin America* (Syracuse: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, 1983); Pamela Lowden, "The Ecumenical Committee for Peace in Chile (1973-1975): The Foundation of Moral Opposition to Authoritarian Rule in Chile," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 12, no. 2 (1993):189-203; Brian Loveman, "Military Dictatorship and Political Opposition in Chile, 1973-1986," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 28, no. 4 (Winter 1986/87): 6-9.

religious organization, the JOC flourished and quickly became not only the largest lay movement in working-class neighborhoods but a dominant social force whose influence extended far beyond the walls of the parish church. Mixing evangelization with recreation, parish base groups supported a variety of leisure and cultural activities, such as dances, theater productions, and trips to the countryside, which frequently involved entire neighborhoods. In addition, movement militants ran basic educational courses and addressed local problems ranging from the lack of green spaces to inadequate housing. The JOC also participated actively in communities' sacramental life, combining traditional forms of religiosity with pastoral practices that presaged changes later instituted with the Second Vatican Council. For example, base groups organized the long-established Month of Mary celebrations with a new emphasis on lay participation, including discussion groups.

Studying the JOC at the local level provides a new perspective on how urban, working-class women used religion to carve out a unique space for socialization and social activism several decades before the emergence of Christian base communities.<sup>4</sup> In an era when parents kept a tight watch on their unmarried daughters, the JOC groups provided a “respectable” environment, under the auspices of clerical advisors, to meet and organize in *poblaciones* that offered few recreational venues outside of male-dominated sports clubs and bars. Furthermore, the sex-segregated base groups facilitated discussion of personal and family issues, helping participants cope with the difficulties of growing up in neighborhoods where economic hardships

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<sup>4</sup> There exists a significant body of literature that examines the Christian base communities' role in providing a social space for poor women and fomenting their social (and political) activism. Much of the literature focuses on Brazil, but the role of base communities under that country's dictatorship in many ways paralleled the Chilean situation. See, for example, Drogus and Stewart-Gambino, *Activist Faith*; Lowy, *Sembradoras de fe y esperanza*; Carol Ann Drogus, *Women, Religion, and Social Change in Brazil's Popular Church* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997); Sonia Alvarez, *Engendering Democracy in Brazil: Women's Movements in Transition Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); John Burdick, *Looking for God in Brazil: The Progressive Catholic Church in Urban Brazil's Religious Arena* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).



and problems such as alcoholism and domestic violence were common. At the same time, with a local, regional and national leadership structure granting the same level of authority and power to women as to men, the JOC enabled its female militants to develop management skills as well as a sense of independence and confidence that were unconnected to their domestic role, in contrast to the secondary, supportive position typically assigned to women in the political parties and labor unions.

As revealed through the personal stories of female JOC militants, religion, gender, and class intersected in the movement in a way that was particularly empowering to women, despite being embedded in a patriarchal Church structure. The JOC spoke to young women not just as (future) wives and mothers but as workers, unlike traditional Church groups and the secular Left. Most female participants in the JOC were wage laborers (as were their male counterparts), the majority in factories, and the movement provided a powerful support network to female adolescents suddenly thrust into a masculine work environment. Moreover, the JOC's social Catholic discourse about workers' divine vocation and inalienable rights, combined with repeated emphasis of women's dignity and worth as God's children, equal to men, encouraged militants to shed societal messages about female passivity and victimization. Both individually and collectively, JOC women directly confronted issues such as sexual harassment, wage discrimination, and other labor abuses, as well as abuse within the home. Although never provoking a direct questioning of Catholic doctrine regarding female domesticity, the JOC experience led young women to reconceptualize traditional gender roles, which deeply influenced their future life choices.

Finally, the JOC illuminates the influence of social Catholicism within Chile's labor movement. Rejecting the Church leadership's unrelenting anti-Communism and support for

separate Christian unions, the Chilean JOC encouraged both women and men's active participation in secular unions through education about labor issues and leadership training. Combined with the Catholic movement's neighborhood involvement, this labor focus helped overcome traditional male reticence regarding church participation and allowed the JOC to attract an almost equal number of men as women. JOC militants had the greatest influence within the labor movement during the 1950s, when the repression of the Communist party opened a space for union leaders without Leftist affiliation. Their influence declined sharply as the labor movement became increasingly politicized in the 1960s, but JOC militants remained active at the base level, usually in connection with either the Christian Democrats or parties associated with the Catholic Left. The nature of JOC activism on the factory floor varied widely, ranging from participation in strikes and work stoppages at large, unionized factories to efforts to build new unions responsive to workers' needs in non-unionized factories or ones with management-dominated unions. Within some of the biggest industries, militants even organized formal JOC groups, which in contrast to the parish groups more exclusively addressed workplace problems.

Despite the JOC's importance to not only the religious but also the broader political and social history of Chile, the movement largely has escaped serious academic attention.<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup> María Antonieta Huerta and Fernando Aliaga Rojas are the only two scholars who have addressed the Chilean JOC in any detail. They both discuss the movement in relationship to the broader history of social Catholicism and apostolic movements in Chile. Although establishing connections between the JOC, the post-Vatican II Church, and the rise of the Catholic Left, their histories privilege the predominantly upper- and middle-class Catholic Action movement. Several works examine the JOC movement in other Latin American countries. In particular, Scott Mainwaring writes about the JOC in Brazil, the country most comparable to Chile in terms of the progressive stance of its national Church in the mid to late twentieth century and the strength of its JOC movement. However, while Mainwaring provides a clearer picture of the JOC's objectives and methods than either Huerta or Aliaga, his primary concern is the JOC's politicization at the late stages of its development, in a political environment vastly different from that of the Chilean JOC. He skims briefly over the movement's apolitical years, which he dismisses as merely

scholarship on the history of the Chilean Church is broad, but the grass-roots comes most clearly into focus for the post-coup era because of the dramatic interest garnered by the Church's role in defending human rights and addressing economic necessity, as well as by the emergence of liberation theology.<sup>6</sup> Some recent studies have looked back to the pre-coup period to explain the origins of the Christian base communities, human rights groups, and other popular Church organizations. However, they dwell on the implementation of Vatican II reforms and the development of the Catholic Left, with only brief discussion of Catholic Action and social Catholicism's influence.<sup>7</sup> Earlier scholarship about the decades preceding the coup concentrates on the Church's relationship to Chile's political, economic, and social development, with

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reformist and lacking class consciousness, without considering the impact that the JOC's focus on work, family, and personal problems, as well as its organization of recreational and educational activities, might have had on communities and on the JOC participants themselves. José Aparecido Gomes Moreira, writing about the Mexican JOC from a Marxist perspective, is similarly critical of the movement's early years. Deborah Levenson--Estrada provides a more balanced perspective on the Guatemalan JOC, but the trajectory of the movement in that country was quite different than in Chile, especially for women. Finally, except for Levenson- Estrada, none of the existing scholarship about the JOC considers the role gender played within the movement. Maria Antonieta Huerta, *Catolicismo social en Chile: Pensamiento y praxis de los movimientos apostólicos* (Santiago: Paulinas, 1991); Fernando Aliaga Rojas, *Itinerario histórico: De los círculos de estudios a las comunidades juveniles de base*. (Santiago: Equipo de Servicios de la Juventud, 1977); Scott Mainwaring, *The Catholic Youth Workers Movement (JOC) and the Emergence of the Popular Church in Brazil*, Working Paper no.6 (Notre Dame, IN: Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, 1983); Mainwaring, *The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil, 1916-1985* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986), 116-141; José Aparecido Gomes Moreira, "Para una historia de la Juventud Obrera Católica (1959-1985)," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 49 no. 3 (July-September 1987): 205-220; Deborah Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists Against Terror: Guatemala City, 1954-1985* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), chap. 3.

<sup>6</sup> See sources cited in note 2.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Fernández, *Historia oral de la Iglesia Católica en Santiago de Chile desde el Concilio Vaticano II hasta el golpe militar de 1973* (Cádiz: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Cádiz, 1996) and Aldunate et al., *Crónicas de una iglesia liberadora*. For Latin America more generally, there exists a large number of publications that describe the reorientation of Latin American churches after Vatican II and the emergence of Christian base communities. For example, Daniel H. Levine, *Churches and Politics in Latin America* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980); Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wilde, eds., *The Progressive Church in Latin America* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame Press, 1989). The one major exception to this tendency not to look beyond Vatican II is Robert Sean Mackin's recent dissertation, "The Movement that Fell From the Sky? Secularization and the Structuring of Progressive Catholicism in Latin America, 1920s-1970s." (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005). Chile is one of several case studies in the dissertation, which shows how social Catholicism and the various movements it inspired laid the groundwork for the later emergence of liberation theology in Latin America. However, because of Mackin's broad, regional focus, his description of the Chilean JOC lacks detail. Moreover, Mackin generalizes about the movement based mainly on the political experiences of the 1960's generation.

particular attention paid after 1973 to the country's democratic breakdown.<sup>8</sup> These studies not surprisingly are top-down, analyzing the ideological and doctrinal positions of the Church hierarchy and Catholic intellectuals and exploring issues such as the close connection between the ecclesiastical and Christian Democratic leadership, the institution's frosty relations with the Marxist Popular Unity government, and the hierarchy's initial support for military intervention. Working-class Catholics, when they appear at all, are usually only a generality.<sup>9</sup>

The scholarship on the Christian Democratic Party overlaps significantly with the literature about the Church. It includes "developmentalist" writings that appeared before 1973 and more recent works focused on the party's role in the extreme political polarization and economic paralysis leading to military intervention.<sup>10</sup> None of these studies pays more than

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<sup>8</sup> A number of publications in the "modernization" school of the 1960s and 70s focus attention on the Chilean Church. These include Henry A. Landsberger, "Time, Persons, Doctrine: The Modernization of the Church in Chile," in *The Church and Social Change in Latin America*, ed. Henry A. Landsberger (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), 77-94; Fredrick B. Pike, "South America's Multifaceted Catholicism: Glimpses of Twentieth-Century Argentina, Chile, and Peru," in Landsberger, *The Church and Social Change*, 53-94; Ivan Vallier, *Catholicism, Social Control, and Modernization in Latin America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 121-147; David E. Mutchler, *The Church as a Political Factor in Latin America with Particular Reference to Colombia and Chile* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971); Frederick C. Turner, *Catholicism and Political Development in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1971). Brian Smith's *The Church and Politics in Chile* is the most comprehensive and detailed study of the twentieth-century Chilean Church to appear since the coup. A political scientist, Smith traces the Church's evolution from conservative to progressive institution and the corresponding changes in its relations with the state over a sixty-year period. Also see Hannah W. Stewart-Gambino, *The Church and Politics in the Chilean Countryside* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> For example, Smith incorporates the popular base into his history principally through statistical analysis of survey data regarding Catholic political attitudes and voting patterns. As a result, he (erroneously) views Catholic Action as primarily a middle-class movement. The JOC is addressed (and dismissed) with one sentence arguing that its penetration of working-class culture was minimal. Smith, *The Church and Politics in Chile*, 96.

<sup>10</sup> The earliest academic writings about the party focus on its potential as an alternative to Communism. See George W. Grayson Jr, *El Partido Demócrata Cristiano chileno* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Francisco de Aguirre, 1968); Edward J. Williams' *Latin American Christian Democratic Parties* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1967). On the other hand, James Petras' *Chilean Christian Democracy: Politics and Social Forces* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1967) provides a Marxist perspective highly critical of the party's organizing efforts among the working-class. The most complete history of the PDC written after 1973 is Michael Fleet's *The Rise and Fall of Chilean Christian Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). A political scientist, Fleet is concerned with understanding the PDC's role in the breakdown of democracy. Like Smith, he draws on voting surveys, as well as documents produced by the party leadership and interviews with top party officials, for most of his evidence. Other works written after the coup that deal at some length with the PDC include Barbara Stallings, *Class Conflict and Economic Development in Chile, 1958-1973* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978); Arturo Valenzuela, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Chile* (Baltimore: The Johns

minimal attention to the significant mobilization that occurred at the party's base or draws connections to social Catholic activism among the urban working classes. The PDC's many supporters in the poblaciones are portrayed as conservative, anti-Communist voters who were unaware of their true class interests or were swayed by the populism and charisma of the party's leader (especially in the case of women).<sup>11</sup> New research that examines the impact of Christian Democratic social programs on the working class describes a more dynamic relationship between the PDC and the Church at the base level but makes only passing references to the JOC.<sup>12</sup>

While research on the Church and the Christian Democratic Party has until recently largely ignored workers, scholarship focused on the Chilean working class before the coup generally has not paid serious attention to Catholic influences.<sup>13</sup> When mentioned at all,

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Hopkins University Press, 1978); Paul E. Sigmund, *The Overthrow of Allende and the Politics of Chile, 1964-1976* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); Wilhelm Hofmeister, *La opción por la democracia: Democracia Cristiana y desarrollo político en Chile, 1964-1995* (Santiago: Corporación de Promoción Universitaria, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> The only book to examine the party's urban, popular base in any detail is Giles Wayland-Smith's *The Christian Democratic Party in Chile: A Study of Political Organization and Activities with Primary Emphasis on the Local Level* (Cuernavaca, Mexico: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1969). Wayland-Smith, a political scientist who conducted interviews with Christian Democratic activists in Santiago, revealed the party to be a highly developed and dynamic center of grass-roots activity and a launching-pad for communist activism. Unfortunately, he only looked at one, older working-class neighborhood and failed to examine Christian Democracy's connections to other non-party, grass-roots organizations.

<sup>12</sup> Mario Garcés writes about connections between the PDC and the Church in working-class neighborhoods in his book about Santiago's housing crisis and the emergence of a "poblacional" movement after 1957. Heidi Tinsman, who examines the gendered impact of the Christian Democrat's agrarian reform program, sheds light on the relationship between the PDC's social projects and the Church's Institute of Rural Education. Mario Garcés, *Tomando su sitio: El movimiento de pobladores de Santiago, 1957-1970* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2002); Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reforms, 1950-1973* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Peter DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions in Chile, 1902-1927* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Charles Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America: Comparative Essays on Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986); Peter Winn, *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Thomas Miller Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904-1951* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998). Alan Angell's institutional analysis of the Chilean labor movement includes a discussion of the Christian Democratic Party and the Catholic labor movement. However, like the other scholarship of his generation, the Catholic working-class base does not figure in Angell's classic but now dated book, although it does discuss the party's Catholic underpinnings from an intellectual standpoint. Angell, *Politics and the Labour Movement in Chile* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

Catholicism frequently has been dismissed for its conservative message holding little significance for the working class, especially males. The strong Communist, Socialist, and (in the first quarter of the twentieth century) Anarchist influences grab the historical spotlight, although a few studies exist revealing that even where the secular Left dominated, popular religiosity continued to flourish.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, intense interest in Chile's militant and heavily politicized labor movement in the mining regions and industrial centers overshadows research on the urban poblaciones, where social Catholic influence at mid-century was much greater. Only for the post-1973 period, when the labor movement was decimated and the non-unionized, urban poor became the focal point for protest and resistance, does scholarly attention shift away from the secular Left and unionized workers to the "*poblador*" movement.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the JOC was most influential in working-class neighborhoods and also in factories during the relatively understudied 1950s, a decade lost between the socially and politically vibrant Popular Front era of the 1940s and the even more effervescent 1960s.<sup>16</sup>

The historical literature on women and gender in twentieth century Chile also has tended to focus on labor and the secular Left, as well as on projects of social and political reform, to the

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<sup>14</sup>For example, see Cristián Parker Gamucio, "Religión y clases subalternas urbanas en una sociedad dependiente: Religiosidad popular urbana en América Latina; Un estudio de caso en Chile." (PhD diss., Université Catholique de Louvain, Faculté des Sciences Economiques Sociales et Politiques, 1986); Parker Gumucio, *Anticlericalismo y religión popular en la génesis del movimiento obrero en Chile, 1900-1920* (Santiago: Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Contemporánea, Academia de Humanismo Cristiano, 1986).

<sup>15</sup>Exceptions exist, in particular Garcés, *Tomando su sitio* and Vicente Espinoza, *Para una historia de los pobres de la ciudad*. (Santiago: Ediciones Sur, 1988). Garcés notes that his book is a reaction to the lack of recognition of the *poblador* movement's importance to twentieth-century Chilean social history, because of the singular focus on the labor movement. Garcés, 5-10.

<sup>16</sup> The countryside in the 1950s has received more attention, including social Catholic influences, because the Church initiated rural reform efforts in this decade. This research reveals that in the early 1950s many JOC militants went to the countryside to help form the first Catholic Action groups for rural workers (JAC). See Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict*; Stewart-Gambino, *Church and Politics in the Chilean Countryside*; Brian Loveman, *Struggle in the Countryside* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976); Henry A. Landsberger and Fernando Canitrot M., *Iglesia, intelectuales y campesinos: La huelga campesina de Molina* (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1967).

exclusion of religion.<sup>17</sup> The first scholarship on Chilean women's history emerged in the 1980s and reflected the profound disillusionment of the country's Leftist historians and social scientists following the coup. Seeking to understand what "went wrong," a group of primarily female intellectuals focused on rewriting male-centered Marxist historical narratives of the Left and labor.<sup>18</sup> These pioneering scholars forged the path for the social histories written in the mid 1990s about urban and rural working-class women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>19</sup> Expanding upon this research, more recent literature has used gender analysis, including attention to sexuality, to move beyond merely recovering women's experiences and to rethink the broader social and political history of Chile, with particular attention paid to the centrality of gender discourse to state-building.<sup>20</sup> Finally, underlying this twenty-year surge in interest in Chilean women's history is the crucial role played by women in grass-roots human rights groups, popular economic organizations, and protest movements under the dictatorship,

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas Klubock, "Writing the History of Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century Chile," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81, no. 3-4 (August and November 2001): 493-518.

<sup>18</sup> Noting the Left's prevalent sexism, these scholars criticized the UP's subordination of feminist interests to its revolutionary project. They also sought to add women to the early history of the Left and the labor movement in Chile as well as to reexamine the feminist movement of the first half of the twentieth century, which centered on achieving women's suffrage. See, for example, Cecilia Salinas, *La mujer proletaria: Una historia por contar* (Santiago: Ediciones LAR, 1987); Edda Gaviola et al., *Queremos votar en las próximas elecciones: Historia del movimiento femenino chileno, 1913-1952* (Santiago: La Morada, 1986); Julieta Kirkwood, *Ser política en Chile: Los nudos de la sabiduría feminista*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Santiago: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 1990).

<sup>19</sup> During these years the growth of exports and urban manufacturing transformed Chile's social landscape. See, for example, Alejandra Brito P., "Del rancho al conventillo: Transformaciones en la identidad popular femenina, Santiago de Chile, 1850- 1920"; Lorena Godoy, "Armas ansiosas de triunfo: Dedal, Agujas, Tijeras...": La educación profesional femenina en Chile, 1888- 1912"; and "M. Soledad M. Zárate, "Mujeres viciosas, mujeres virtuosas: La mujer dilincuente y la casa correccional de Santiago, 1860-1900," all in *Disciplina y desecato: Construcción de identidad en Chile, siglos XIX y XX*, ed. Lorena Godoy et al. (Santiago: Ediciones Sur/CEDAM: 1995).

<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the earlier concern with writing the social history of working-class women continues to shape this latest research. Examples include Klubock, *Contested Communities*; Karin Alejandra Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Elizabeth Quay Hutchinson, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex: Gender, Labor, and Politics in Urban Chile, 1900-1930* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2001); Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict*.

about which a vast literature exists.<sup>21</sup> Only for this period of women's history does religion come into relief.<sup>22</sup> The Church originally nurtured many of these women's groups, which in turn formed a central axis of the "poblador" movement.

This dissertation provides a complex portrait of a movement about which little has been written. It explores the JOC's significance for young men and women living in Chile's poblaciones and working in the country's factories, workshops, and commercial centers at mid-century. In so doing, it paints an intimate picture of the nature of JOC participation and also opens a window into the lives of workers (the majority in their teens and early to mid-twenties) coming of age on the urban periphery. Along with a focus on personal experience, the JOC's growth and development, its structures and activities, and its relationship to church and community are described in broad detail. The overarching goal is to understand how the ideologies and policies of a reformist Church worked themselves out on the ground, while at the same time connecting the movement to Chile's social and political history.

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<sup>21</sup>See, for example, Marjorie Agosin, *Scraps of Life: Chilean Arpilleras; Chilean Women and the Pinochet Dictatorship*, trans. Cola Franzen (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1987); Edda Gaviola, Eliana Largo, and Sandra Palestro, *Una historia necesaria: Mujeres en Chile, 1973-1990* (Santiago: Aki and Aora, 1994); Teresa Valdés and Marisa Weinstein, *Mujeres que sueñan: Las organizaciones de pobladores en Chile, 1973-1989* (Santiago:FLASCO, 1993); María de la Luz Silva Donoso, *La participación política de la mujer en Chile: Las organizaciones de mujeres* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Friedrich Naumann, 1987); María Elena Valenzuela, "The Evolving Roles of Women Under Military Rule," in *The Struggle for Democracy in Chile, 1982-1990*, eds. Paul W. Drake and Iván Jaksic (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 161-187; Patricia M. Chuchryk, "From Dictatorship to Democracy: The Women's Movement in Chile," in *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Participation and Democracy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. Jane S. Jaquette (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 65-107; Lisa Baldez, *Why Women Protest: Women's Movements in Chile*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Baldez analyzes both the mobilization of women against Pinochet and the mobilization of women against Salvador Allende's UP government. For more on right-wing women's role in Allende's over-throw, see Margaret Power, *Right-Wing Women in Chile: Feminine Power and the Struggle Against Allende, 1964-1973* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> Exceptions include Erika Maza Valenzeula's article about the role upper-class Chilean women played in the suffrage movement. "Catolicismo, anticlericalismo y la extensión del sufragio a la mujer en Chile," *Estudios Públicos* 58 (Fall 1995): 137-195.



Just as previous scholarship has described how the Communist and Socialist parties shaped working-class culture and society, this study sheds new light on the influence of the Catholic Church.<sup>23</sup> The high level of class consciousness commonly identified as characteristic of the Chilean working class also typified *Jocistas*, but it was Catholicism, rather than Marxism, that defined their class vision and molded their world-view. The dominant religious influence within the JOC movement was not the traditional folk Catholicism that scholars most associate with the lower classes, which to a certain extent the movement rejected, but social Catholicism. Forged in European intellectual Catholic circles and underlying Christian Democratic Party ideology, this discourse promoted class harmony rather than class struggle. Yet working-class women and men appropriated social Catholicism in ways that led to a restructuring of attitudes and self-conceptions regarding class and gender, which proved to be deeply empowering to their lives.

Because of the focus on reconstructing subjective experience, oral sources were central to this project. I interviewed a total of fifty-seven individual *Jocistas*, of whom thirty-four were female and twenty-three were male. I also conducted five group interviews, totaling twenty-nine people, and interviews with twelve priests who had served as JOC advisors. Finally, I interviewed several middle-class Catholic activists and working-class Catholics involved in either the Catholic Action Workers Movement (MOAC) or Christian base communities but not in the JOC.<sup>24</sup> Most of the interviewees were from Santiago, but a small percentage was from the

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<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Winn, *Weavers of Revolution* and Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*.

<sup>24</sup> MOAC was formed in the early 1960s as an adult branch of specialized Catholic Action, but it never achieved the influence of the JOC. Five interviews were conducted with middle-class Catholic activists and seven with MOAC and/or base communities participants. However, for reasons of time, not all of these non-JOC interviews were reviewed for this dissertation.

industrial cities of Valparaíso, Talca, and Concepción, the three urban areas besides the capital with the greatest JOC influence.<sup>25</sup>

Interviews were unstructured and conversational in style, with the individual ones inevitably more in-depth than the group interviews.<sup>26</sup> In addition to focusing on experiences in the JOC movement, when time permitted I asked questions about interviewees' family backgrounds (economic, religious, and political), work histories, education, marriages, and religious and political participation after leaving the JOC. This life-history approach allowed for greater understanding of how childhood and adult experiences and choices related to JOC participation. The nature of the interviews differed significantly between the sexes. Women tended to talk more freely and naturally about intimate matters such as family relations, sexuality, etc. and stayed more focused on their personal experiences. Men more often spoke impersonally about the movement's history until prodded with questions, except when discussing childhood. (The female gender of the interviewer undoubtedly was a significant factor.) As a result, the text is much richer in terms of women's than men's experiences.

I established initial contacts with former JOC participants through frequent attendance at Church events that had a strong presence of progressive Catholics and through personal connections with middle-class Catholic activists in the poblaciones.<sup>27</sup> Once an initial network of JOC contacts was formed, recommendations facilitated access to other people from the movement; not everyone interviewed still was active in the Church. I made an effort to locate

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<sup>25</sup> Santiago (51 people, including group interviews); Valparaíso (6); Talca (14); Concepción, including Coronel and Talcahuano (5); the northern mining region (5). A majority of the interviews outside of Santiago were in group settings.

<sup>26</sup> The interviews varied in length from half an hour on a lunch break to four-hour interviews conducted over several days in people's homes. In the large group interviews, some people left early and others came late, making it difficult to ask everyone the same questions, for example regarding educational level or past political affiliations.

<sup>27</sup> Examples of such events are an annual outdoor mass in memory of a worker-priest killed by the military and the yearly *Vía Crucis* (stations of the cross) ending at Villa Grimaldi, the infamous detention center. I also participated in conferences and workshops with a "liberationist" perspective.

participants from different parts of the city and who were active in the JOC during distinct periods of its history, although interview numbers are more heavily weighted toward the movement's "mass period" (1950s). However, the sample base was broad and representative of the different stages of the movement and the variety of political tendencies that emerged over time. The interviewees' level of participation in the movement varied, but the large majority considered themselves to have been *militantes*, in other words deeply involved in the movement, with a high representation of movement leaders.<sup>28</sup> Access to less committed JOC participants was difficult because they were not as known within the JOC community.

Both male and female Jocistas, as they still refer to themselves, as well as their clerical advisors, looked back fondly on their youthful JOC days. Often growing quite emotional, they recalled it as a beautiful time-- the best days of their lives, said many. Interviewees emphasized that the values and ideals they absorbed in the movement continue to shape their lives, and the lives of their children. In many cases, their closest friends remain other Jocistas, and they serve as godparents to each other's children. Women and men also related stories of meeting people with whom they had an instant affinity and discovering that they too had participated in the JOC. There are groups of former militants, now retired or near retirement, that occasionally gather to reminisce about the past and even to sing once again the movement's songs.

The joyous, warm memories of the JOC frequently were juxtaposed against the tragic, tearful memories of the coup and its aftermath, which left shattered so many dreams for the future. The younger generation of Jocistas suffered the most from the repression and bore the scars of detention, torture, loss of friends and family, and exile. Militants from the JOC's early

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<sup>28</sup> Approximately forty-two percent of the interviewees had been JOC leaders above the local level (14 females and 10 males). Six interviews were conducted with female national JOC presidents and two interviews with male national JOC presidents.

years (those who entered between 1946 and the mid-50s) already were busy raising children and supporting families by the early 1970s, so they generally were less socially and politically active at the moment of the coup. Also, this earlier generation tended not to have been affiliated with Marxist groups. Hence, they suffered less under the military, although there were a number of exceptions. However, the older Jocistas still endured the economic hardships wrought by Pinochet, and many had worked actively at the local level to help the regime's victims.

As much as the coup, the conservative direction that the Catholic Church has taken over the past two decades is a great disillusionment shared by all generations of Jocistas. This shift in direction is especially jarring to them in light of the progressive stance the institution took during the dictatorship, and a palpable feeling of betrayal is evident in laypersons and many clerics.<sup>29</sup> It stems from their view that the Church, which had imbued them with tremendous faith and social commitment, has turned its back on the poor and on social change. One former militant, who talked about the importance of knowing that she had the Church's backing during her years of labor militancy, reflected the sentiment of many when she stated poignantly, "It has been very sad for me to see the Church of today, a Church that doesn't commit to people... that stays silent in the face of injustice; it has caused me much pain."<sup>30</sup>

Filtered through this pain and disillusionment, the former Jocistas undoubtedly paint an overly rosy picture of innocent days long past. Furthermore, many women and men were excited to have someone take an interest in what they felt was an important untold story, even if a young, "gringa," non-Catholic researcher, which likely also shaded presentations of their personal

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<sup>29</sup> On the Church's more conservative direction, see Drogus and Stewart-Gambino, *Activist Faith*. Also see Michael Fleet and Brian H. Smith, *The Catholic Church and Democracy in Chile and Peru* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), which is specifically about the period of transition and consolidation of democracy in the late 1980s and early 90s.

<sup>30</sup> María Mataluna, interview, Santiago, August 17, 2001.

histories.<sup>31</sup> (Only a few people initially were skeptical of the interview's purpose, usually from the younger generation, which was particularly hesitant to discuss past political activities.<sup>32</sup>) However, even the movement's written historical documents reflect tremendous exuberance and optimism, a sense of being part of a glorious and momentous mission, that must also have been very real to participants forty to sixty years ago.<sup>33</sup>

As with any historical document, judging the reliability of interview sources and paying attention to context were necessary. In this regard, the written documentation, although limited, served as an important counterpoint to the interviews. Combining the two sets of sources, it was possible to reconstruct a basic narrative of the movement. The interviews filled in the significant gaps in the historical record, particularly at the parish level and for the movement's later years. The documents often allowed for a verification of dates, attendance numbers, and other minutiae especially affected by the vagaries of memory. Also, written accounts of major JOC activities and events, as well as commentary about a variety of issues ranging from recruitment strategies to campaign goals, provided a first-hand perspective to compare and contrast with people's memories of the movement's development. Finally, working with both written and oral sources allowed for attention to differences between official Church views of the JOC and participants' vision and understanding of it.

The bulk of written sources are from the Chilean JOC's first fifteen years. These include letters from advisors to bishops, records from meetings of movement leaders, conference reports, and other miscellaneous material located in the archives of the Archdiocese of Santiago. *Pastoral*

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<sup>31</sup>The reason for my interest in the JOC provoked much curiosity, as did my religious background.

<sup>32</sup> Only half-jokingly would the question be raised, "You're not with the C.I.A., are you?" In one case, I found out about one man's political involvement in the MIR, a radical Marxist group, through a third person.

<sup>33</sup> This enthusiasm was less pronounced in documents from the 1960s, when the JOC was no longer a mass movement. In the 1970s, the tone was dramatically different as the JOC tried to figure out where it fit into Allende's socialist revolution. However, even the youngest Jocistas spoke warmly and enthusiastically about their JOC experiences.

*Popular*, a monthly, mimeographed magazine for JOC advisors, as well as *Vida Obrera* and *La Voz*, two Catholic newspapers published by the Archdiocese for a working-class readership, contain a wealth of material about the JOC in the late 1940s through the 1950s. Several copies of early JOC bulletins, in the possession of interviewees, as well as JOC booklets located in the National Library, also are informative. The movement published two magazines (one for the female branch of the JOC and the other for the male branch) for a brief period in the early 1950s, but no copies could be located.<sup>34</sup> According to a JOC leader, when the movement's central office was demolished to make way for new housing, much material was lost.<sup>35</sup>

After about 1960, the documentary trail drops off significantly. The JOC's transition from mass movement to one more narrowly focused on leadership development, together with a gradual cessation of hierarchical support, shifted the Catholic press's attention away from the movement.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the JOC now had fewer resources for printing its own materials, although the movement produced the magazine *Tú* from 1965 to 1967.<sup>37</sup> *Pastoral Popular* continued to be published but as a formal magazine directed at the wider clerical community, with few articles about the movement. Another magazine for advisors of both the JOC and MOAC appeared towards the end of the decade, although with its broader and by 1970 more international perspective, it provided less information about the base than had the earlier *Pastoral Popular*.<sup>38</sup> Finally, a movement leader saved several documents from national and

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<sup>34</sup> *Pastoral Popular* mentioned that the magazines *De Pie* and *Más Arriba*, were sold along with JOC pamphlets in the movement's bookstore at the central office. However, the magazines apparently did not have a wide circulation, as not many Jocistas from the 1950s remembered them (while they all knew *La Voz*.)

<sup>35</sup> Elena Castillo, interview, Santiago, July 23, 2001. It is not clear when this demolition occurred but it was before 1973.

<sup>36</sup> Several Christian Democratic newspapers printed by the party's "poblador" department in the mid-1960s were quickly reviewed but had no information about the JOC (nor the Church more generally).

<sup>37</sup> Issues of *Tú* are available in the National Library.

<sup>38</sup> *Boletín de Asesores JOC/MOAC*. The magazine also contained articles about the early Christian base communities.

regional JOC congresses in the early 1970s. Fearful that their houses might be searched by the military, other people who were militants in the years before the coup commented that they had destroyed all of their materials.

Because I collected the majority of oral and documentary material in Santiago, the capital city is the focal point of this history. Chile always has been highly centralized, and the Santiago JOC had a major influence over the movement's development throughout the country. In terms of sheer numbers, the JOC in the capital city eclipsed the regions. Furthermore, the movement's national headquarters were located here, and regional JOC leaders moved to Santiago from the provinces when elected to serve on the national executive committee. The annual work plans, national campaigns, and JOC publications all emanated from the capital, while frequent national congresses and conferences knit together a cohesive movement.

Despite Santiago's dominance, there were some significant regional differences in the movement. For example, while the JOC largely turned its back on mass organizing in the 1960s, local groups in Concepción remained focused on building a mass base due to the influence of French and Belgian advisors. However, in the small industrial city of Talca, the JOC's influence dropped more sharply than elsewhere in this same decade, after having had an especially strong presence there the 1950s, particularly in the labor unions. For reasons of time, this dissertation will not examine these and other regional differences, although it will draw upon interviews from outside of Santiago when dealing with issues general to the movement as a whole.

The first chapter of the dissertation describes the social, economic, and religious context in which the Chilean JOC developed. Weaving together the country's history of rapid industrialization and urbanization with the personal childhood experiences of individual Jocistas,

it discusses the mass poverty and related social problems that accompanied Chile's modernization. The Catholic Church, prodded by growing Marxist influence among the working-class, hesitantly responded to the country's so-called "social question" before opening the door to the JOC. The young women's branch of Catholic Action laid the initial groundwork for the movement, but through the support of the country's cardinal and the work of several dedicated priests, the men's branch gradually gained a foothold as well. Once the JOC separated from general Catholic Action, the movement's social message, centered upon the figure of the Worker Christ, was able to more fully take root, and the movement quickly grew. However, more conservative elements within the Church, including many parish priests, continued to resist the JOC, fearful not only of its rhetoric about workers' rights but also that it would challenge their power within the parish.

Chapter two explores the JOC's penetration of Santiago's poblaciones at mid-century. Through its multitude of recreational and educational activities for youth and their families, the movement established a strong local base and became an integral part of social and religious life in many working-class neighborhoods. The focus on "conquering" as many youth as possible was in constant tension with the movement's concerns about forming "pure and selfless" leaders dedicated to the moral and social uplift of the working-class. However, through the 1950s growth remained a priority, and the JOC filled streets, plazas, and stadiums with massive events celebrating the working class, overshadowing the presence of political parties. Every summer the JOC also organized popular beach trips, which over the years attracted thousands of workers who never before had had the means to travel outside of the city.

Chapter three focuses on why the JOC, although originally conceived as a movement for working-class males, had an especially powerful influence on young women. Chilean society in



the first half of the twentieth century generally viewed the woman worker (*la mujer obrera*) in negative terms. In contrast, the JOC presented women's employment as not only a necessary sacrifice on behalf of their families, but also a desirable and ennobling endeavor. This message, together with the movement's emphasis on women's dignity and worth, laid the base for a shift in self-perception that transformed how female Jocistas addressed challenges faced at work and at home. Moreover, as already mentioned, the movement facilitated women's social activism, and female militants led active, public lives unlike anything their mothers had known. Consequently, these young women did not easily embrace Catholicism's view that motherhood is women's "natural" vocation, reflected in their greater identification with the Worker Christ than the Virgin Mary. Most female Jocistas did eventually marry, but at a much older age than their peers, and the experiences they had accumulated in the JOC deeply influenced their expectations regarding domestic relations and motherhood. At the same time, the JOC's focus on workers and workplace issues also made it attractive to young men, who traditionally shied away from Church participation at the parish level. In a movement in which women had equal authority, this participation provoked a subtle shift in men's perceptions of male power and dominance.

Chapter four traces the JOC's evolution from social Catholic to Marxist movement. Until the 1970s, the JOC steadfastly rejected Marxist doctrine and embraced the social Catholic mandate of achieving justice for workers through inter-class solidarity. However, the JOC never shared ecclesiastical leaders' concerns about containing Marxist influences. Stressing that their movement was above politics, JOC militants collaborated with Communists (and the less visible Socialists) in neighborhood associations and in trade unions, allowing the JOC to break with the Church's historical resistance to syndicalism. But as both Communist and Christian Democratic

influences expanded in the 1960s, the politically independent Jocistas increasingly were marginalized within the labor movement. They also were no longer one of the largest social organizations in working-class neighborhoods. Partially in response, the JOC shifted its strategy away from mass organizing to leadership development, working to spread its message more quietly through active involvement in the many social groups blossoming in the poblaciones in these years.

Although the religious movement never forged any direct links with the Christian Democratic Party, JOC militants played an important role in the PDC's Popular Promotion program, serving as advisors to the mothers' centers, neighborhood councils, and other popular organizations that formed the core of the party's strategy to secure the political support of women and the urban poor. Yet surprisingly few JOC militants actually joined the Christian Democratic Party, despite the obvious ideological affinity, a reflection of the party's failure to build political networks in the poblaciones that could compete over the long term with the Marxist Left. Between 1965 and 1970, the JOC mirrored the increasing radicalization and politicization of Chilean society. In dialogue with the Catholic Left, many militants openly aligned themselves with Allende's Popular Unity coalition, and soon after his presidential victory, national JOC leaders voted for the movement to adopt a Marxist line. This controversial decision split a movement already weakened because of a sharp decline in support from the Church. By the time of the 1973 coup, the JOC had become just a shadow of its former self.

## 2.0 CHAPTER TWO - FORMING CATHOLIC WORKERS: THE JOC'S ORIGINS IN CHILE

### 2.1 THE EMERGENCE OF AN INDUSTRIAL WORKING CLASS

The urban workers who composed the backbone of the JOC movement in Chile were relative newcomers to industrial labor. Modest but persistent industrial growth dated to the last decade of the nineteenth century, but similar to the rest of Latin America, it was not until the 1930s that the country entered a period of rapid industrialization based on import substitution. Led by the textile, light metallurgy, and food industries, Chilean manufacturers, depending on imported foreign technology and government subsidies, had achieved a substantial increase in output and created a significant industrial sector by the 1940s.<sup>1</sup> In the textile industry alone, the number of workers employed increased from 15,195 in 1939 to 35,482 in 1950.<sup>2</sup>

Women were an important component of this new industrial labor force. Massive numbers entered the textile factories in particular, attracted by pay exceeding that of domestic

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<sup>1</sup> Other industries included chemicals, cement, metal products, machinery, furniture, paper, and non-metallic minerals, with consumer items accounting for ninety-five percent of Chilean manufacturing output at the end of the 1940s. The proportion of the economically active population working in industry climbed from 15 percent in 1930 to twenty percent a little over ten years later. Brian Loveman, *The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 188, 195-196, 231-232; Paul W. Drake, "Chile, 1930-1958," in *Chile Since Independence*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 88; Luis Vitale, *De Alessandri P. a Frei M. (1932-1964): Industrialización y modernidad*, vol. 6 of *Interpretación marxista de la historia de Chile*. (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 1998), 15; Carmelo Furci, *The Chilean Communist Party and the Road to Socialism* (London: Zed Books, 1984), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Vitale, *De Alessandri a Frei*, 118

service, laundering, and other more traditional forms of employment for lower-class women.<sup>3</sup> Many Jocistas, male and female, recounted their experiences working at large textile mills, such as Yarur and Hirmas, which employed several thousand workers over two or three daily shifts, often a work experience quite different from that of their parents. Others found employment in a variety of smaller industrial operations, some with no more than a couple of dozen workers, while there were those who had no factory experience at all, earning their income instead as store clerks, seamstresses in small shops, peddling goods in the street markets, a few even in offices. Yet in Santiago and other industrial centers of Chile, it was the factory experience that dominated and shaped the movement's working-class identity.

Whatever their specific experience as workers, all of the Jocistas interviewed, with only a couple of exceptions, had left school and entered employment at a young age, several as young as ten years, most by their early teens.<sup>4</sup> While Chile at mid-century had one of the best educational systems in Latin America, with an illiteracy rate of only nineteen percent and education largely equal for men and women, fifty percent of working-class children did not finish the third grade, and over eighty-five percent dropped out after sixth grade.<sup>5</sup> Most of the Jocistas' parents, who themselves were not always literate, struggled to feed large families and depended on their children's income to make ends meet.<sup>6</sup> Humberto Mora, one of ten siblings, began working at age eleven in a small factory that made wood doors and windows, close to

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<sup>3</sup> Winn, *Weavers of Revolution*, 34; Vitale, *De Alessandri a Frei*, 115.

<sup>4</sup> According to interviewees, a few Jocistas had university studies, but even the better educated in the movement were of working-class background and identified strongly themselves as working class.

<sup>5</sup> Public education expanded in urban areas during the Popular Front governments (1938-1952) but was free only through the sixth grade. James Petras, *Politics and Social Forces in Chilean Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 29.

<sup>6</sup> A 1962 study from the University of Chile found that seven of every ten young persons in the población San Gregorio (which had an exceptionally strong JOC group) worked to help maintain the family. Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 164.

where he lived.<sup>7</sup> Lidia Bravo, also from a large family, recounted that she never finished elementary school because as the oldest she was expected both to help raise her siblings and to work. Her first job was sewing leather in a shoemaker's shop, and from there, "still in braids," she obtained a job in a shoe factory with eight hundred workers. Graciela Vitta related how her mother died when she was fifteen, leaving her and her two younger siblings orphaned. To support them, she worked first as a maid, then in a bakery and a small shirt factory, before finally obtaining through a friend a better job at the Yarur textile mill.<sup>8</sup> Many other Jocistas similarly mentioned having lost one or both parents at an early age, leaving them responsible as adolescents for both supporting and raising younger siblings.

Almost all of the Jocistas interviewed had rural roots. Even if they themselves were not born in the countryside, usually at least one of their parents had a peasant background, reflecting the massive demographic shift from rural to urban areas that accompanied Chile's industrial expansion. Potential employment opportunities pulled thousands of rural poor away from the stagnant countryside to the major manufacturing centers in Santiago and Valparaíso, in the central part of the country, and Concepción, Talcahuano, and Talca in the south, all cities where the JOC had its biggest presence.<sup>9</sup> Urbanization also accentuated Santiago's traditional dominance over the rest of Chile. By 1952, Santiago province's share of the national population had grown to thirty percent, and it accounted for nearly forty percent of the country's urban population.<sup>10</sup> Not surprisingly, JOC's strongest roots were in the capital, where the movement was founded and its national leadership was based. However, most of Santiago's growth

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<sup>7</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, interview, Santiago, March 18, 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vitta, interview, February 10, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> From 1940 to 1952, the urban population increased by 42 percent, while the rural by a mere 3 percent, a rate of urbanization more than double that of population increases. Drake, *Chile*, 88-99; Loveman, *Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, 234-235, 260.

<sup>10</sup> Drake, *Chile*, 89; Espinoza, *Para una historia de los pobres*, 244.

occurred not in the city's center, but in the surrounding municipalities. In fact, in the years between 1932 and 1952, the center itself actually lost population, while the outlying municipalities of San Miguel, Ñuñoa, and Quinta Normal experienced a fivefold population increase.<sup>11</sup> It was in these new neighborhoods, to the south and west of the city center and later to the north, where the JOC base groups, known as *centros*, flourished.<sup>12</sup>

The growing urban centers, unable to absorb all the newcomers, faced severe problems with housing, sanitation, and public health. Decaying *conventillos* and *cites*-- old, deteriorated tenement houses in Santiago's center, frequently with one family for a room of about 9 square meters, and one bathroom for all the building's residents—marked Santiago's center.<sup>13</sup> The swelling poblaciones on the periphery of Chile's major cities, especially Santiago, received the thousands of immigrants that the saturated *conventillos* could not absorb. Various governmental institutions dedicated to resolving the housing crisis existed (the Corporación de la Vivienda, known as CORVI, being the largest), but their efforts to build new housing were woefully inadequate. Numerous shantytowns of precarious cardboard homes, the *poblaciones callampas*, sprouted alongside working-class neighborhoods with more solid, even if simple and cramped, structures.<sup>14</sup> In 1957, the Auxiliary Social Service identified forty-one *callampas*, characterized by substandard housing and lack of public services, on what had been until recently rural land around Santiago. Twenty-six of these had no electricity, seventeen had no plumbing, and

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<sup>11</sup> Espinoza, *Para una historia de los pobres*, 244-245.

<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the well-to-do fled the city to establish themselves on former farm lands to the east, toward the Andes Mountains.

<sup>13</sup> Manuel Castells, "Movimiento de pobladores y lucha de clases en Chile," *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Urbanos Regionales (EURE)* 3, no. 7 (April, 1973): 12; Espinoza, *Para una historia de los pobres*, 197; Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 63.

<sup>14</sup> Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 230. Also referred to as *campamentos*, *población-callampas* refer to shantytowns. The term literally translates as mushroom settlements, so named because of the manner in which they seem to sprout up overnight. At mid-century such shantytowns grew rapidly around major urban center throughout Latin America. In Brazil they are called *favelas*, in Argentina *villas miserias*, in Venezuela, *ranchos*, etc. Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 57, 264.

eighteen no potable water. The most numerous and densely populated *callamapas* were near the Zanjón de la Aguada, a ditch into which industries emptied their waste. Although subject to both frequent flooding and fires, some 35,000 people lived along the Zanjón's edge in an area a mere three miles long and 100 yards wide.<sup>15</sup>

Almost all of the Jocistas interviewed emphasized how very poor they were as children. Manuel Guerrero lived until adulthood in a *población callampa* where he said, "We suffered from lack of water, lack of hygiene, of plumbing, of light, roofs with holes, water in the streets. There were four fires in the sector where we lived, four fires at the same time...we suffered all this."<sup>16</sup> Patricio Pino also talked about growing up in a *población callampa* without electricity and sometimes having to walk kilometers in search of water.<sup>17</sup> Humberto Mora, living on the outskirts of the city near the Zanjón de la Aguada, similarly related having to search for water, making it hard to bathe and causing plagues of fleas and scabies. When he turned eighteen, his family was one of the lucky ones chosen for new government housing in the población San Gregorio. He commented that the biggest improvement in their lives was obtaining a bathroom.<sup>18</sup> Domingo Marilaf, who also moved to San Gregorio as a teenager, expressed with much emotion that it was normal for him and others he knew there to be hungry.<sup>19</sup> Victoria Plaza, born in a downtown tenement with no water or electricity, bathed with a makeshift shower of cold water poured from condensed milk cans. Her family moved to the población San Joaquín

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<sup>15</sup> Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 31-33,77, 82, 121-122; Espinoza, *Para una historia de los pobres*, 249.

<sup>16</sup> Manuel Guerrero, interview, Santiago, June 5, 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Patricio Pino, interview, Santiago, July 7, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, March 18 interview.

<sup>19</sup> Domingo Marilaf and Eliana Poblaza, interview, Santiago, April 22, 2002. CORVI built San Gregorio on the edge of Santiago in 1958. Although a substantial improvement over the *callampas*, residents living there still faced tremendous problems of overpopulation, minimal governmental services, and high level of poverty. Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 151, 165-166, 174-175.

when she was a teenager, allowing her the luxury of a real shower.<sup>20</sup> Like Victoria Plaza, Luis Reyes lived in a *conventillo* as a boy, in a group of buildings called the Devil's Rock, comparable to a small city, where he saw death many times, frequently at the point of a knife, before moving to the still semi-rural municipality of Barrancas (today Pudahuel) at thirteen.<sup>21</sup> Lidia Bravo, growing up in a working-class neighborhood in Talca, the child of factory workers, saw half of her siblings die as infants from dehydration and poor medical care.<sup>22</sup> These and many other experiences of deprivation deeply marked the youth who entered the JOC movement and would influence their concern for social issues as Jocistas.

Even when Jocistas living in new poblaciones had their basic necessities met, life was not easy for them. Chilean workers with regular employment still found it hard to make ends meet and faced grinding poverty.<sup>23</sup> The government's industrialization policies favored economic growth over redistribution, and consequently the upper and middle classes benefited more than workers, whose wages remained lower than the cost of living.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, by the middle 1950s, the years in which the JOC reached its peak as a movement, the ISI model of national capitalism had begun to unravel. Continued dependency on copper exports, foreign investment, and fluctuations in the international economy, accompanied by rising indebtedness, caused growth rates to slow, inflation to increase (spiraling to around 85 percent annually in the mid-1950s), and income gaps to widen further.<sup>25</sup> The economic pressures led the Ibáñez government to bring in an American economic mission to design a program of stabilization (the Klein-Saks

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<sup>20</sup> Victoria Plaza, interview, Santiago, November 17, 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Luis Reyes, interview, Santiago, May 4, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Lidia Bravo, interview, Santiago, January 25, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> See Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 272-273

<sup>24</sup> Winn, *Weavers of Revolution*, 39; Paul W. Drake, *Socialism and Populism in Chile, 1932-52* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 269.

<sup>25</sup> Loveman, *Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, 234, 256; Vitale, *De Alessandri a Frei*, 118, 336; Drake, *Socialism and Populism*, 285; Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 55.



Mission), which called for classic austerity measures. While inflation rates declined as a result, so too did the standard of living for a majority of Chileans as salaries were frozen, unemployment increased, and government expenditures were cut back, at the same time that rural migrants continued to pour into the major cities.<sup>26</sup>

However, despite the hardships described, the Jocistas made it clear that while they viewed themselves as poor, and the struggle against poverty as their own struggle, they were not the “poorest of the poor.” The individuals interviewed typically had steady employment during their years in the JOC, although they changed jobs with some regularity, and while they had to help support their siblings, most still lived with at least one parent and did not need to support children of their own.<sup>27</sup> As Humberto Mora, who first entered the JOC at seventeen while still living in the *población callampa*, pointed out:

While we were poor, our parents at least had permanent income, even if extremely low...but in another sector across the Zajón del Aguada on the south side....we lived on the north side....there was a garbage dump called “*el botadero*.” There people were poorer than us, because they only knew about working in the garbage, collecting metals, bones, rags to sell.... The people were very indigent, they earned so little...and there the kids were more illiterate than us.

As his wife, Graciela Vitta, also in the JOC in her late teens, put it, “Within our poverty we at least had a charcoal stove on which to cook.”<sup>28</sup>

The JOC did try to reach out to youth in the callampas, but generally with little success. Only one man remembered that young people from a nearby *población callampa* integrated into

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<sup>26</sup> Loveman, *Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, 262-263; Vitale, *De Alessandri a Frei*, 337; Winn, *Weavers of Revolution*, 60.

<sup>27</sup> Upon marriage, men and women left the JOC movement.

<sup>28</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, March 18 interview.

his JOC group in any significant numbers. More typical was the experience of Luis Reyes. His JOC group was surrounded to the south by poblaciones callampas, and the Jocistas made a great effort to reach out to the young people there. They established friendly relations, even close friendships, with some of them, which Luis emphasized was not difficult because the Jocistas also were not well-off. However, only one or two people from the callampas stayed with Luis' JOC group for any length of time. Others would come and sit through a JOC meeting but seemed bored and never returned. Luis speculated that perhaps it was because of cultural issues, or because young people in the callampas often could not read or write (in a movement with many bulletins, pamphlets, and other written material, as well as an emphasis on reading the Bible).<sup>29</sup> Also possible is that the young people most on the margins of society could not relate to the Jocistas' work experiences, a central focus of JOC meetings, and did not feel that the movement spoke to their particular reality. As Luis mentioned, the youth in the callampas never had stable jobs; they only earned money selling fruit and other small items. Nor were JOC meetings ever held in the callampas. The groups always met in the relatively better-off poblaciones, usually in their simple chapels, which "looked almost luxurious next to cardboard houses."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Luis Reyes, interview. Illiteracy rates in the callampas stood at 26%, with the average level of schooling only 3.2 years. Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 274.

<sup>30</sup> The Christian base communities (CEBs) of the 1970s and 80s similarly tended to attract the better-employed, more literate segments of the working class, rather than the most indigent. This situation has been most studied with regards to base communities in Brazil. Writing about CEBs on Rio de Janeiro's urban periphery, John Burdick attributes the under-representation of the most unskilled workers to the groups' emphasis on literacy. He also points to the CEBs' major demands of time (which would be less of an issue in the JOC, a movement composed of single youth.) Finally, Burdick discusses how members of lesser social standing felt judged for the clothes they wore or the houses in which they lived. On the other hand, W.E. Hewitt and Rowan Ireland both argue that the very poor generally were not part of the base communities because of their fatalistic attitudes. Hewitt, who studied base communities in São Paulo, writes that the extreme poor "have frequently lost all hope of ever removing themselves from their disadvantaged situation and hence are unresponsive to the message of the CEB." Investigating progressive Catholicism and CEBs in Rio de Janeiro, the journalist Jane Kramer similarly concludes that extreme poverty caused people to turn to spirits and saints rather than to the empowering ideas of the base communities. For Chile, Cristián Parker Gamucio and Maximiliano Salinas have written about the prevalence of popular religiosity, in

## 2.2 THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE "SOCIAL QUESTION"

The mass poverty and related social problems that accompanied industrialization and urbanization in Chile led to the rise of the so-called "social question" (*la cuestión social*) in political, university, and political circles and within the budding labor movement. However, rather than workers' exploitation, it was their rebellion against it, through strikes, riots, and other forms of social disruption, which most pushed the issue forward as a topic of debate in party newspapers, academic studies, and the working-class press.<sup>31</sup> In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the issue of poverty generally was viewed as a private problem to be addressed primarily by charitable institutions, and as an issue of personal morality; by the 1930s, elites showed greater willingness to enact social legislation and labor reforms and to accept organized labor's limited participation in government in an attempt to preempt more extreme demands from the Left.<sup>32</sup> However, because of the resounding failure of governmental economic policies, limited reforms were not enough to curtail the mounting social discontent or to curb the rising Marxist influence among the urban (and later rural) working classes. Under the Popular Front governments (1938-1952), the Socialist and Communist parties forged new forms of mass

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contrast to institutional Catholicism, among the poor. Burdick, *Looking for God*; W.E. Hewitt, *Base Christian Communities and Social Change in Brazil* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 199-200; Rowan Ireland, *Kingdoms Come: Religion and Politics in Brazil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991); Jane Kramer, "Letter from the Elysian Fields," *The New Yorker* (March 2, 1987): 40-75; Parker Gamucio, *Anticlericalismo y religión popular*; Maximiliano Salinas C., *Historia del pueblo de Dios en Chile: La evolución del Cristianismo desde la perspectiva de los pobres* (Santiago: Ediciones Rehue, 1987).

<sup>31</sup> Homero Ponce Molina, *Historia del movimiento asociativo laboral chileno* (Santiago: Editorial ALBA, 1986), 41; Loveman, *Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, 189, 195-196, 203; Drake, *Chile*, 126-127.

<sup>32</sup> Paula Antúnez Díaz and María Alejandra Cueva Muñoz, "Desafíos comunicacionales para sectores de escasos recursos" (Thesis, Universidad Diego Portales, Facultad de Ciencias de la Comunicación e Información,) 72; Drake, *Socialism and Populism*, 117-118.

political participation and union activism, developing strong roots within Chile's expanding industrial working class.<sup>33</sup>

The social question was also of tremendous concern to the Catholic Church. The institution reacted strongly to Marxist inroads among a population that was, at least nominally, homogeneously Catholic. However, the Church found itself in the awkward position of needing to prove to workers that the Communists, Socialists, and anarchists were not the only groups concerned about their problems. The Chilean Church, like other national churches in the region, had a deeply ingrained reputation as an ally of the moneyed and powerful in society. As a group of JOC leaders wrote in a 1950 letter to the Chilean Cardinal, José María Caro, "In our contact with the popular classes, they are constantly throwing in our face that the church is practically united with capitalism."<sup>34</sup>

Seeking a Christian solution to the problem of human exploitation and suffering, the Church drew its answers from the social encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*. With Pope Leo XIII's release of *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, almost 50 years after the publication of *The Communist Manifesto*, and twenty-five years after *Das Kapital* first appeared, the Vatican finally had addressed the new problems posed by the Industrial Revolution. This document implicitly maintained that employers must pay their workers a just wage, one sufficient to provide more than mere subsistence for workers and their families. It also provided a doctrinal base for ecclesiastical promotion of workers' associations, including the recognition that in certain cases workers not only have the right to organize but also to strike in order to receive

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<sup>33</sup> The Popular Front refers to the political coalitions formed with the Left under the Radical administrations of Aguirre Cerda, Juan Antonio Ríos, and Gabriel González Videla.

Before 1930, there existed a militant working-class movement, with deep Marxist influence, in the mines but not in industry.

<sup>34</sup> JOC leaders to Cardinal José María Caro [signatures illegible], May 1950, Archivo del Arzobispado de Santiago, *Acción Católica*, 1931-1954, Leg. 132, no. 1 [hereafter cited as AAS, AC].

better wages and/or working conditions. Finally, *Rerum Novarum* condemned the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few and took a critical stance toward capitalism, while at the same time attacking communism and socialism. *Quadragesimo Anno*, written by Pope Pius XI in 1931 to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, ratified the ideas of the first social encyclical and presented an even sharper critique of capitalism. It also condemned imperialism with language not much different in many respects from Marxist critiques. Employing a more forceful tone than Leo X, Pius XI blamed the owners of capital for the miserable conditions of the working class, explicitly urged Catholics to actively promote social equity and reform, and pressured the hierarchy to aid in the organization of Catholic unions, at the same time reiterating the Vatican's unrelenting condemnation of atheistic communism.<sup>35</sup>

Chile's Catholic political elite harshly criticized both social encyclicals upon their release. With Church support, lay leaders associated with the Conservative party went so far as to prohibit *Quadragesimo Anno*'s publication in the Catholic press, arguing "it was necessary to protect Catholics from the imprudences of the Pope."<sup>36</sup> However, although most of the Church remained indifferent to the sufferings of the working classes, *Rerum Novarum* and social Catholic thought emanating from Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century did inspire a small cadre of dedicated, progressive clerics to address the social question. These young priests and their lay followers constructed houses in working-class neighborhoods and organized workers into self-help groups, called *patronatos*, the first of which was established in the 1890s.

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<sup>35</sup> John J. Considine, *New Horizons in Latin America* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1958), 145; Fernández Fernández, *Historia Oral de la Iglesia Católica*, 142; Stewart-Gambino, *Church and Politics in the Chilean Countryside*, 35-36, 64; Landsberger and Canitrot, *Iglesia, intelectuales y campesinos*, 179; Ana María Bidegain, *From Catholic Action to Liberation Theology: The Historical Process of the Laity in Latin America in the Twentieth Century*, Working Paper no. 48 (Notre Dame, IN: Helen Kellogg Institute of International Studies, University of Notre Dame, 1985), 1.

<sup>36</sup> Considine, *New Horizons*, 145; Stewart-Gambino, *Church and Politics in the Chilean Countryside*, 37; Landsberger and Canitrot, *Iglesia, intelectuales y campesinos*, 198; Landsberger, "Time, Persons, Doctrine," 86.

The *patronatos* functioned both as mutual aid societies and as educational institutions providing secular and religious teaching, including morality and the evolving Catholic social doctrine. By recognizing that workers could be educated and not simply viewing them as the objects of upper-class assistance, the groups marked a first step away from traditional charity.<sup>37</sup> A decade later, the Jesuit priest Fernando Vives developed study circles (*círculos de estudio*) as a place for Catholic workers and university students to analyze Catholic social doctrine and current social problems.<sup>38</sup>

It was not until the 1930s, around the Great Depression, that the Church leadership began to shift its weight behind these social reform efforts, against the strong resistance of traditional clerical and lay factions within the institution. Conservatives feared that any change in the social order would create social instability and strengthen the Communists. The most fundamental step in this progressive direction was the hierarchy's formal establishment, with the support of the Vatican, of Chilean Catholic Action in 1931. The inauguration of Bishop José María Caro as archbishop of Santiago in 1938 (and then Cardinal in 1946) followed. Caro was a leader who showed genuine concern for the poor and had a history of pushing the Church to take a stronger stand in favor of social reform.<sup>39</sup>

Catholic Action, created in Italy in the late nineteenth century and given formal status by Pope Pius XI in 1922, was the cornerstone of the Vatican's strategy to reassert the Church's central role in modern societies after its disastrous losses to anticlerical forces in the nineteenth century and continuing secularization in the twentieth. The movement had as its express purpose the "rechristianization" of society through the construction of a broad-based movement of laity

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<sup>37</sup>Landsberger, "Time, Persons, Doctrine," 78

<sup>38</sup>Aliaga Rojas, *Itinerario histórico*, 35-40; Fleet and Smith, *Church and Democracy*, 40-41.

<sup>39</sup>Stewart-Gambino, *Church and Politics in the Chilean Countryside*, 36-46, 79-85; Smith, *Church and Politics in Chile*, 87-88; Fleet and Smith, *Church and Democracy*, 41-42.

with spiritual and social training based on the new social Catholic doctrine. Catholic Action essentially was a defensive weapon against influences such as Liberalism, Marxism, anarchism, Masonry, and Protestantism.<sup>40</sup> Its emphasis on an “apostolate of the laity” also helped the Church to address a more mundane problem— an extreme shortage of priests not only in Chile but throughout Latin America because of difficulty recruiting young men to the priesthood. The idea that layman could officially collaborate with the clergy in apostolic work was quite novel. In the words of Deborah Levenson-Estrada, “Catholic Action gave the masses, previously envisioned as sheep, a new role as shepherd.”<sup>41</sup> The subordination of these lay apostles to ecclesiastical authority was never theoretically in question, however. Pius XI, who described Catholic Action metaphorically as an extension of the hierarchy’s arm, emphasized that it was a movement *of* the Church, distinct from any other lay organization.<sup>42</sup>

### 2.3 THE JOC’S ESTABLISHMENT IN CHILE

Chile was one of the countries in Latin America where the Catholic Action movement gained the most traction, and almost every diocese in the country had established Catholic Action programs by the late 1930s.<sup>43</sup> However, the groups were relatively small in membership

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<sup>40</sup> Smith 1982, *Church and Politics in Chile*, 88; Mainwaring, *Catholic Youth Workers Movement*, 1983, 61; Emanuel de Kadt, *Catholic Radicals in Brazil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 58; Hellmut Gnadt Vitalis, *The Significance of Changes in Latin American Catholicism Since Chimbote 1953*, Sondeos no. 51 (Cuernavaca, Mexico: CIDOC, 1969), 3/1; Bidegain, *From Catholic Action to Liberation Theology*, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists Against Terror*, 81.

<sup>42</sup> Aliaga Rojas, Fernando et al., *Documentos de la Conferencia Episcopal Chilena*, part 1, 1952-1962 ([Santiago?]: Equipo de Servicios de la Juventud, n.d.), 18; Bidegain, *From Catholic Action to Liberation Theology*, 4-5; de Kadt, *Catholic Radicals*, 207.

<sup>43</sup> Brazil is the other country in the region that had a notably strong Catholic Action movement. Similar to Chile, a progressive hierarchy characterized the twentieth-century Brazilian Church. See Mainwaring, *Catholic Youth Workers*; Mainwaring, *Catholic Church and Politics*; de Kadt, *Catholic Radicals*.

and primarily focused on middle and upper-class Catholics. In the late 1940s, the Chilean episcopate gave its support to the establishment of specialized branches of Catholic Action in order to more deeply penetrate all social strata. While Catholic Action was a general movement divided only by sex and age and centered territorially on the parish (the Italian model), specialized Catholic Action was organized along occupational lines (the French and Belgian model). The JOC for workers was the first of these specialized groups in Chile and internationally, and its success served as a model for the formation of student and peasant branches of the movement <sup>44</sup> Joseph Cardijn, a visionary Belgian priest of working-class origin, founded the JOC in 1923 to literally win back the working class and provide a viable alternative to Marxist organizations. In his words, it was “either Moscow or Rome.”<sup>45</sup> Cardijn’s intent was to train lay organizers who would then evangelize workers on the factory floor, rather than remaining within their parish base. As much as personal transformation, he emphasized modifying the milieu (*ambiente*) in which workers lived, which came to include the neighborhood as well as the workplace.

In contrast to Cardijn’s original vision of the JOC as a movement for male workers, in Chile it was the young women’s branch of Catholic Action that laid the initial groundwork for the JOC’s penetration of the working class.<sup>46</sup> Within the Church, the Association of Catholic Feminine Youth (AJCF), created in 1921 and integrated into the Catholic Action movement in 1931, was considered to have the most efficient structure, the greatest breadth of activities, and to be the most socially advanced of the Catholic Action branches. Notwithstanding the AJCF’s

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<sup>44</sup> JEC (Juventud Estudiantil Católica); AUC (Acción Universitaria Católica); JAC (Juventud Agrícola Católica).

<sup>45</sup> Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists Against Terror*, 81.

<sup>46</sup> Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists Against Terror*, 80-81. In contrast, in Guatemala women did not take the lead in JOC organizing and no indications exist that they did so in Brazil or Mexico. (As noted in the introduction, little scholarship exists about the JOC in Latin America outside of these three countries.) See Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists Against Terror*; Mainwaring, *Catholic Youth Workers*; Gomes Moreira, “Para una historia.”



embrace of traditional female religious activities such as catechism and devotion to the Virgin, an exhaustive 1946 report on the state of the Chilean Church recognized the association's dynamic and pioneering character, which stood in contrast to the muted nature of young men's Catholic Action. According to the report, "In Chile the AJCF has been an enthusiastic militia for social advancement... focusing on issues distinct from the normal preoccupations of youth."<sup>47</sup>

Aware that women who worked in factories did not enter its ranks, in 1934 the AJCF established a detailed program aimed at recruiting young female workers. This program included training centers, located in working-class parishes, which offered courses such as hairstyling, sewing, and first aid, as well as social events and small study groups. The AJCF recruited through visits to workers' homes and factories and scheduled the activities on Sundays, in recognition that factory work hours made meeting attendance on other days difficult. The AJCF also addressed the issue of unionization among female workers, creating the White Union of Women's Work (*Sindicato Blanco de Labores Femeninas*) and organizing "shops for the protection of women's work" ("*tiendas de protección al trabajo femenino*") throughout the country. While reaching out to female factory workers, the women in the AJCF studied literature about the JOC movement and its methodology in Europe.<sup>48</sup> As explained in a 1936 association document, they concluded, "The degree of misery of the popular sectors... is one of

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<sup>47</sup> Oficina Nacional de Estadística de la Acción Católica Chilena, 1946, 439-440. For more on the AJCF, see María Magdalena Urrejola Santa María, "Los inicios de la Asociación de la Juventud Católica Femenina: 1921-1935" (Thesis, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Facultad de Historia, Geografía y Ciencia Política, 2000) and Huerta, *Catolicismo social en Chile*, 339-340, 424-425, 461-463. The available sources of information on the AJCF unfortunately provide no indication as to why this branch of the Catholic Action movement was the strongest, although one can speculate that women's traditional connection with the Church and men's greater focus on schooling and work were important factors. (For adult Catholic Action in Chile, the women's branch also was stronger and more socially active than the men's.) Moreover, according to *La Voz*, the Chilean AJCF was the first Catholic Action association to be established in Latin America (in 1921). "Para la fiesta de Cristo Rey, hace 25 años, nació la Acción Católica," *La Voz*, October 28, 1956, 9.

<sup>48</sup> Oficina Nacional de Estadística, 439-440; Urrejola Santa María, "Inicios de la Asociación," 116-121; Huerta, *Catolicismo social en Chile*, 461-462; Aliaga Rojas, *Itinerario histórico*, 101-104; Isabel Valenzuela, interview, Santiago, April 12, 2002.

the fundamental causes of communism.”<sup>49</sup> In 1941 the AJCF began calling its training centers JOC, and that same year a significant number of female workers involved with the AJCF, now referred to as Jocistas, participated in the association’s national congress.<sup>50</sup>

The episcopate officially had established the Chilean JOC in 1942, but it was not until 1946, after a visit both by Cardijn and a delegation of Canadian Jocistas in Chile for an Interamerican Catholic Action Conference, that the movement began to firmly establish itself in working-class parishes. That year, the AJCF leadership, citing the influence of the foreign visitors, decided that the women’s branch of the JOC (JOCF) had matured enough to separate itself from its parent association. However, the formation of the men’s branch (JOCM) lagged behind. According to the Chilean hierarchy, a lack of qualified, trained leaders inhibited the growth of the JOCM, which did not enjoy a strong level of support from young men’s Catholic Action.<sup>51</sup>

In an effort to address the relative weakness of the JOCM, Cardinal Caro sent Fathers Rafael Larraín and Carlos González to Canada to study the successful JOC movement in that country. Larraín was a young parish priest whose work in the extremely poor parish of San Joaquín, in the población Bulnes (an old neighborhood with many large factories and *conventillos*), had interested him in experimenting with JOC. He and González, who only recently had graduated from seminary, formed a small JOC nuclei based on the Belgian model, focusing efforts on training leaders for the movement in their parish. Upon the two men’s return from Canada, Caro named Larraín, at his request, as the movement’s first national advisor (*asesor*), and he and González left their duties as parish priests to work full-time in building the

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<sup>49</sup> Huerta, *Catolicismo social*, 463.

<sup>50</sup> Isabel Valenzuela, interview; Aliaga Rojas, *Itinerario histórico*, 103.

<sup>51</sup> Huerta, *Catolicismo social*, 472-475; Oficina Nacional de Estadística, 440.

men's and women's branches of the Chilean JOC movement. Three other priests soon joined them as full-time advisors, and the movement grew quickly.<sup>52</sup> By 1948, the first workshop for JOC advisers had eighty priests in attendance, including several bishops, the Cardinal, and Cardijn, in Chile for the second time. That same year, a day of JOC retreats in Santiago had a total attendance of 2,100 youth.<sup>53</sup>

## 2.4 THE JOC'S WORKING-CLASS IDENTITY: INTERWEAVING RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE.

The JOC's separation from general Catholic Action changed the movement dramatically. The first JOC groups, particularly those connected to the AJCF, were led mainly by middle-class activists and tended toward paternalism and elitism, much as had the earlier *patronatos*. Isabel Valenzuela, an AJCF member in charge of some of the first workers' groups, noted the distinction that existed in the movement between the middle-class women and those from working-class sectors of the city. She pointed out that the workers, who called her and the other women from the AJCF the "*señoritas*," were passive participants in the movement, at the most making an effort to invite one or two companions from work to attend the parish centers.<sup>54</sup>

Dalila Pacheco, who started attending JOC meetings in 1945, explained that she and other young women from her working-class neighborhood noticed a lot of differences between

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<sup>52</sup> Isabel Valenzuela, interview; Blanca Correa, "Datos Biográficos," in *El infinito es tuyo: Reflexiones de Monseñor Rafael Larrain*, ed. Blanca Correa (Santiago: Soc. Editora Manantial, 1981), 20-21; Carlos González C, "Rafael Larrain," in Correa, *El infinito es tuyo*, 14; Interview with Father Francisco González, Santiago, August 9, 2001; Isabel Valenzuela, interview; Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, Feb. 10 interview.

<sup>53</sup> "La Jornada de Asesores en la J.O.C.," *Boletín de la Acción Católica Chilena* 16, no. 5 (1948): 1-3; "Cardijn en Chile," *Boletín de la A.C.C.* 16, no. 5 (1948), 1; Presentación de la juventud obrera católica al H. Consejo de Administración relativa a retiros católicos, AAS, AC, 1931-1954, Leg. 132, no. 1, n.d.

<sup>54</sup> Isabel Valenzuela, interview.

the girls from Catholic Action and themselves. She explained, “In their way of dressing, of being, in all this, one felt inhibited, like, badly... We were all humble, quiet... As a worker, I didn’t feel worth very much... It’s not that the girls from Catholic Action were bad; it was the social difference.” According to Dalila, the Jocistas asked Rafael Larraín for permission to separate from the AJCF. The factory workers had their own ideas and also wanted to hold meetings at night, after work. Dalila only attended a couple of meetings as part of the ACJF, but once the JOC group was independent, she immediately enjoyed it more and started to be a regular and enthusiastic participant.<sup>55</sup>

Independence from general Catholic Action also allowed the JOC movement’s social consciousness to more fully develop. Instead of Catholics from better-off sectors going to poor neighborhoods to evangelize, the workers themselves began developing an articulation of a faith that directly incorporated their reality and values. Moreover, this faith called on workers to struggle in defense of their own interests. One of the Chilean JOC’s first male leaders, Francisco González, recollected that in its earliest years the workers’ movement “was a little group of good boys, of workers who were active in the parishes and nothing else. There wasn’t a social mystique...only later.” According to González, the first national JOC meeting, organized by Larraín and the other advisors in 1949, was a turning point for the JOC. Before then, he was skeptical about the movement. Having grown up orphaned and poor, supporting five siblings, he wanted to be part of a movement of social action, not just religious piety. After the meeting, he agreed to a leadership position in the JOC because he saw that its participants:

began to be steeped in the mystique that we had lacked.... on the street, in the home, in the factory, in the workshop... everywhere... Instead of continuing in the JOC merely as

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<sup>55</sup> Dalila Pacheco and René Abalos, interview, Santiago, August 13, 2001.

a good boy, I was in the JOC as a fighter... It was not about being holed up in the parish, defending yourself from bad things and playing ping pong... The criteria had to be changed... social injustice.... small wages, the problems of young people, the boys that had to work.<sup>56</sup>

The JOC's innovative pedagogical method, later adopted by all the specialized Catholic Action branches, fostered the movement's social vision and further distinguished it from general Catholic Action. Known as the "review of life," the method involved three basic steps, See, Judge, and Act (*Ver, Juzgar, Actuar*), which Cardijn had introduced in Belgium. In the weekly parish meetings, a worker would introduce an issue or problem from his or her life (*el hecho*), then with the help of the group, he or she would analyze and evaluate that issue in the light of the Gospel, and finally, come up with a plan of action to address it. With this method, Jocistas addressed issues and problems in their families, neighborhoods, and workplaces that sometimes called for a personal change, for example not drinking, or a coordinated group effort, such as organizing a neighborhood clean-up campaign. The method's ultimate purpose was to shape young workers' consciousness of their potential to positively influence the milieu in which they lived and worked. The JOC did not seek to change the Church or to proselytize for the Catholic religion. Rather, the movement encouraged young workers to be "leaven in the dough," actively transforming their reality according to Christian values, a position which frequently led JOC militants to involvement in neighborhood groups, unions, and with time, political parties.

The Jocistas' social consciousness was built upon a spiritual framework that placed the worker squarely in the center. The movement emphasized the great dignity of workers, in Cardijn's words, "as children of God, respected and honored as such." The JOC founder

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<sup>56</sup> Father Francisco González, interview.

affirmed, “Young worker, you are worth more than all the gold in the world,” and asserted, “Without you, the Church is not the Church of Christ.”<sup>57</sup> Cardijn’s novel and inspiring words about a Church of workers were repeated frequently throughout the JOC literature and in meetings, and they strongly resonated with the Jocistas, most of whom entered the movement with a traditional religious upbringing centered on the major rites of passage in the Church and in many cases also on saints and devotions in the home. Furthermore, in contrast to the image of a remote and punishing God with which many Jocistas grew up, in the movement young people discovered a God who is “a worker a like us,” as the JOC Prayer, recited at every meeting and event, expresses in its opening line. Elena Castillo recounted:

Christ ceased being a distant person and became a person very close to us, and very like us. He was the son of a worker, of a carpenter, of an ordinary family... It had a big impact, and it’s why I began to participate with such enthusiasm... It opened a huge window for me... turned everything upside down for me, knowing a distinct God. Before I only knew a terrible God.... and when I went to church I didn’t feel like I belonged, you could sense the caste differences.<sup>58</sup>

Finally, in the JOC work was viewed not materially, but as a service to mankind and a form of prayer. An article in the Catholic working-class press about the JOC’s spiritual vision explained, “Work is an act of God’s praise; it completes the act of creation and of redemption. Work is a dialogue between God and the worker... The man or woman, day after day guiding and making the production machine run... this collective effort creates prayer in work.”<sup>59</sup> Pedro Castex, an advisor to the JOCM, further clarified, “In the meetings, with See, Judge, Act, a lot of

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<sup>57</sup> “JOC, ¡Queremos Ser Más!” *La Voz*, April 8, 1956, 6-7; Fernández Fernández, *Historia Oral de la Iglesia Católica*, 196.

<sup>58</sup> Elena Castillo, interview.

<sup>59</sup> “La Joc educa, sirve y defiende a toda la Juventud Obrera,” *La Voz*, January 19, 1958, 7.

importance was given to the workplace, where 8 hours every day were spent, often in difficult conditions. [Jocistas] talked a lot about the machinery or worktable being the altar, and your effort, your tiredness, your pain-- the sacrifice of Christ on the cross that you're living."<sup>60</sup>

The JOC's intertwining of social and religious consciousness created what interviewees frequently referred to as the movement's mystique (*la mística*). On the one hand, this term referred to the deep sense of working-class pride and identity that the JOC inspired. On the other, it spoke to the movement's tremendous spirit of camaraderie, joyfulness, hope, and enthusiasm about constructing a new world of justice and peace, whatever the difficulties, under the Christian banner. Nostalgically describing the movement's *mística*, interviewees would choke with emotion, remembering back on this youthful idealism and how it transformed their view of life and of their purpose in it.

## **2.5 CONFLICT WITH CHURCH CONSERVATIVES: THE IMPORTANCE OF MONSIGNOR CARO AND THE JOC ADVISORS TO THE MOVEMENT'S CONTINUED GROWTH**

Not surprisingly, there were many in the Church who did not agree with the JOC's social or religious perspective. Well into the mid-1950s, factions of the Chilean hierarchy resisted specialization precisely because they feared (quite correctly it turned out) that such movements would develop class-consciousness, become radicalized, and ultimately introduce class struggle and social conflict into the Church. Many bishops also expressed a concern that the institution

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<sup>60</sup> Pedro Castex, interview, Sacramento, CA, October 17, 2001.

lacked a sufficient number of priests to adequately “orient,” the JOC, in other words to insure that it remained under strict hierarchical control. Some in the Catholic elite went so far as to accuse Monsignor Caro of being a Communist because of his preoccupation with the working class.<sup>61</sup> However, the Archbishop’s unwavering support for the JOC, backed by the Vatican, insured that the movement not only would survive but thrive. Pedro Castex, the former advisor, claimed that Cardinal Caro’s openness and understanding were critical to the JOC. He noted that Caro completely trusted Rafael Larraín and provided the JOC leadership with considerable independence, which would have been particularly important as the movement expanded to cities outside of Santiago where more conservative bishops held sway.<sup>62</sup> Perhaps most important, the movement had its own resources, however meager, which were separate from the finances of parishes and dioceses.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Huerta, *Catolicismo social*, 453-459; Fernández Fernández, *Historia Oral de la Iglesia Católica*, 152.

<sup>62</sup> Pedro Castex, interview. JOC advisor Gabriel Larraín similarly credited the movement’s success to Caro’s support, noting the Cardinal’s careful appointment of dedicated priests to advise the movement. “Una JOC nacional unida y apostólica educa a la familia obrera chilena,” *La Voz*, April 8, 1956, 7.

<sup>63</sup>Based on documents and interviews, the JOC’s financial resources apparently came from three main sources: funds that Monsignor Caro and the Archdiocese of Santiago initially made available to the movement (for example, to purchase a building for the JOC headquarters and to help fund big events such as a national conference); money that the JOC groups managed to raise themselves through raffles, dances, and other fundraisers; and the family connections that advisors such as Rafael Larraín had with Catholics in the moneyed elite, from whom they acquired donations. Other less documented financial sources existed as well. Two national JOC leaders mentioned that some Catholic businessmen donated to the movement on a monthly basis; one leader said that she herself had to go around and collect from their offices. (However, others in national leadership positions emphatically claimed otherwise, which suggests that such regular donations were short-term.) Moreover, a document written by JOC advisor Rafael Larraín indicates that in the early 1950s the movement received an annual subvention from the Chilean treasury to partially finance the JOC camp on the coast. Finally, the JOC, like other Catholic Action groups, apparently received some support from abroad, with several interviewees mentioning that the international charity Caritas regularly provided food for the JOC camp. Whatever the sources of money, all interviewees made clear that the movement always had to scrounge to cover its costs for retreats, conferences, printing of bulletins, and other expenses since the workers themselves could not afford more than very minimal dues. Examples of the assorted documents and letters in the Archdiocese’s archives that make reference to JOC finances include: Rafael Larraín to Cardenal Monseñor José María Caro Rodríguez, March 21, 1950; Rafael Larraín, “Presentación de la Juventud Obrera Católica al H. Consejo de Administración [del Arzobispado], n.d.; Rafael Larraín to Reverendísimo Monseñor Cardenal, July 19, 1950, AAS, AC, 1931-1954, Leg. 132, n. 1; Note of payment, Alejandro Huneeus Cox, January 12, 1957, AAS, AC, n.d., Leg. 132, no. 4. Many former JOC leaders and advisors also discussed the movement’s finances when interviewed. Pedro Castex, interview; Father Enrique Salman, interview, Santiago, April 30, 2002; Lidia Bravo, Jan. 25 and Jan. 29 interviews; Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, March 18 interview; Elena Castillo, interview; Hilda Perez, interview, Santiago, May 8, 2002; María Eugenia Gálvez, interview,



Outside of the Cardinal's personal influence, continued hierarchical support for the JOC, despite the misgivings of a number of bishops, rested on an understanding that the movement, besides potentially serving as a bulwark against communism, might address the underlying issue of Chilean society's general apathy in religious matters, with the lower classes in particular disconnected from the institutional Church.<sup>64</sup> Helping to convince the Church of the issue's urgency was the book *Is Chile a Catholic Country?* by Father Alberto Hurtado. Published in 1946, the same year that the JOC started gaining momentum in Chile, this book "reverberated like thunder" among Chilean Catholics and led to a "violent polemic" within the Church, in the words of one international Catholic newspaper.<sup>65</sup> Hurtado argued that Chile essentially had ceased to be a Catholic country and that the Church, because of a shortage of priests and nuns, lacked the necessary means to confront the situation. Based upon personal observations as he traveled through the country organizing Catholic Action groups, as well as on a national mail survey of Chilean pastors, Hurtado concluded that three-fifths of the population were on the margins of the Church's pastoral care, fifty percent of marriages were not contracted in the Church, and that only 9 percent of women and 3.5 percent of men attended weekly Sunday Mass.<sup>66</sup> Other studies conducted around the same time confirmed Hurtado's finding that levels of religious practice and attachment to the Church were appallingly low, notwithstanding a baptism rate of 98 percent<sup>67</sup>

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Santiago, October 18 and 26, 2000; Juanita Pérez, interview, Santiago, February 2, 2001 [pseudonym used at interviewee's request].

<sup>64</sup> The *Boletín de la Acción Católica Chilena* wrote in 1948 that not only workers' social problems but also their "complete religious apostasy" made it "of first importance to accept the necessity of a worker's movement." "Cardijn en Chile," *Boletín de la A.C.C.* 16, no. 5 (1948): 1.

<sup>65</sup> "El Catolicismo en Chile," *Informations Catholiques Internationales*, no. 60 (November 15, 1957), reprinted in *Política y Espíritu* 13, no. 199 (May 1, 1958): 16-17.

<sup>66</sup> Smith, *Church and Politics in Chile*, 99; "El Catolicismo en Chile," *Informations Catholiques*, 17.

<sup>67</sup> *Oficina Nacional de Estadística*, 391; Fleet and Smith, *Church and Democracy*, 42.

Not only the upper echelon of the clergy resisted the JOC. Many lower-level priests continued to hold the paternalistic view that helping the poor required charity. Moreover, they felt threatened by a movement whose vision of faith and practices was more progressive than the average position within the Church. In particular, the movement's outward-looking focus created conflicts with parish priests who were accustomed to the Catholic Action groups, which tended to work in service of the parish, helping with catechism, processions, taking in the "collection", and other traditional religious activities. A 1949 JOC report about the JOC's problems and needs, presented to the Chilean bishops, argued, "It would be useful to instruct the parish priests [about the JOC], helping them to understand the importance of organizing a Christian worker movement and allowing the movement's national orientation to develop... not just little parish groups, which are in every way different from the true JOC and without its social importance."<sup>68</sup>

The Jocistas complained that the more traditional parish priests simply had "another mentality" (*otra mentalidad*). Humberto Mora, who helped start a new JOC group when he moved to the población San Gregorio, recounted, "So when the JOC goes and tells the parish priest that we need to form JOC, loan us a room to meet, and then the Jocistas have all of their action outside the church in the neighborhood, the priest thinks we are just a bunch of brats who came to occupy the hall and leave." At another point in the interview, Humberto mentioned that the parish priest thought the Jocistas were being "used" by the Marxists because they had ideas such as giving the workers better salaries.<sup>69</sup> Dalila Pacheco similarly related that her parish priest did not like her JOC group because of "the social part." One day when the Jocistas arrived for their meeting, he simply refused to let them into the church's rooms. (They met instead on a

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<sup>68</sup> "La JOC y la parroquia," [subsection of the untitled report], July 1949, Santiago, AAS, AC, 1931-1954, Leg. 132, no. 1.

<sup>69</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, March 18 interview.

bench in the street.)<sup>70</sup> Lidia Bravo remembered having to meet in people's houses because the Jocistas were not allowed to use the local church. The parish priest, who made them feel "like second class citizens," also wanted nothing to do with the movement's social perspective. He told them, "I already have the youth organized [in Catholic Action], so what am I going to do with another youth group?" He added, "People from the extreme left, the Communists, will infiltrate the group."<sup>71</sup> As Elena Castillo commented, "It smelled like Communism to them."<sup>72</sup>

The backing of the JOC advisors counterbalanced the Jocistas' difficulties with the parish priests. According to Lydia Bravo, who became national president of JOCF, the advisors, rather than JOC leaders, dealt directly with the conservative bishops who resisted the JOC's expansion in their dioceses, and they also visited individual parishes to try to convince local priests to accept the movement.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the Jocistas formed close, supportive relationships with their clerical mentors, whom they described as part spiritual guide, part father, part professor, and above all, part friend. Jocistas emphasized that with their advisors they felt comfortable sharing their intimate joys and grief, laughing as well as crying, albeit the woman a little more than the men. (The women joked that many Jocistas fell in love with their advisors--and there actually were several instances of advisors leaving the priesthood to marry Jocistas!)

The Jocistas in Santiago also had the support of "la Central," the movement's national office, staffed by JOC leaders and always open until nine in the evening. Attracted by the office's welcoming atmosphere, Jocistas went there to talk with advisors and lay leaders about a wide range of problems, from relationship troubles to issues in their unions.<sup>74</sup> In the early years,

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<sup>70</sup> Dalila Pacheco and René Abalos, interview.

<sup>71</sup> Lidia Bravo, Jan. 25 interview.

<sup>72</sup> Elena Castillo, interview.

<sup>73</sup> Pedro Castex, interview; Father José Baeza, interview, Santiago, August 2, 2001.

<sup>74</sup> Pedro Castex, interview.

according to JOC advisor Father José Baeza, “It was the Central that kept the JOC going,” with the base groups dependent on the parishes only for a meeting space.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, the Central organized frequent retreats, workshops, and conferences at the diocesan, regional, and national levels, at which the advisors and lay leaders provided direct orientation to movement participants. Graciela Vitta, whose group also did not have a good relationship with the parish priest, stated, “In the conferences and retreats we learned an awful lot, and it was there that we renewed our energies, so we could go home rejuvenated.”<sup>76</sup>

For the most part, the JOC apparently managed to avoid the clericalism and paternalism that characterized the *patronatos* and many of the earlier Catholic Action groups. The Jocistas emphasized that the advisors encouraged them to develop their own ideas, and they felt comfortable confronting the priests when in disagreement. Cardijn stressed to the advisors that they should only orient not lead the workers, leaving the responsibility of running the movement to them. The advisors’ main purpose was spiritual direction.<sup>77</sup> However, more than any mandate, the youth, social commitment, idealism, and enthusiasm that the advisors shared with the Jocistas fostered a relationship based on more equality than was typical in priest/parishioner relationships of the era.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, the first generation of advisors, all diocesan clergy and independent from any parish, lived together in a house close to the JOC’s office in downtown Santiago. This living arrangement both fostered a strong sense of community and purpose among the advisors and made them accessible to the Jocistas. Lay initiative also was encouraged by the simple fact that the advisors, whose numbers were limited, usually were not present at the weekly JOC

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<sup>75</sup> Father José Baeza, interview.

<sup>76</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, Feb. 10, interview.

<sup>77</sup> Huerta, *Catolicismo social*, 480.

<sup>78</sup> This unusually close relationship existed despite the fact that all the advisors in the JOC, especially in its early years, had upper-class backgrounds.

meetings in the parishes, once a group was established. The parish priest might stop by instead, depending on his relationship with the group, or someone from the JOC leadership, but oftentimes the Jocistas conducted the meetings on their own, using thematic guides issued by the JOC national leadership.

As the JOC matured and gained greater acceptance within the Church, and as a new generation of clergy moved into the parishes, the movement grew less dependent on the independent advisors, who were too small in number to maintain close connections with the ever growing number of centers. The newer poblaciones in particular tended to have younger and more open-minded priests, who frequently assigned junior clergy to work directly with the JOC groups. As a result, the second and third generation of Jocistas reported close ties to their parish priests and especially to the priests' young assistants, with only minimal connection to the independent advisors, except for militants in national leadership positions. Furthermore, while the first generation of advisors was mainly Chilean, an influx of foreign priests in the 1950s helped to reinvigorate the movement at a time when the dioceses could less and less afford to devote clergy members full-time to the JOC, because of the ever increasing shortages of Chilean clerics.<sup>79</sup> Many of these foreign priests had experience with the JOC in Europe and arrived specifically to work and live in the poorest parishes. They also tended to be part of religious orders, which helped provide extra resources.

By the mid 1950s, the JOC had grown into a major force among working-class youth. Within Santiago, it attracted thousands of participants of both sexes and staged massive events that filled stadiums. JOC groups not only peppered the new poblaciones surrounding the city but also were present in large factories. The movement had established a solid presence throughout

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<sup>79</sup> According to Fleet and Smith, the foreign priests augmented the number of clerics working in Santiago by almost 70 percent. Fleet and Smith, *Church and Democracy*, 47.

the country as well, with groups located in the nitrate mines to the north and the coal mines to the south and in all the industrial cities in between. A well-organized leadership structure with male and female executive committees at the diocesan, regional, and national levels allowed for frequent communication and contact among the different geographic regions. The Chilean JOC also benefited from strong international connections, hosting both regional and international conferences in Santiago and sending Chilean leaders to conferences abroad. According to the Jocistas, the international dimension helped expand their vision and their sense of the movement's mystique and importance.

Despite these strong national and international connections and a common methodological base, the JOC groups in each region inevitably developed their own particular characteristics. For example, the JOC never achieved a mass presence in the north, dominated by nitrate and copper mines with deep Communist roots. Also, in the north Canadian missionaries established the first JOC groups, stamping them with their own, more conservative vision for the movement. Furthermore, because the mining economy produced only limited female employment, the nature of women's JOC involvement in the northern and also the southern mining towns differed markedly from the country's industrial centers. Female Jocistas in the mining regions inevitably had less direct engagement with labor issues than their counterparts in Santiago, although their father and brothers' work experiences shaped an equally deep concern about the exploitation of workers.

In addition to the regional differences, each parish group over time acquired its own traits, influenced both by the personality of the parish priest and the social and political character of the población in which it was located. Some JOC centers were more radical than others, stirring the workers to strongly defend their existing rights and to fight determinedly for new

ones through union and political activity. In other parishes, the groups remained more focused on the spiritual realm and social activities at the neighborhood level. However, as the following chapters show, the trend over the subsequent two decades was toward more socially and eventually politically oriented action.

### 3.0 CHAPTER THREE – FROM PARISH TO STADIUM: THE JOC AS A MASS MOVEMENT

The Chilean Young Catholic Workers movement reached its peak in the 1950s, a decade sandwiched between the leftist agitation of the 1930s and 40s and the increasingly radical politics of the 1960s. In terms of political mobilization, repression of the Communist Party made these relatively quiescent years. Moreover, the decade stands as a moment of transition between the Popular Front governments, with mobilization centered mainly on urban workers organized in unions, and Eduardo Frei's "Revolution in Liberty," during which the pobladores arose as a major political and social force.<sup>1</sup> The JOC in many ways is representative of this transition. The worker in the factory, workshop, and mine was the principle rhetorical focus for the movement. However, the JOC had its deepest roots not in unions but in the burgeoning poblaciones of Santiago, where it quickly became an important part of social and religious life. The movement also had a mass presence that transcended the neighborhood. With the goal of Christianizing the masses, the Jocistas worked purposefully to recruit as many young people as possible into the movement. In addition to building a solid local base, the Catholic activists organized immense regional and national events marked by a religious fervor that frequently attracted thousands of

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<sup>1</sup> Garcés calls this long decade "the years of interregnum," referring specifically to the period between 1948, when the government enacted a law outlawing Communism, and 1964 when Frei was elected president. Through Frei's agrarian reform policies, the peasants also achieved greater prominence as social actors in the 1960s. Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 417. On agrarian reform in this period, see Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict* and Loveman, *Struggle in the Countryside*.



people. By the end of the decade, the JOC had grown into the most important grass roots youth organization in the country, with a strength that rivaled the political parties of the era.

### 3.1 JOC'S ROOTS IN THE POBLACIONES

The JOC gathered force in the first half of the 1950s in Santiago's older poblaciones surrounding factories such as the well-known Yarur cotton mill. It then advanced steadily southward and westward away from the city center, carried along by the large numbers of youth populating the working-class neighborhoods that were expanding outward in these two directions.<sup>2</sup> By 1956, there were 78 active JOC groups or *centros* (male and female), with at least one group in almost all of Santiago's working-class parishes. In 1958 alone, more than eleven new JOC groups were formed in poblaciones on the city's edge.<sup>3</sup> As the decade drew to a close, the Alessandri government's massive relocations of families from the *callampas* and *conventillos* to new poblaciones such as San Gregorio and José María Caro provided fertile ground for the continued growth of JOC groups well into the early 1960s.<sup>4</sup>

At the core of these JOC centers were select and close-knit groups of anywhere from fifteen to forty dedicated activists or *militantes*, those young men and women who showed up regularly for weekly meetings of reflection using the JOC method. If a group grew beyond this number, a new JOC center usually was formed. Some of the larger parishes frequently had three

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<sup>2</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, Feb. 10 interview.

<sup>3</sup> "Una JOC nacional unida y apostólica educa a la familia obrera chilena," *La Voz*, April 8, 1956, 7. However, an article six months later in the same Catholic newspaper reports that more than forty JOC centers existed in Santiago. This lower number possibly refers only to male and not to female JOC groups, of which there were more. "Cien fieles de la JOC tratan de levantar nivel del trabajador," *La Voz*, October 12, 1956, 8; Fernando Ariztía to Mons. Emilio Tagle G., Obsipo Auxiliar de Santiago, May 1958, AAS, AC, 1955-1961, Leg. 132, no. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 177, 196-197.

or more groups.<sup>5</sup> The movement's large numbers of sympathizers (*simpatizantes*) extended the influence of the relatively small JOC centers well beyond their core membership. While not attending the centers' meetings on a regular basis, the sympathizers supported and participated in the JOC's myriad activities and events. A 1957 article about Chilean Catholicism in *Informations Catholiques Internationales* stated that there was 2,800 youth in the JOC nationally but argued based on surveys that the movement's actual influence extended to 30,000 young workers. This figure undoubtedly grew as the movement continued to expand.<sup>6</sup> With six of the ten JOC federations located in Santiago, the capital city encompassed a disproportionate number of these Jocistas.<sup>7</sup>

Within the narrow confines of the working-class poblaciones where the JOC established itself in the 1950s, there were few social or recreational options for youth outside of the male sports clubs (with soccer a major obsession) and the Church. The newer neighborhoods where the JOC was concentrated, composed of cheap houses constructed either by the government or through self-construction, were like ghettos but with populations several times bigger than the majority of Chile's cities.<sup>8</sup> They lacked economic and social diversification and had limited transport to and from other sectors of Santiago. Barren fields dedicated to soccer existed, but

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<sup>5</sup> Some examples include San José parish in the western part of Santiago, which included various poblaciones in the municipalities (*comunas*) of Quinta Normal and Las Barrancas. Each sector of the parish had a JOC group. San Gregorio in the south, which was both población and parish, similarly had several JOC groups. The parish Nuestra Señora del Rosario, which included the slightly older poblaciones of Juan Antonio Ríos and the callampas El Pino Bajo and Colo-Colo, immediately north of downtown, also had several JOC groups, with up to 50 militants each. Adriana Hernández, interview, Santiago, May 11, 2002; Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, Feb. 10 interview; Domingo Marilaf and Eliana Poblaza, interview; Luisa Torres, interview, Santiago, May 4, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> "Catolicismo en Chile," *Informations Catholiques*, 19.

<sup>7</sup> Smith describes the JOC's influence as small and inconsequential, citing the same 1957 figure of 2,800 Jocistas mentioned above but completely ignoring the article's larger point about the movement's broad influence. However, it is Smith's factual errors regarding the movement that most call his interpretation into question. For example, he claims that the JOC was operating in only four of twenty dioceses, while the article just cited, as well as other JOC documents, state clearly that the JOC operated in nine dioceses. Smith, *Church and Politics in Chile*, 95-96.

<sup>8</sup> Soon after the Chilean government created San Gregorio in 1959, it had 18,000 inhabitants, increasing to almost 29,000 by 1962. José María Caro, also founded in 1959, began with 20,000 inhabitants and by 1966 had increased to almost 89,000 people. Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 162-163, 175-176.

parks or other open green spaces with trees were scarce. Nor were there any movie or theater houses, only the occasional circus tent with some children's entertainment. Bars, liquor stores, and pool halls, on the other hand, were ubiquitous, with "getting lost in drink" the typical activity after a soccer match.<sup>9</sup>

The need for healthy recreational activities came up frequently in JOC documents and in Catholic working-class newspapers. As early as 1947, the Santiago Archdiocese's JOC Commission asked the JOCF centers to take action regarding the problem of entertainment. According to the commission, "In each neighborhood many girls lose their way because of the lack of good pastimes; those that do exist... lead to dangerous places."<sup>10</sup> Twelve years later, youth recreation remained a major issue. The JOCM stated in a 1959 manifesto, "The boys' petition can be summed up as more and better entertainment... in the case of soccer, the most popular sport, there are few fields and in the majority of cases they do not meet minimum hygienic needs, which endangers the health of the players. Also, the existence of clandestine liquor businesses.... and the lack of cultural locales, makes it impossible for free time to be an occasion for the physical and moral rejuvenation of working-class youth, who are marked by a difficult life."<sup>11</sup>

Political parties also did not provide an outlet for working-class youth, unlike in previous decades. In her book on the Popular Front, the historian Karin Roseblatt describes how the

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<sup>9</sup> Abraham Santibáñez Martínez, "La Nueva Aurora': Una experiencia de periodismo en las poblaciones marginales de Santiago" (Thesis, Universidad de Chile, Escuela de Periodismo, 1966), 26; "Un mundo inédito alrededor de Santiago, *La Voz*, Abril 15, 1962, n.p.; Cecilia D. Cecilia Binimelis D., "Historia del decanato José María Caro," (Santiago, 1984), 3 [photocopied document]; Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 192; Carlos Leyton Alvarez, "Dos encuestas relámpagos en Población V. Navarrete," *La Voz*, Abril 8, 1956, 8; "Barrios abandonados contrastan con la opulencia del sector centrico," *La Voz*, Mayo 1, 1957, 2; Cecilia Binimelis, "La mezcla explosiva de la Población Caro," *La Voz*, December 2, 1962, 11; Gladys Abarca, Alfredo Barraza, and other unnamed residents of Población Cardijn, Santiago, May 18, 2001; Adriana Hernández, interview.

<sup>10</sup> "Instrucciones para las dirigentes de la JOCF," *Vida Obrera*, no. 2, second week of May, 1947, 2.

<sup>11</sup> "Situación de jóvenes obreros denuncia la JOC en manifiesto," *La Voz*, October 12, 1959, 9.

Left, similar to the JOC, was concerned about encouraging healthy recreational pursuits. In the 1930s and 40s, the Communists and Socialists had organized theater, music groups, dances, and sports activities both in working-class communities and at places of employment.<sup>12</sup> Rosenblatt does not write about the youth branches of these parties in much detail, but according to Luis Corvalán, elected Communist secretary general in 1958, the Communist Youth had a period of great strength in the 1930s.<sup>13</sup> (The Socialist youth wing never gained the prominence of the Communist Youth.) And Chilean historian Mario Garcés, writing specifically about the poblaciones, reveals that a variety of organizations with close ties to the Communist Party had existed in the slums by the end of the Popular Front era.<sup>14</sup>

However, scant evidence of this Leftist influence exists for the 1950s. The 1948 Law for the Permanent Defense of Democracy outlawed the Communist Party and unleashed a wave of persecution against it (although Corvalán notes that long before this point the Communist Youth had lost its appeal.) By 1952 when the authoritarian Carlos Ibáñez gained control of the government for the second time, the Communist Party had reached a low point in its history, comprising no more than approximately 3,000 members nationally, and popular organizations were facing severe restrictions.<sup>15</sup> The Socialists also failed to hold on to their political relevance in these years, breaking into multiple factions.<sup>16</sup> Not until the early 1960s would the Left recuperate strength and begin to make new inroads in working-class neighborhoods.<sup>17</sup> Until then, its primary focus and major source of strength remained the labor unions.

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<sup>12</sup> Rosenblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, 195-197.

<sup>13</sup> Luis Corvalán, *De lo vivido y lo peleado: Memorias* (Santiago, LOM Ediciones, 1997), 85.

<sup>14</sup> Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 340-341.

<sup>15</sup> Corvalán, *De lo vivido*, 99. Corvalán contributes this dramatic decline to both the repression and internal party disputes.

<sup>16</sup> Espinoza, *Para una historia de los pobres*, 241.

<sup>17</sup> See chapter 4 for more on the Left's penetration of working-class neighborhoods in the 1960s.

### 3.2 BUILDING A MOVEMENT IN WORKING-CLASS PARISHES

In contrast to the Communist and Socialist parties, the JOC never had a dominant presence in the labor movement. The JOC actively promoted its militants' involvement in unions, but a disproportionate percentage of organizing efforts were focused on the poblaciones.<sup>18</sup> The basic JOC unit, *el centro*, was parish-based and local in orientation, despite belonging to a movement with regional, national, and even international connections. The JOC formed factory groups in some of the larger industries, such as textiles and food processing, but these nuclei were more informal and smaller in size than the centers in the poblaciones. Furthermore, most Jocistas in factory groups also were active in parish groups, which usually remained their principal source of inspiration and support.

While the JOC at the grass roots level was parish-based, the Jocistas understood the parish to be more than just the church structure, in contrast to previous Catholic organizations. In the words of national JOC advisor Fernando Ariztía, it included “all the neighborhoods, poblaciones, streets and organizations that make up the parish territory.” The JOC should not be just “little groups of parish youth... separate from the rest of the youth,” but out in the world in which workers lived, acting as “leaven within the dough,” to use the common JOC slogan. *Pastoral Popular*, a magazine for JOC advisors, in fact warned the centers to avoid too close a connection with the Church. “You should keep in mind the instinctive distance that the worker has to priestly things.”<sup>19</sup>

“So what should we do so that we are known as Jocistas?” an early JOC newsletter asked its members, and not “just one more parish institution, a group of good girls whose influence

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<sup>18</sup> See chapter 4 for more on the JOC's presence in unions.

<sup>19</sup> “Formación de centro,” *Pastoral Popular*, no. 31 (March 1956): 14-15.

doesn't reach all in the neighborhood."<sup>20</sup> The answer, the JOC decided, was to actively engage in organizing recreational and educational activities within the poblaciones for youth and their families. The newsletter advised that first "the militants should know their neighborhoods from top to bottom; study and understand the necessity of doing something to help people advance (*surgir*)."<sup>21</sup> Hence, a first major activity of the movement, one that started in 1948 and continued throughout the next two decades, was to undertake neighborhood surveys. The Jocistas frequently went house to house, asking residents, and especially youth, questions about their problems and needs, their interests and ideals, and not incidentally, looking for potential new recruits to join their movement.<sup>22</sup> Based partially on the results, together with direction from the regional and national JOC leadership, the centers organized an array of community events.

"Social afternoons" and teas were a common and simple first step that the women's JOC groups used to introduce themselves in their poblaciones and spread the word about their movement.<sup>23</sup> At these gatherings, girls invited from the neighborhood would sing, dance, and drink tea, with everyone bringing some food to share. Lidia Bravo, who was invited to a JOC tea at the age of fourteen, recounts, "The [JOC] girls spoke to us and asked us what we would like to learn and what we would like to do and served us tea in such an attentive and beautiful way. Nobody had ever served us like that before." The organizers then explained to Lidia and the

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<sup>20</sup> "Primer jornada de estudio," *Boletín de la Juventud Obrera Católica Femenina*, no. 8 (October 1949): 4-6.

<sup>21</sup> *Boletín de la JOCF*, no. 1 (Marzo de 1948): 4-5.

<sup>22</sup> For example, Victoria Plaza remembers that in the early 1960s, her JOC group interviewed almost 500 young men and women in her población of La Victoria, which had a total population of around 30,000. Victoria said the Jocistas attempted to speak with every young person in the población, asking them a variety of questions. Polls and surveys were not unique to the Chilean JOC. The Colombian scholar Ana María Bidegain wrote that JOC militants throughout Latin America "took polls and the young workers took the information that they needed to understand... the reality in its entirety in which they must live their own faith." Victoria Plaza, Nov. 17 interview; Bidegain, *From Catholic Action to Liberation Theology*, 7.

<sup>23</sup> "Primera jornada de estudio," *Boletín de la Juventud Obrera Católica Femenina*, no. 8 (Octubre 1949): 4-6.

others in attendance that they were the JOC, an apostolic movement, and invited them to future events.

Based on the information learned at the teas, the JOCF began to organize courses, which served to attract yet more people. The courses tended to be practical, appealing to the interests of female adolescents of the era, including fashion, hair-styling, cooking, sewing, and first-aid. Jocistas sometimes taught the courses themselves or they brought in outside people to do so, often professionals connected with other branches of the Catholic Action movement. Lidia, who eventually became national president of JOCF, said, laughing, “What really got me involved [in the movement] was a course about fashion.” No mention was made of the JOC or religion at the courses, but along with providing a service appreciated in the community, they allowed the Jocistas to get to know potential recruits and invite them to other activities where the movement then would be introduced. Lidia, following a path similar to other militants, eventually was invited to a regular JOC meeting and became more actively involved in the movement. Her first responsibility as a militant was to invite other girls to JOC events and make sure they too were well attended and had a good time, before educating them about the JOC.<sup>24</sup>

For young men, sports were a common tool for recruitment, with male JOC centers organizing soccer matches, basketball games, even setting up ping-pong tables in the parish hall. (The JOC advisor, cassock and all, sometimes would play along with the young men.)<sup>25</sup> Simply striking up conversations and forming friendships with the groups of young men who tended to hang out on street corners also served to establish contact with potential recruits. As with the women, initial introductions were followed up with extensive personal attention from a current

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<sup>24</sup> Lidia Bravo, Jan. 25 and 29 interviews. Written testimonies of youth recruited to the JOC movement parallel the stories related in the interviews. See for example, “Trabajo de una militante con el equipo,” *Pastoral Popular*, no. 29-30 (December, January, February 1955): 4.

<sup>25</sup> Manuel Vergara, interview, Santiago, March 5, 2001; Manuel Guerreño, interview.

militant in an effort to groom members for the movement. A male Jocista discussed in *Pastoral Popular* his recruitment of two boys whom he met on the street in his población:

More than anything I tried to be their friend... We greeted each other, conversed in passing. I began to win their confidence.... In a very natural manner, I worried about each of them... As our friendship advanced, I invited them to my house, and they invited me to theirs... I began to talk to them about the need to do something for their friends... I brought a pamphlet from the Central to discuss... One day, I gave a JOC book to these friends who since childhood had not gone to church.... it gave me great satisfaction to see how there arose in each of them a great sense of the working class and an immense restlessness and spirit of service.<sup>26</sup>

Instilling in new militants a “pure and selfless” desire to serve the working class, a critical facet of the mystique that propelled the movement, required careful attention to the individual. However, a conflicting interest in quickly increasing the number of adherents also marked the JOC in the 1950s. One national leader, reflecting back on the movement’s first ten years, wrote, “The idea of the JOC was to conquer more and more apostles for the salvation of the working class.”<sup>27</sup> The Catholic working-class newspaper of the period, *La Voz*, paraphrasing Cardijn, posited that the JOC “should be the ferment of the great masses, which will reconquer for the Church, for the Glory of the Lord, and for the gift of a human existence worthy of being lived.”<sup>28</sup>

Because of this strong missionary and militant spirit, the years from 1946, when the movement was founded, to around 1960 are considered to be the movement’s “mass phase,” with

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<sup>26</sup> “Vida de un nucleo jocista,” *Pastoral Popular*, no. 22 (May 1955): 8-10.

<sup>27</sup> “Una Jocista nos escribe,” *Pastoral Popular*, no. 37 (September 1956): 13-15.

<sup>28</sup> “Sólo el pensamiento visionario de Mons. J. Cardijn pudo crear la JOC,” *La Voz*, October 12, 1956, 10.



spiritual reform of the individual in constant tension with and often overshadowed by the desire to Christianize the working-class *ambiente*, or social environment. The JOCF concluded, at its first study conference in 1949, “While we begin to collaborate in solving all the workers’ problems, let us dedicate ourselves, for the moment, to organizing assemblies, to promoting healthy diversions... because conquering only through personal contact would never produce results, our apostolic work would be too slow.”<sup>29</sup>

In an its effort to reach as many young people as possible, the JOC centers, much as the Communists and Socialists had for a previous generation, took their movement out into the community by organizing healthy leisure and cultural activities. In the words of Cardijn, the JOC’s intent was to provide “entertainment that will uplift rather than reduce the worker materially and morally.”<sup>30</sup> A militant from San Gregorio, on Santiago’s southern fringe, related how his JOC group, despite scarce resources, organized theater presentations for the población.<sup>31</sup> Two other Jocistas from San Gregorio remembered that their center put together a well-received radio program one year. On show day, popular artists of the day filled the field at the south entrance to the población.<sup>32</sup> Their JOC group also obtained European movies, borrowed from foreign embassies in Santiago, to show in the población’s social center. Some five hundred young people regularly showed up to watch the films. The JOC presented Christian movies as well, obtained from the Church, which proved to be quite popular simply because “no other movie options existed,” according to one woman. She remembered that when her center showed *The Ten Commandments*, “Word spread... It was really full, there had to have been some 3,000

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<sup>29</sup> “Primera jornada de estudio,” *Boletín de la Juventud Obrera Católica Femenina*.

<sup>30</sup> “Sólo el pensamiento visionario,” *La Voz*.

<sup>31</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, March 18 interview.

<sup>32</sup> The JOC, through its national office, had a regular weekly program on a Catholic radio station, and the program produced in San Gregorio most likely was connected with this station.

to 4,000 people, and everyone brought their own chairs to sit and watch... It's that San Gregorio is very big."<sup>33</sup>

While organizing many activities for the whole neighborhood, the JOC served in particular as a social center for local youth. Adriana Hernández, from a new población that was part of San José Parish on Santiago's west side, described how all the Jocistas—militants and sympathizers—gathered from three until eight in the afternoon one Sunday each month in the parish school.<sup>34</sup> The JOC there was *muy de masa*, very mass-based, she said, and five hundred or so youth regularly showed up. After the *hora santa* (a ritual devotion to Christ) there was a meeting in which the different JOC groups from each sector of the parish brought up problems they were confronting and reviewed the past month, followed by evening tea. Finally, after the snack, came the dance, “the part that most caught our attention,” according to Adriana. (She mentioned that if you did not arrive by the start of the *hora santa*, then the doors were closed, and you missed the entertainment.)

The parish would put some speakers out, and there would be music and dancing until eight at night... It was there that I learned to dance rock and roll. Before, I never danced at all. Men and women together, couples met each other and began to date. Many people entered the JOC through our dances, because it was a party, we really had a good time.<sup>35</sup>

Big holiday celebrations were another common way in which the JOC groups attracted people to their movement and promoted cultural activity in their communities. Adriana explained that the residents in her población had never celebrated Independence Day. The male

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<sup>33</sup> Domingo Marilaf and Eliana Poblaza, interview. *The Ten Commandments* was shown as part of a larger family campaign of the Church, with Father Patrick Peyton in charge of distributing the movies.

<sup>34</sup> Adriana's población was referred to as *anexo* José Joaquín Pérez because it was built next to an older población of the same name.

<sup>35</sup> Adriana Hernández, interview.

Jocistas came up with the idea of organizing a party in the plaza, and they worked together with their female counterparts to bring in musical groups and a movie. “We really shook the community!” she exclaimed.<sup>36</sup> May 1, the Day of the Worker (a national holiday in Chile), in particular was an occasion for which many JOC groups organized major celebrations in their neighborhoods. Luis Reyes recounted how in his parish, Nuestra Señora del Rosario, in the municipality of Quinta Normal, the Jocistas annually put together a real “homespun” celebration. They used oil barrels and thick boards for a stage and presented “the most heterogeneous artistic show,” dependent on who was available to perform, from Spanish dancers to trumpet players.<sup>37</sup>

In order to help make the May 1 celebration a success, and to raise the JOC’s profile in the community, Luis said that his group would ask for help from many people in the community. “It was all about asking and bothering all the neighborhood, but this helped us to become better friends with people... and then they knew us and were willing to participate in things.” Luis said that the JOC’s May 1 celebration became a huge event, explaining, “Imagine, May 1, no transportation at that time, the people in their neighborhoods bored, so we easily brought together some 2,000 to 3,000 people. People of all ages, all types; it was a party!”<sup>38</sup> An article in *Pastoral Popular* corroborates Luis’ memory. It reports that the celebration, which the Jocistas advertised with posters and flyers throughout the poblaciones, took place “on an outside stage the group built themselves, with a curtain that had a workers’ motif... At 8:30 P.M. on May 1... more than 1500 people listened through loudspeakers to the artistic acts.”<sup>39</sup>

Finally, the JOC groups also raised their image and helped their local communities in a quieter manner, through traditional charity work. Besides visiting the sick and assisting

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<sup>36</sup>Adriana Hernández, interview.

<sup>37</sup> Luis Reyes, interview.

<sup>38</sup> Luis Reyes, interview.

<sup>39</sup> “Gran Fogata,” *Pastoral Popular*, no. 23 (June 1955): 16.

neighbors in need, Jocistas mentioned fixing roofs after strong rains, organizing a campaign to help people paint their homes, and cleaning garbage from the streets. A woman commented, “These type of things didn’t cost a lot, but they represented a big improvement... People noted the change and said, ‘Ah, the kids from the JOC!’”<sup>40</sup> Jocistas extended their service efforts outside their immediate communities as well. A man remembered that his JOC group helped move people from an encampment to plots of land in a new población. The following day the male Jocistas returned with hammers and nails to assist with the construction of homes, and female Jocistas stopped by with food. The Catholic activists used the opportunity to converse and invite the younger people in the población to their movement.<sup>41</sup> Another person commented that during winter floods she and other Jocistas worked in the callampas neighboring their población, helping people escape the waters and bringing them food and clothing.<sup>42</sup> Martín Rivas explained, “The JOC was attuned to the problems of the sector and of serving those who were poorest... We were poor, but there were others who were even poorer, super poor. In the JOC there was a big spirit of giving, of service, of giving everything for our brothers.”<sup>43</sup>

### 3.3 THE JOC AND RELIGION IN THE POBLACIONES

JOC events and activities were welcoming of the entire community, believers and nonbelievers, and the Jocistas made a point of de-emphasizing their Church connection. Martín commented, “It wasn’t like we fixed your roof so now you need to go to mass. It was about

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<sup>40</sup> Sonia Bravo, interview, Talcahuano, April 15, 2003. Although interviewed in Talcahuano, Sonia participated in the JOC in Santiago.

<sup>41</sup> Manuela Vergara, interview.

<sup>42</sup> Luis Lizama and Norma Avaloz, interview, Santiago, April 23, 2002.

<sup>43</sup> Martín Rivas, interview, Santiago, May 21, 2002.

service, not spreading God's word."<sup>44</sup> However, Jocistas also would not pass up an opportunity to infuse the environment with some Christian spirit. For example, Luis Reyes pointed out that after the May 1 show, a JOC leader would give a speech explaining the motive behind the celebration, touching upon the workers' struggle and providing a brief history of the Chicago martyrs who gave their lives for their "brother *compañeros*." And, Luis added with a chuckle, "In one way or another, we stuck a little bit about Christ in there too." After the speech, the Jocistas would lead the crowd in the hymn of the international JOC movement, Chile's national anthem, and other songs, handing out leaflets to help people sing along.<sup>45</sup>

As time went on, the JOC movement developed its own religious traditions for May 1, a holiday traditionally associated with the secular Left. In particular, it began to organize special masses celebrating workers and for which people brought their tools to be blessed. (The JOC held its mass at in the 8 in the morning so as not to overlap with the gathering of the CUT, the left-dominated central labor federation, held closer to midday.<sup>46</sup>) *Pastoral Popular* reported in a 1955 article, "Almost all the parishes where there is a JOC center celebrated this Festival of Work with a workers' mass, with a blessing of tools, with a pamphlet produced especially for this day. Some [masses] took place in the street, others in chapels or parishes. The JOC has given a Christian meaning to this universal celebration."<sup>47</sup>

In embracing Christ the Worker, the Jocistas rejected the fatalistic, paternalistic religiosity of their parents. They emphasized, in the words of one woman, "We were not one of those Church groups that were focused on mass, the Rosary, the Virgin."<sup>48</sup> However, the

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<sup>44</sup> Martín Rivas, interview.

<sup>45</sup> Luis Reyes, interview.

<sup>46</sup> Pedro Castex, interview; Lidia Bravo, Jan. 25 interview.

<sup>47</sup> "1 de mayo," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 22 (May 1955): 16.

<sup>48</sup> Adriana Hernández, interview.

Jocistas, many of whom grew up enveloped in traditional prayers and practices, recognized that these were an important part of their communities.<sup>49</sup> Elena Castillo explained, “We understood that many people, for example, don’t participate in the Church, but go to visit Saint Teresa of the Andes. Or they go on a Thursday to the Church of Santo Domingo to touch the cloak of the Virgin and make a request of her.” Elena stressed that while Jocistas did not agree with these practices, they respected them. However, the movement attempted to infuse traditional, popular religious celebrations with renewed spiritual meaning and use them to spread its message.<sup>50</sup>

One traditional practice that the JOC appropriated was the Month of Mary (*Mes de María*) celebration, a major occasion at that time (but which today has lost its popular appeal.) The JOC made an effort to turn this celebration, usually completely under the control of the priest, into one in which people participated seriously and actively. Elena explained, “Before, people would just walk along behind the priest, chatting about whatever, but we got them to participate. We initiated songs and had all the people singing the same thing. Or we went and organized prayers, interspersing ourselves among the people... We weren’t just passive in a Church activity... like before.”<sup>51</sup> Other interviewees agreed that before the JOC, “You just went and joined the procession, you turned around and went back to the Church, the priest did a mass, and you went home, that was all the participation there was, no more.”<sup>52</sup>

In some of the newest parishes, the JOC brought the Month of Mary celebrations out into the street for the first time. A man whose parish included many callampas and struggled just to build a chapel, remembered that his JOC group organized a parade for the event, including floats

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<sup>49</sup> In the 1960s, however, as progressive elements within the Chilean Church, including the JOC, became politicized, the movement distanced itself more from traditional, popular religiosity. See chapter 4.

<sup>50</sup>Elena Castillo, interview.

<sup>51</sup>Elena Castillo, interview.

<sup>52</sup> Gladys Abarca, et al., interview.

decorated with sticks, flowers, and an image of the Virgin in the middle. They had everyone in the community helping. He said, “There were at least three blocks filled with people, including many men, who usually were embarrassed to go pray for the Month of Mary...but we managed to convince them.”<sup>53</sup> Another man who was also from a new, very poor parish exclaimed, “It was amazing, to do the Month of Mary in the street!”<sup>54</sup>

In addition to the processions, JOC centers organized talks and discussions as a way to insert more social meaning into the festivities. Elena Castillo described how in her parish the Jocistas went house to house inviting young people to discussions at the church hall, which they decorated with flowers and blue and white ribbons, the colors of the Virgin. JOC militants experienced in the practice of the see, judge, act method moderated the discussions, which encompassed themes of importance and interest to adolescents, such as dating and relations with parents.<sup>55</sup> María Eugenia Gálvez, whose JOC groups also organized Month of Mary discussions, emphasized their significance. “We were young workers who worked more than eight, twelve, or sixteen hours a day, who had no recreation, who didn’t have any idea about what dating was nor the why of it... who didn’t trust friendship...because in the factories there was a lot of backstabbing. So the discussions were to help bring back trustworthiness.”<sup>56</sup>

The JOC centers also organized special JOC masses in their parishes that reflected the movement’s social perspective. In these masses, conducted by the movement’s advisors, the Jocistas replaced the traditional prayers and readings with texts specifically directed at workers. An example is the JOC Prayer, usually recited at base meetings, which reads:

Lord Jesus, worker like us: Grant me and all workers, the grace of working with You, of

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<sup>53</sup>Manuel Guerrero, interview.

<sup>54</sup>Manuel Vergara, interview.

<sup>55</sup> Elena Castillo, interview.

<sup>56</sup> María Eugenia Gálvez, October 18 interview.

thinking like You, of praying united with You.... May your kingdom come to the factory, to the workshop, to the office, in the middle of our homes and streets, on all the earth as in the heavens.... That through your mercy, the souls of workers fallen on the field of honor, at work, rest in peace. So may it be.<sup>57</sup>

As many Jocistas emphasized, in their masses this prayer and others were recited in Spanish, not Latin, a radical change for the period before Vatican II. Also novel was the active participation of laymen in the service, and especially of women, who together with the men helped with the readings. Finally, the Jocistas brought their songs and music into the chapel, creating a whole new environment for religious services.

Over time, the JOC helped to shift the Church's image in working-class parishes. Many Jocistas emphasized that their communities came to understand that they were not just a bunch of "pechoños," literally meaning people who beat their chests, a pejorative expression commonly used in Chile to refer to grim, traditional Catholics who spend all their time in the Church. Both the interviewees and documents stressed that a critical part of the movement's mystique was participants' joy and happiness, despite the hardships of daily life in the poblaciones. One Jocista recounted how she did not want to attend when first invited to a JOC tea. "I thought it would be boring, I thought they would be there praying every minute, because I knew that it had something to do with the Church. But I liked it because there was much happiness, they sang, they laughed, even danced a little."<sup>58</sup>

The JOC groups also helped convince people that the Church was concerned about the problems of the working-class. After the May 1 speeches in Luis Reyes' parish, *Pastoral Popular* reported comments within the crowd such as "I didn't think that Catholics were

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<sup>57</sup> *Orando con Cristo*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Santiago: Archdiocese of Santiago, 1966), 73.

<sup>58</sup> Catalina Basaure, et al., interview, Valparaíso, April 28, 2003.



concerned about these things!”<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the Jocistas claimed that the JOC mystique and spirit of service to the working-class infected the broader community. Luis asserted, “The JOC’s arrival changed the atmosphere in the neighborhood, instilling more working-class pride. Before, little occurred in the streets, but all the JOC celebrations helped the people to know each other more, with people even helping to keep the streets cleaner.”<sup>60</sup> Another Jocista commented, “Even people who did not believe in God were motivated by all the *bullas*, all of the racket, that the JOC created.”<sup>61</sup>

### 3.4 RALLIES, PARADES, AND OTHER MASS EVENTS

By the mid-1950s, the JOC movement in Chile was well known and popular in many working-class parishes. Humberto Mora, who as a teenager moved with his family to San Gregorio soon after its formation in 1959, mentioned, “People who arrived to San Gregorio from other parts of Santiago in one form or another had already heard of the JOC, because of its importance in the city at that time.” He added that the JOC in San Gregorio, which initially had its headquarters in a temporary shack, “became the principal meeting place for the neighborhood youth, who didn’t have anywhere to get together; there wasn’t a place, so the parish was the natural one.”<sup>62</sup> Manuel Guerrero, also in the San Gregorio JOC, as well as several years in a JOC

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<sup>59</sup> “Gran fogata,” *Pastoral Popular*, no. 23 (June 1955): 16.

<sup>60</sup> Luis Reyes, interview.

<sup>61</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, Feb. 10 interview.

<sup>62</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, Feb. 10 interview.

group in a different part of the city, remembers how easy it was to recruit, mentioning, “We never were lacking people who wanted to join the JOC.”<sup>63</sup>

Recreational activities, while important to attracting young men and women to the JOC, were not the movement’s only draw. These were years of triumphalism and euphoria. Immense rallies, colored with JOC flags, signs and insignias that reflected the continuing influence in Chile of the mass movements of the 1940s, characterized the JOC.<sup>64</sup> As several participants pointed out, young people like to feel that they are part of something big, and the Catholic movement certainly filled that desire.<sup>65</sup> The national JOC leadership, building upon its base in Santiago’s poblaciones and in cities across Chile, orchestrated grand events that brought together Jocistas from throughout the country.<sup>66</sup> For example, a 1956 issue of *La Voz* displayed a photo of a group of male Jocistas carrying a banner through Santiago’s streets. The caption stated, “With banners and posters more than 3,000 Jocistas paraded through Santiago’s streets for the International Day of the JOC. This demonstration was the fruit of the work, enthusiasm, and true understanding of the capital’s 40 Jocista centers. Let Christ the Worker reign in the workplace!”<sup>67</sup> The parading youth marched from Santiago’s Cathedral, where they celebrated

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<sup>63</sup> Manuel Guerrero, interview.

<sup>64</sup> Huge numbers were not unique to the JOC; an emphasis on immense gatherings and the “conquest” of as many persons as possible characterized all branches of Catholic Action in these years. For example, in 1955 adult Catholic Action’s Festival of the Family attracted thousands of Catholics to Santiago’s National Stadium. In 1956, thousands of Catholics paraded through the streets of downtown Santiago to celebrate Catholic Action’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. However, in terms of absolute numbers and frequency of events, in the 1950s the JOC dominated the other branches. Huerta, *Catolicismo social*, 24; Aliaga Rojas, *Itinerario histórico*, 105; “La familia cristiana está de fiesta,” *La Voz*, December 17, 1955, 3.

<sup>65</sup> Luis Reyes, interview; Victoria Plaza, March 19 interview; María Mataluna, interview.

<sup>66</sup> The JOC organized parades and other mass demonstrations outside of the capital as well. For example, *La Voz* reported that in Talcahuano, a mining community near Concepción, an ebullient JOC parade for a May 1 celebration took up more than six city blocks.” “Fiesta del trabajo en Chiguayante,” *La Voz*, May 20, 1956, 8.

<sup>67</sup> *La Voz*, October 12, 1956, 8. This same picture, with a different caption, also appears in an earlier edition of *La Voz*. (May 1, 1956, 10.) The picture actually was taken on April 15, 1956, when the JOC celebrated its International Day.

mass, to an assembly at the Caupolicán Theater, where young workers “from all of Santiago’s neighborhoods” showed up.<sup>68</sup>

Six months later, *La Voz* reported that 12,000 working-class youth (1,000 of them from the provinces as well as many from other South American countries) and their families showed up for the JOC’s ten-year anniversary celebration, named the Festival of the Worker.<sup>69</sup> They filled the stadium of the Catholic University, where floats representing workers from all over Chile were displayed. JOC founder Joseph Cardijn, in the country for the third time, spoke at the event. And a group of four hundred Jocistas acted in an original play about the development and importance of workers, with “Christ the Worker at the Center.”<sup>70</sup> Young workers organized *all* of the festivities, *Pastoral Popular* emphatically pointed out.<sup>71</sup>

The following year, *La Voz* wrote that festivities for the International Day of the JOC included an assembly with different artistic presentations in the Balmaceda Theater. Jocistas remembered the theater as being completely packed, “not even room to wedge a knife,” said one. A parade “in a forest of flags” to a solemn mass in the Franciscan Church of Recoleta followed the assembly.<sup>72</sup> Cardijn was back in Chile for a fourth and final visit in 1959, for which more than 2,000 youth filled the Alameda Theater in homage to the movement’s founder.<sup>73</sup> As late as the early 1960s, according to several Jocistas, a large international JOC meeting was held in Santiago, with over 5,000 participants, some from as far away as Africa, converging on the

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<sup>68</sup> “10 años construyendo una nueva clase obrera,” *La Voz*, April 8, 1956, 1.

<sup>69</sup> “Festival: 12.000 chilenos mostraron unidad obrera,” *La Voz*, October 28, 1956, 16.

<sup>70</sup> “Un año de grandes demostraciones de fe vivió la iglesia chilena,” *La Voz*, December 30, 1956, 3; “Mons. Cardijn y la JOC,” *Pastoral Popular*, no. 37 (September 1956): 3-5; “Diez años en Chile,” *Pastoral Popular*, no. 37 (September, 1956): 6.

<sup>71</sup> “Diez años en Chile,” *Pastoral Popular*. This event coincided with the third South American JOC congress in Santiago, “the most important event for the Chilean JOC in its 10 years of existence.” “Jocistas de ocho países se reunieron en congreso sudamericano de Santiago,” *La Voz*, October 12, 1956, 10.

<sup>72</sup> “Ecos del día internacional de JOC in Santiago,” *La Voz*, September 8, 1957, 6-7; “Diez años en Chile,” *Pastoral Popular*; Gladys Abarca, et al, interview; Elena Escalona, interview, Santiago, May 22, 2002.

<sup>73</sup> “Respeto para el cuerpo y el alma de los obreros,” *La Voz*, November 22, 1959, 11.

National Stadium. According to Victoria Plaza, “We realized we were all united by Jesus, it was extraordinary.”<sup>74</sup>

The huge numbers reported by *La Voz* and *Pastoral Popular* only partially reflect the energy and enthusiasm that infused these massive JOC gatherings. Militants and sympathizers who were active in the 1950s distinctly recall the emotional singing of JOC songs, interspersed with chants such as “hurrah for the JOC, hurrah for the JOC,” which filled the jammed venues. Elena Castillo, who was in the stadium for the JOC’s ten-year anniversary, remembered:

There was a lot of singing... We sang those [JOC] songs with so much fervor... songs that had so much to do with this mystique, this mystique of wanting to change the world, to bring all the workers to Christ, to transform everything, to improve everything... It was very contagious... very emotional. It was very beautiful, very, very beautiful.<sup>75</sup>

Dalila Pacheco and René Abalos vividly recalled a JOC assembly in the early 1950s in a plaza in Renca, close to downtown. A parade to a theater for speeches and entertainment followed. They recounted:

What a quantity of people! The Jocistas all arrived to Renca singing... We went everywhere in Renca, the streets full of mud, but we had such zeal, like a thing of craziness, we were so happy... All the girls and all the young men walked as equals. It was exciting, the number of people....singing, shouting. All the población came out to look, to see what was going on.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Victoria Plaza, March 19 interview.

<sup>75</sup> Elena Castillo, interview. Julia Carbonelli has similar memories of this event. Julia Carbonelli, interview, Santiago, May 7, 2002.

<sup>76</sup> Dalila Pacheco and René Abalos, interview.

Songs such as *Stand up, Comrades*, which opened the JOC chapter of the prayer book most commonly used in the movement, helped encourage the almost fanatical spirit that the JOC inspired. The lyrics read:

Stand up comrades and always forward  
we sing the hymn of youth  
the hymn that the triumphant JOC sings  
that throws off the yoke of slavery.  
Jocismo advances, in the factories it prevails  
we will die kissing the sacred flag.  
With the cross and the flagpole  
our red banner is a sun  
that brings the day of peace and redemption.

The sun of justice of a new era  
rises radiant in our Nation  
and the Holy Flag that will be the sign of redemption.  
With the cross protected, with the brow elevated,  
we rise up united to the Sacred Cause...<sup>77</sup>

Not all large JOC events had the energy and feeling of a political rally, however. The movement's national leadership committees frequently organized more relaxed happenings, such as the annual social weeks, a series of talks with a strong social component. During these weeks, JOC leaders might invite a representative of the national labor federation (CUT) to talk about

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<sup>77</sup> *Orando con Cristo*, 269.

labor issues, or a government official to explain social security laws. Social weeks culminated with cultural activities that promoted Christian values, to which the families of all the Jocistas were invited. (In 1955, the social week's culminating event was held under a banner reading, "The cement of human society is the Christian family."<sup>78</sup>) Usually held in a park or theater, these family activities attracted large crowds, like most JOC events in the 1950s.

The JOC leadership also organized well-attended family outings to the countryside. One former national JOC leader asserted that up to sixty buses would be needed to transport all the families to the chosen location outside Santiago, while another claimed that the year she was in charge of the transportation, the JOC occupied six train cars.<sup>79</sup> Outings also were organized at the federation and parish levels. The JOC newsletter for Santiago's southern federation described a family outing attended by more than four hundred people. It began with a mass, followed by artistic presentations and a soccer game between two different parishes, and ended with a family dance.<sup>80</sup> *La Voz* wrote about a "happy day in the country" for the poblaciones Madeco and Madensa (older, industrial neighborhoods near the factories of the same names.) This day also started with a mass, followed by diverse entertainment, including popular music, games for infants and tots, and a show performed by the village that hosted them.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> The banner appears in a black and white photograph of the event. Photograph provided by Juanita Pérez.

<sup>79</sup> Elena Castillo, interview; María Eugenia Gálvez, October 18 interview.

<sup>80</sup> *JOC Boletín de la Federación Sur* (n.d.): 5.

<sup>81</sup> "Familias de Madeco and Mademsa en el campo," *La Voz*, January 20, 1956, 4.

### 3.5 VACATION TRIPS TO THE BEACH: A JOC SERVICE FOR THE WORKING CLASS

Interviewees described the JOC's vacation trips to the beach as the highlight of all the movement's activities. First organized in 1946 and continuing through the 1960s, the weeklong trips took place during the summer months from January until the first days in March. At first participants slept in tents, but by the early 1950s the advisors had obtained enough funds, largely through private donations and with some help from the Santiago Archdiocese, to build a house in El Quisco.<sup>82</sup> As demand spiraled, the movement acquired land in nearby Algarrobo for a second JOC house, allowing men and women to vacation during the same week.<sup>83</sup> (The Jocistas completed some of the construction themselves, including the electrical work.<sup>84</sup>) Successive groups of one hundred women and one hundred men traveled each week to El Quisco and Algarrobo, signing up either in the parishes or in factories to guarantee their spot, but the movement still could not meet all the demand.<sup>85</sup> According to *La Voz*, more than three thousand youth vacationed at the two JOC camps during the summer of 1956 alone.<sup>86</sup> Some weeks were for first-timers; other weeks, involving more training and less recreation, were for vacationers with previous JOC experience. The trips represented a major organizational effort, and JOC leaders and militants worked long hours to plan the recreational and training activities and to arrange all the details such as food (the Catholic charity Caritas donated basic supplies such as

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<sup>82</sup> See Chapter 1, note 63 for more on JOC's financial resources.

<sup>83</sup> "Así no más," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 20 (March 1955): 8; "Pleno éxito alcanzan campamentos de la A.C.," *La Voz*, March 13, 1955, 8; Lidia Bravo, Jan. 29 interview. The JOC in Talca had a vacation house in Vilches, a small town in the mountains. Jocistas from Concepción also went to the beach. However, they did not have their own facilities, but borrowed space at a monastery or school instead.

<sup>84</sup> "Sacrificio por la J.O.C.," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 27 (November 1955): 16.

<sup>85</sup> "Descanso al que trabaja," *La Voz*, August 25, 1957, 7; *La Voz*, October 12, 1956, 4 [photo caption], Juanita Pérez, interview.

<sup>86</sup> "Vacaciones, 'luna de miel,' y retiros en campamentos," *La Voz*, October 12, 1956, 4.

flour, milk, and cheese) and transportation (in old buses or sometimes even the backs of trucks.<sup>87</sup>)

The JOC vacations were consistently described as a tremendous benefit to the working class; a summer vacation, especially to the beach, even though only a few hours from Santiago, was a tremendous luxury at that time. Few workers had the money for traveling or a place to stay, and an entire week's vacation was practically unheard of.<sup>88</sup> One leader, reflecting the feeling of many Jocistas, said, "For most of us, it was like a dream, because many of us had never even seen the ocean."<sup>89</sup> *Pastoral Popular* in a similar vein wrote, "For many girls and boys these have been the first vacations that they have really experienced. 'All this has been new for me!' many have said."<sup>90</sup> And *La Voz*, stressing the idea that a vacation is a right, stated:

Paid vacations were a recent conquest by the working class. Although in many cases the law is ignored, the majority of workers do receive two weeks of paid vacation. Some just stay in their houses, others do odd jobs, and others 'work' the vacations because money is always lacking, but in no manner can a working-class family...leave for a summer vacation. The vacations, the only means that the worker has to renew his energies, are a right that he cannot enjoy. Low salaries, unaffordable prices. However, although social

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<sup>87</sup> María Eugenia Gálvez, interview; Lidia Bravo, Jan. 29 interview. In the 1950s, JOCM and JOCF each had a couple of national leaders who received small stipends from the movement so they could devote themselves full-time to organizing activities such as the beach trips, always run on shoe-string budgets. However, sometimes the movement did not have enough money available to pay the full-timers (referred to as *dirigentes liberados/as*), who being from poor families had to scrounge to make ends meet. Many unpaid JOC leaders and militants helped them, using their evenings, weekends, and vacations.

<sup>88</sup> Domingo Marilaf and Eliana Poblaza, interview.

<sup>89</sup> Elena Castillo, interview.

<sup>90</sup> "Un servicio para la clase obrera y un medio de conquista de nuevos cristianos," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 31 (March 1956): 5.



injustice denies the working class its right to its vacations, to rest their body, for recreation for their spirit: LET'S GO TO EL QUISCO....<sup>91</sup>

The JOC viewed their houses in El Quisco and Algarrobo both as a community service and as an opportunity to either introduce young people to the movement's ideals or to help those already familiar with the JOC more deeply understand the movement. While at the beach, JOC militants led talks and discussions similar to those in the parishes, but they addressed a broader range of themes, from nutrition to sexuality, from the nature of friendship to the country's political situation, even floral arranging and furniture repair.<sup>92</sup> Sometimes, JOC leaders arranged to have a professional, such as a doctor, social worker, or psychologist, speak to the young men and women who were present. Most importantly, in the Jocistas' view, "Christian values were always really, really, really emphasized."<sup>93</sup> Although for many vacationers the beach trip marked the first time they had any contact with the Church, the daily, participatory mass led by a JOC adviser usually had almost one hundred percent attendance by the end of the week, according to national adviser Pedro Castex and JOC organizers.<sup>94</sup> *Pastoral Popular* asserted many first communions and confessions took place at the beach houses.<sup>95</sup>

The JOC vacations also exposed young women and men to the joyfulness, fun, and camaraderie for which the movement prided itself. Each day in El Quisco or Algarrobo involved different recreational activities, such as hiking, swimming, or volleyball. Discussions were held not in the house but on the beach or in the woods. At night, there was always a bonfire, around which the youth discussed workplace issues along with some fun. They might dramatize

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<sup>91</sup> "Unidad y alegría en vacaciones obreras," *La Voz*, January 29, 1956, 6-7.

<sup>92</sup> María Eugenia Gálvez, interview; Lidia Bravo, Jan. 25 and 29 interviews.

<sup>93</sup> María Eugenia Gálvez, interview.

<sup>94</sup> Pedro Castex, interview; María Eugenia Gálvez, interview; Elena Castillo, interview.

<sup>95</sup> "Así no más," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 20 (March 1955): 8.

problems they faced in the factories or perhaps dress up for skits based on the Bible. And there were songs, all kinds of songs. The Jocistas emphasized that they always were singing-- in the buses on the way to and from the vacation houses, around the campfire, on their hikes. Someone always brought along an accordion, guitar, or harmonica, and the Jocistas supplied songbooks. A tremendous experience, everyone said. "It was beautiful; we were all young, all workers."<sup>96</sup>

### 3.6 AN ALTERNATIVE TO POLITICAL PARTIES

The massive JOC events in stadiums and theaters, the beach vacations, and the assortment of smaller but well-attended cultural and recreational activities at both the local and national level served to build the JOC's self- image as the movement that most attracted and excited young people. Jocistas viewed their movement as bigger than any political party. Luis Reyes explained, "You began to feel respected, because if you unite people to fill a stadium, it signifies that you aren't, well, just a bunch of... crazy young people."<sup>97</sup> Humberto Mora, reflecting on the overflowing theaters and stadiums, asserted, "It was what was lovely in that period-- there were so many young people, and we were more important than the political parties. We brought together more people, more young people, which the political parties didn't do."<sup>98</sup> María Mataluna claimed, "It was a time in which the political parties were afraid of us... because of the strength that the [JOC] had. We were everywhere— in the poblaciones, in the factories, in the workshops... And at that time in history there were few young people in the

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<sup>96</sup> Juanita Pérez, interview, María Eugenia Gálvez, interview, Lidia Bravo, Jan. 29; Victoria Plaza, Feb. 23, interview; Humberto Mora and Graciela Vitta, Feb. 10 interview.

<sup>97</sup> Luis Reyes, interview.

<sup>98</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, March 18 interview.

political parties, while we were so very many.”<sup>99</sup> Even *La Voz* considered the JOC (and other specialized Catholic Action groups) as an alternative to traditional politics. In a 1956 article about an event that many Jocistas attended, the newspaper claimed:

There are many people that long for the youth of days gone by. Many think that today’s young people are weaklings because they are little interested in politics and they like soccer too much. There is a lot of truth to this assessment... But the true youth still exists... with an immense resolve of the soul and with the vibrant and profound enthusiasm of all true young people. These were the young people that united on August 15 in the Baqueadano Theater.<sup>100</sup>

Young people’s disinterest in politics in the 1950s was a constant refrain throughout the interviews, with politics in that decade commonly viewed as “something for older people.” However, the political winds were soon to shift. The Chilean government rescinded the Law for the Defense of Democracy in 1957. That same year, the Christian Democratic Party emerged from the Falange Nacional. By the close of the decade, the Communist Party, and the less organized Socialist Party, were establishing tight links with committees of pobladores as well as revamping their youth wings. Parallel to this process, the Christian Democrats, responding to social Catholic influences, developed a political philosophy that directly addressed the urban poor in political terms, along with a deliberate strategy to reach out to young people. Meanwhile, the institutional Church was having second thoughts about a Catholic Action movement that at times seemed to be slipping from its control, especially after Cardinal Caro, the JOC’s most consistent supporter within the hierarchy, passed away in 1958. By the time that Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei beat the candidate of the Left, Salvador Allende, in the 1964 presidential

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<sup>99</sup> María Mataluna, interview.

<sup>100</sup> “Juventud Católica,” *La Voz*, August 19, 1956, 3.

election, the Young Catholic Workers movement was starting to lose its ability to separate the apostolic from the political, a division that in a movement with deep social consciousness, had never been entirely clear.

#### **4.0 CHAPTER FOUR – PUSHING AGAINST GENDER BOUNDARIES: WOMEN WORKERS IN THE JOC**

The JOC's emphasis in the poblaciones on creating cultural and entertainment venues infused with Catholic values proved especially attractive for young women, who unlike young men had little access to sports clubs and for whom bars and cantinas were considered socially inappropriate places. For those women most committed to the movement, however, their participation meant much more than simply a space for sociability. Unlike the secular Left, the JOC directly addressed young women as workers, not just as future mothers and wives, striking a chord with women struggling to adjust to life in a masculine work environment. The movement also helped them cope with the myriad of social and familial problems common to adolescent females coming of age in Santiago's marginalized poblaciones. Finally, the JOC provided a unique environment in which to develop leadership and organizational skills unconnected to women's traditional domestic role and away from the tight restrictions of parents, who trusted that their daughters' virtue would be protected in the ecclesiastical setting.

The movement's focus on workers and workplace issues also made it attractive to young men, who traditionally shied away from Church participation at the parish level. Ironically, considering the context of a patriarchal Church, male militants found themselves in a setting where the *machista* attitudes with which they grew up held less sway, and women acted as their relative equals, shifting perceptions of male power and authority. At the same time, the JOC transformed female militants' sense of their value and capabilities, leading them to reconceptualize their traditional role in the family and society, even if never directly questioning

Church doctrine regarding women's maternal vocation. Significantly, the JOC opened this space for women at a moment in Chilean history when feminist organizations, which had emerged in the first half of the century to struggle for women's political and social rights, had all but disappeared.

#### 4.1 SPEAKING TO WOMEN AS WORKERS

Chilean society in the first half of the twentieth century generally considered the woman worker (*la mujer obrera*) as a weak, defenseless victim of the morally corrupting and physically exhausting factory environment. Groups ranging from left-wing activists to conservative politicians questioned the moral appropriateness of women's workforce participation, especially in industry, with the labor press even suggesting that only a thin line existed between a women's sale of her labor and the sale of her body.<sup>1</sup> As elsewhere in Latin America, both women and men adhered to the ideal that the woman's place is in the home and used a "language of necessity" to explain the employment of lower-class women, refusing to consider them as "real workers."<sup>2</sup> In response to the deep-seated anxiety about female employment, the left prioritized obtaining a "family wage" for men, which would allow women to remain in the home, while more

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<sup>1</sup>Hutchinson, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex*, 81.

<sup>2</sup> John D. French and Daniel James, "Squaring the Circle: Women's Factory Labor, Gender Ideology, and Necessity," in *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers: From Household and Factory to the Union Hall and Ballot Box*, ed. French and James (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 8-10; Deborah Levenson-Estrada, "The Loneliness of Working-Class Feminism: Women in the 'Male World' of Labor Unions, Guatemala City, 1970s," in French and James, *Gendered Worlds*, 226.

conservative politicians focused on regulating through gender-specific legislation where and how women, particularly mothers, worked.<sup>3</sup>

Jocistas and their clerical advisors recounted how in building the JOC movement at mid-century they had to struggle against these entrenched attitudes about the undesirability of women's wage labor and in particular against the negative connotation associated with being an *obrero*. In a 1956 letter published in *Pastoral Popular*, an early JOCF leader reflecting back on her years in the movement wrote, "One of the difficulties that had to be overcome in the beginning was getting girls to accept calling themselves 'workers.' For some, accepting this label was a true catastrophe and there were cases in which [girls] preferred to not join our movement only for this reason... They were embarrassed about their own situation."<sup>4</sup> National JOC advisor Pedro Castex further explained, "For women in particular it was difficult to let go of the embarrassment of being a worker... The women wanted to be *señoritas*. They wanted to dress better, to come across better. They would prefer being a secretary or the like, the worker was always seen as at the bottom, not good for much, without education..."<sup>5</sup> A number of female interviewees who had worked as *obreras* discussed the social opprobrium directed toward female factory workers by pointing out that the pejorative term "*fabricana*" (from *fábrica*, the Spanish word for factory) was commonly used to refer to them. One Jocista, who in her youth was employed as a seamstress in a textile factory, exclaimed, "*Fabricana* they called you, as if it were the worst... because it was very badly seen, very badly seen to work in a factory. They called you *fabricana* so disparagingly."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Hutchinson, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex*, for more on women workers in early-twentieth century Chile. For the period of the Popular Front governments, see Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromise*.

<sup>4</sup> "Una Jocista nos escribe," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 37 (September 1956): 13-15.

<sup>5</sup> Pedro Castex, interview.

<sup>6</sup> Adriana Hernández, interview.

In contrast to this broad societal condemnation, the JOC accepted without judgment that female employment, especially in factories, was a common experience for young, working-class women. The JOC's discourse presented women's employment as not only a necessary sacrifice on behalf of their families, but also as a desirable and ennobling endeavor, and involvement in the movement helped female workers feel pride rather than shame in their labor. Female Jocistas, reading the same JOC material and listening to many of the same speeches as their male counterparts, were equally inspired by Cardijn's belief that work dignifies and sanctifies, and they shared fully in the JOC mystique (*la mística*) built around the figure of Jesus as a poor and humble worker.<sup>7</sup> In the words of one woman:

The JOC gave us a sense of the dignity of workers...one learned in the JOC that all human beings are equal before God and in the JOC there was a very beautiful expression that really influenced me a lot: the soul of a young worker is worth more than all the gold in the world. These things really affected you, gave you a sense of life.... Because of what I learned in the JOC I've never felt embarrassed of my origins nor of my economic problems or anything.<sup>8</sup>

The frequent reference to female and not just male workers in JOC articles and pamphlets helped reinforce this sense that the movement's discourse about workers' dignity applied to both sexes. While Joseph Cardijn, the JOC's Belgian founder, initially had envisioned the JOC as a movement only for male workers, the Chilean JOC's writings were inclusive of both sexes, even in the movement's earliest years, except when written specifically for one branch of the movement. In one of many examples, a 1947 article on "Our JOC Page" in *Vida Obrera* discusses "the role and the dignity of the young female worker (*la joven obrera*)" and asserts,

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<sup>7</sup> See chapter 1 for more on the JOC mystique.

<sup>8</sup> Sonia Bravo, interview.



drawing upon Cardijn, “They themselves appreciate their important role in the social reconstruction of tomorrow’s world... We know that even the most humble, the poorest of the *obreras* has a divine origin, a divine destiny....”<sup>9</sup> In a 1952 article about the JOC’s basic doctrines, *Pastoral Popular* states, “The JOC rests on this fundamental truth, that each young working man and each young working woman (*todo joven trabajador y toda joven trabajadora*).... is a human being, with vocation as child, as collaborator, as heir of God...”<sup>10</sup>

Workers, and especially factory workers, were so glorified in the JOC that female militants who had never been employed in a factory, working instead in stores, offices, or small workshops, sometimes sought out factory jobs, which they considered the true *obrero* experience, even if it meant a decrease in wages or status.<sup>11</sup> One Jocista, who said that after many years in the movement “my dream was to work in a factory,” finally obtained employment in the textile industry through the intervention of a friend in the movement, which meant leaving a better-paying job in a candy shop.<sup>12</sup> Another woman, who worked as a secretary, left her job for a lower-paid one in a shirt factory after becoming a leader in the JOC because “such was the commitment.... you wanted to live and not just talk about the experience...it was out of a sense of vocation.”<sup>13</sup> A third person recounted how her mother wanted strongly for her to work like her sisters as a cashier downtown and not in a factory, despite the fact that in this case the factory

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<sup>9</sup> “Algo más sobre Jocismo femenino,” *Vida Obrera*, first week of June, 1947, 2.

<sup>10</sup> “Fundamentos doctrinales de la J.O.C.,” *Pastoral Popular*, no. 12 and 13 (November and December 1952): 14-15.

<sup>11</sup> None of the male interviewees mentioned leaving a job specifically to gain factory experience, perhaps because even those militants not in factories usually worked with their hands in carpentry, construction, or other such trade clearly considered “working-class,” rather than in shops or offices like the women.

<sup>12</sup> Luisa Torres, interview.

<sup>13</sup> Nury Ramos, interview, Santiago, May 14, 2002.

paid more. However, she adamantly refused. She explained, “My ideal was different, I wanted to be involved with a different type of people, to grow as a person.”<sup>14</sup>

While Jocistas emphasized the centrality of the factory experience, where a majority worked in the 1940s and 50s, non-factory workers were quick to affirm that they felt fully accepted in the JOC. Interviewees stressed that the movement did not differentiate according to employment, pointing out that achieving positions of leadership had no correlation to the nature of one’s work, with both factory and non-factory workers serving as presidents at both the diocesan and national level. They also underlined that the common experience of living in marginalized working-class poblaciones united movement participants, whatever their work situation. Furthermore, workers frequently changed jobs at that time, and most women had experience in a variety of occupations, including domestic service, the first form of employment for a number of interviewees. The JOC documents are careful to refer to workers not only in factories but also in shops, offices, workshops, and even domestic service, affirming the interviewees’ perception of inclusiveness. In contrast, according to Elizabeth Hutchinson, the Leftist labor press rarely addressed female employment outside the factory.<sup>15</sup> In particular, while the Socialists and Communists ignored domestic servants, the JOC actively reached out to them through its formation of the Federation of Private Home Employees (*Federación de Empleadas de Casa Particular*) in 1950.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Julia Rojas, et al., Talca, April 12, 2003. This interviewee also pointed out that in the JOC she learned that commerce was often even more exploitative of workers than industry.

<sup>15</sup> Hutchinson argues that women’s work outside of the factory was not a major concern for the Left because it did not threaten working-class patriarchy in the way that women’s presence in factory jobs did. Hutchinson, *Laborers Appropriate to their Sex*, 95.

<sup>16</sup> Catholic efforts to organize domestic employees pre-date the JOC. In early 1947, *Vida Obrera* reported that Women’s Catholic Action had organized training courses for domestic employees and also ran an ad that called for “employees of private homes who would like a two-week vacation in Peñaflor.... To sign up at the Office of Women’s Catholic Action.” Also, Hutchinson mentions elite Catholic women’s “social action” among domestic servants in the early twentieth century, although without providing much detail. “Magnífica labor desarrollada por

The “JOC de Empleadas,” as it was commonly called, was considered a branch of the movement on a par with the JOCF and the JOCM.<sup>17</sup> The domestic employees used the same JOC method and shared its *mística* surrounding the dignity and value of workers.<sup>18</sup> Although meeting separately in the parishes of the upper-class neighborhoods where they lived and worked, the *empleadas* participated in the movement’s retreats and celebrations, sent representatives to its regional and national conferences, and used the JOCF’s vacation house in El Quisco. Jocistas from factories often served as advisers to the new *empleada* groups.<sup>19</sup> The domestic employees’ participation in the JOC’s Festival of the Worker, mentioned in the last chapter, exemplifies this connection between the *empleadas* and the rest of the JOC movement, based on a common identity as workers. A photo that accompanies an article in *La Voz* about the festival spotlights a group of domestic employees alongside a float carrying a gigantic broom, reported to symbolize their “daily work.”<sup>20</sup>

Despite these links, various interviewees mentioned that the domestic employees’ limited free time, distinct realities, and, in their view, intense resistance to recognizing themselves as workers, many having “adopted the airs and attitudes of their wealthy employers,” created different needs and distance between the two women’s branches of the JOC.<sup>21</sup> Father Mauricio Hurtón, who served at different times as an advisor to both the Federation of Private Home

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la A.C. de Mujeres,” *Vida Obrera*, third week of January 1947, 3; [Untitled ad], second week of February 1947, 2; Hutchinson, *Labor Appropriate to Their Sex*, 189.

<sup>17</sup> To date almost nothing has been published in either English or Spanish about the JOC de Empleadas, but Elizabeth Hutchinson has a forthcoming article about this branch of the JOC movement. Hutchinson, “Many *Zitas*: The Young Catholic Worker and Household Workers in Postwar Chile,” *Labor* (2009) [forthcoming].

<sup>18</sup> Pedro Castex, interview.

<sup>19</sup> Monsignor Bernardino Piñera, Santiago, July 5, 2001; Marta Olivares, Santiago, January 11, 2001; Luis Lizama and Norma Avaloz, April 23 interview; Elena Castillo, interview; Catalina Basaure, et al., interview.

<sup>20</sup> “Festival: 12.000 chilenos mostraron unidad obrera,” *La Voz*, October 28, 1956, 16.

<sup>21</sup> Monsignor Bernadino Piñera, interview; Marta Olivares, interview; Luis Lizama and Norma Avaloz, April 23 interview; Hilda Pérez, interview. *La Voz* also mentions that the domestic employees did not see themselves as workers. “60 mil mujeres abandonadas en manos extrañas en la capital,” *La Voz*, October 12, 1956, 6.

Employees and the JOCF, stated in an interview, “*Obreros* and workers in private homes didn’t get along well. There was animosity because those who worked in the homes of the rich looked down on the *obrerros* who worked in factories. They said, ‘those are the *fabricanas*,’ that’s how they called them, *fabricanas*, with disdain... She [the domestic employee] in contrast worked with a family, in the home, with children.”<sup>22</sup> Further dividing the two branches were the differences in backgrounds-- most *empleadas* were recently arrived from the countryside and many were illiterate, while the *obrerros* generally were urbanized and also more educated.<sup>23</sup>

As the JOC of Employees expanded it eventually acquired its own headquarters in Santiago and other cities, produced its own publications, and gradually separated from the rest of the movement, although retaining the JOC name and identity through the 1960s. As of 1956, the Santiago JOC of Employees had 2,800 dues-paying members associated with its Home of the Employee (*el Hogar de la Empleada*), as its headquarters was known, according to a 1956 interview with its national advisor. The *hogar* offered a myriad of services ranging from lodging and job placement for women recently arrived from the countryside to literacy classes and social activities for domestic employees who had nowhere to go on their days off, all infused with a sense of Christian spirit and mission.<sup>24</sup> The *hogar*’s membership had grown to 3,500 by 1959

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<sup>22</sup> Father Mauricio Hurtón, interview, Santiago, June 20, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> See chapter 1 for more on Jocistas’ background and educational levels. The contact between the JOC of Employees and the JOCF always was significantly greater in smaller cities such as Concepción, Valparaíso, and Talca, where the two branches often shared the same clerical advisor and sometimes even met together in the base groups. Furthermore, no *obrero* outside of Santiago mentioned that the *empleadas* held a negative opinion of factory workers. Julia Rojas, et al., interview; Catalina Basaure, et al., interview; Nora Hortensia Parra, interview, Concepción, April 16, 2003; Rosa Loyola, interview, Talcahuano, April 16, 2003.

<sup>24</sup> “La JOC entre las empleadas domésticas,” *Pastoral Popular* 89 (September-October 1965): 40-48; “Un hogar para la empleada,” *La Voz*, May 1, 1956, 7; “Por el mundo del trabajo,” *La Voz*, November 9, 1958, n.p.; “Nueve años cumplió el hogar de la empleada,” *La Voz*, June 7, 1959, 11; “Por el mundo del trabajo: empleadas se especializan,” *La Voz*, December 21, 1958, 11; “Supera sus programas el Instituto ‘Luisa Cardijn,’” *La Voz*, June 16, 1957, 11. The *hogar* also offered beds for domestic employees who were without work or sick. Many more *empleadas* used the Federation’s various other services, including outings and vacations to El Quisco; a library; a savings cooperative, and a variety of other classes in addition to literacy, including for example sewing, first aid, hair styling, and guitar, all offered through its Instituto ‘Luisa Cardijn’ (named after the mother of the JOC founder,

and 5,000 as of 1965 (with 65 *empleadas* considered active JOC militants), comprising Chile's largest support network for domestic workers.<sup>25</sup>

## 4.2 A SUPPORT GROUP FOR WORKING WOMEN

The JOC offered an important support to young women who were dealing with their sudden entry into the workforce as teenagers, sometimes as young as twelve or thirteen. Interviewees emphasized that factory work was grueling, with long hours, few breaks, and little pay. A woman who worked in the spinning section (*hilandería*) in a textile factory described the immense, heavy machines, rooms that were very hot in the summer and cold in the winter, and days that started at eight in the morning and ended at eight in the evening.<sup>26</sup> Treatment in shops was often not much better. Graciela Vitta, who at fifteen was employed first as a maid and then in a bakery, where work began very early in the morning, developed a problem in her legs because of the shop's cold and earned barely enough for food and bus fare, leaving little for the younger brother she was supporting after her parents died. Graciela eventually was able to obtain a better paying job at Yarur, the large textile factory, but found herself crying frequently because the work was hard and stressful, and she felt lonely. As a worker in the weaving section (*telares*), she often faced the censure of her bosses for failing to produce the required number of meters of cloth. Graciela recounted:

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herself a domestic employee.) The intent of this institute was to offer training that would provide women with employment options beyond domestic service.

<sup>25</sup> "Nueve años," *La Voz*, 11; "La JOC entre las empleadas domésticas" *Pastoral Popular* 89 (September/ October 1965): 40-48. Also, a 1959 letter from Don Fernando Ariztía, a national JOC advisor, to Cardinal Caro states that there were 3,000 employees associated with the Federation of Employees, with 21 federation base groups in Santiago. AAS, *A.C.*, 1955-1961, Leg. 132, no. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Virka Méndez [pseudonym], interview, Santiago, May 3, 2002.

They would say to me, “Miss, there are 100 more people waiting for your job, you’re doing a job that anyone can learn.” They told you terrible things that you couldn’t say today. One day I arrived with a terrible stomach-ache, and I ran to tell the boss, but everyone had to be at the machine at a certain hour, and I dirtied myself there. I ran and knocked at the bathroom, but it didn’t open for another half an hour. When it opened I went to wash myself but was told it’s not for washing. I tried to explain that I had dirtied myself, but it didn’t matter, I had to go outside like that, all dirty, it didn’t matter to them because those were the orders. It was like a jail, the experiences were tremendous.<sup>27</sup>

The JOC provided young women a place to talk about the hardships and not feel alone. For example, Graciela described her JOC group as a place to go and share her sorrow or *pena*. “It kept you going, kept you hoping for something better, in God.... It helped a lot because it’s no longer just one...everyone had her difficulties.... We were a población of workers in which there was a lot of discontent.”<sup>28</sup> María Mataluna, who joined the JOC through a recruitment campaign in her neighborhood soon after starting a factory job, similarly recounted how meeting with other workers helped her to confront the tremendous fear that the “huge, immense factory” provoked in her. Not only did the force she felt from having the JOC movement behind her build self-confidence, but so too did her new-found faith in Christ. “I was not alone, I was with Christ,” she recounted, “and if you are with Christ, what do you have to fear?”<sup>29</sup> Experienced Jocistas kept an eye out for new workers, so they could orient and guide them in the rough environment, and interviewees strongly emphasized the importance to them of the Catholic

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<sup>27</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, Feb. 10 interview. While Graciela did not remember the exact date that she began working at Yarur, it appears based on other biographical information that she started there in the late 1950s, about the time that the factory began to adopt measures to improve efficiency and productivity at the cost of greater pressure on workers. See Winn, *Weavers of Revolution*, chapt. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, Feb. 10 interview.

<sup>29</sup> María Mataluna, interview.

groups' *acogida*, or warm reception, contrasting it to the cruel, aggressive factory floor.<sup>30</sup> A woman who worked in a shoe factory related, "I was just a new little bird when JOCistas approached me and brought me to a JOC meeting in the población in which I lived. The very warm welcome that the group gave was very important," she added. "You immediately felt at home, no one looked at you badly, you felt good."<sup>31</sup>

Besides offering a shoulder to cry on, the JOC helped these young women address the day-to-day challenges they faced in the workplace. The JOC never directly discussed theoretical issues such as the sexual division of labor that kept women in poorly paid jobs, but through the use of the see, judge, and act method, movement participants learned to think critically about their problems and explored strategies for improving both their own situations and the broader factory (and other workplace) environments.<sup>32</sup> Some of the labor problems addressed in the JOC were common to workers of both sexes, such as employers who underpaid them, failed to record for the government the social security taxes deducted from wages (*las imposiciones*), or who forced workers to sign unfair or even illegal contracts. Others were more gender-specific, such as unequal pay for women, the lack of adequate bathroom breaks, especially for menstruating or pregnant women, and sexual harassment. Women (and men) feared losing their jobs if they complained, but the JOC encouraged movement participants to stick up for their rights by educating them about the country's labor laws and regulations, including through special workshops and national campaigns organized by the female and male Jocistas themselves. The JOC also full-heartedly supported not only men's but women's involvement in syndicalism,

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<sup>30</sup> However, while some recruitment occurred in the factories, most Jocistas entered the movement through neighborhood recruitment campaigns. See chapter 2 for more on JOC recruitment.

<sup>31</sup> Gladys Abarca, et al., interview.

<sup>32</sup> See chapter 1 for more information on Jocistas' employment histories as well as the see, judge, and act method.

although because many women worked in small, non-unionized factories and workshops, union activism was not always an available option.<sup>33</sup>

The support and education received in the JOC helped to change the young women's sense of themselves as insignificant and powerless and infused them with the courage and the conviction required to stand up to authority. María Mataluna, mentioned above in regard to her tremendous fear upon entering the factory, claimed that due to the study and analysis of injustice that occurred in the JOC:

When you went to confront the bosses, you didn't go like a beheaded lamb, but like one person talking to another person who has to answer to our needs and demands... The woman in the workplace was very badly treated, humiliated, badly paid, and the JOC helped... to defend your rights, to feel that you have the same rights as any other person, even if they have money... The boss wasn't a superior God but a run-of-the-mill man that had to be made to meet his responsibility. He was a businessman, but not the owner of our lives.

María then proudly provided an example of when, not long after joining the JOC, she stood up to a boss who refused to let a pregnant and ill *compañera* rest on an empty box, although it cost María her job in a pasta factory. This small act of resistance eventually led to a leadership role in the unions at her subsequent places of employment.<sup>34</sup>

Graciela, the woman who used to sob at work, recounted how through the JOC she found the courage to approach her boss, of whom she had been so afraid, and ask (without crying, she noted) for a transfer to a section with better hours, which would allow her to return to school.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See chapter 4 for more on the movement's national campaigns and on Jocistas' union participation.

<sup>34</sup> María Mataluna, interview.

<sup>35</sup> Graciela had only a fifth grade education when she started working.



Similar to María, Graciela said, “I began to feel that it was appropriate, that I had to confront the situation, not be afraid, because he wasn’t an ogre, he wasn’t a king, he wasn’t superior to me, he was just in a position. The community helped me to see this.”<sup>36</sup> (She was granted the transfer.)

Norma Alvaloz, who worked in a small, non-unionized factory that had what she described as a cowed workforce, recounted how she, together with a few other girls from the movement, argued with a boss who would not allow a mother to nurse a baby brought to her in the factory; they understood that the law required him to do so. Norma also talked proudly about the time she stepped between a boss and a girl he was forcing to clean the bathroom, even though not part of her job. She asserted that the boss hit her and threatened to call the police to arrest her, but she refused to back down. The police did arrive, but they took no action, leaving Norma with a real sense of triumph. She exclaimed at the end of her story, “If I hadn’t been part of the JOC, none of this would have happened. They would have just swept the floor with me, as they did with all the rest.”<sup>37</sup>

Among the many workplace issues addressed in the JOCF meetings, sexual harassment (to use the modern term) was one of the most salient and was frequently mentioned in interviews. As one woman explained, “In the factory, women only mattered from the waist down.” Another added, “it was really conflictive working with so many men ...when you entered on the first day, they checked you out from head to toe, yelled out flirtatious remarks.... I had long hair, so they called out ‘*la morena del moñito*’ (literally “the dark one with the hair bun”) and ‘*morenita stop here*’.... my legs trembled, I didn’t know whether to continue walking or not.”<sup>38</sup> A third Jocista explained, “The factory environment was very corrupt, with men, the

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<sup>36</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, Feb. 10 interview.

<sup>37</sup> Luis Lizama and Norma Avaloz, interview.

<sup>38</sup> Julia Rojas, et al., interview.

majority married adults, lining up to ‘conquer’ the young girl, and many girls let themselves.... So many women in the factories became single mothers, it happened so many times.”<sup>39</sup> Not only co-workers, but also bosses posed a sexual threat to the young women. The Jocistas spoke about co-workers being pressured into becoming the bosses’ lovers in order to preserve their jobs, and a JOCF leader, in her testimony published in the magazine for advisors, related how much it bothered her when working in a shirt factory to witness the boss harassing the younger women.<sup>40</sup>

The JOC’s main approach to sexual harassment was rather traditional-- to simply raise women’s awareness of men’s “double intentions” and teach them how to be less vulnerable. “To keep women from falling,” was how the woman called out to as “*la morenita*” put it.<sup>41</sup> She illustrated her meaning with the following example:

The men would say.... ‘hopefully the new girl arrives with fruit,’ so whichever man was working closest to her would ask for a fruit, and since she was a nice girl and had two, she would give him one. In the next day or two, he would ask for another one, and nicely she would give it without any thought as to why he was asking; she didn’t know that there was something behind the request, that he was going to say, ‘OK, you’re giving me fruit or bread, we are dating, we’re girlfriend and boyfriend, because you gave it to me.’ It was a way to corner the woman and get her into something she wasn’t looking for. She was just looking to work, and in that situation one had to be really strong.<sup>42</sup>

In the JOC women also discussed the need to refrain from coquettishness and to ignore the men’s flirtations, in other words, to use the colloquial phrase in English, “to not lead the men

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<sup>39</sup> Hilda Pérez, interview.

<sup>40</sup> Nury Ramos, “Testimonio,” *Boletín de asesores JOC/MOAC* 2, no. 7 (May 1967): 26. Bosses’ sexual predations also were a common theme in the Leftist press, and it was an issue that came up in Winn’s interviews with the Yarur factory workers. Winn, *Weavers of Revolution*, 35.

<sup>41</sup> Julia Rojas, et al, interview; Elena Escalona, interview.

<sup>42</sup> Julia Rojas, et al., interview.

on.” Hilda Pérez, who entered the movement soon after its formation in Chile, said that in base meetings the women would discuss “the respect that a girl should have at work, even in a tough environment. She should know how to handle herself,” by which Hilda meant, using herself as an example, “My work companions saw me as very serious, no one ever said a bad word to me, never overstepped with me, because they saw that I acted correctly.... Without having a bad character, I got along with everyone, but with respect.”<sup>43</sup> Elena Escalona commented, “Men didn’t dare with me, because I wasn’t like all the others, more religious.”<sup>44</sup>

As a result of their strict propriety, JOC women, while at pains to be friendly and open with everyone, admitted that they sometimes came across as severe and sanctimonious (*santurronas*), unintentionally setting themselves apart from the other workers. However, these militants underscored that they attempted to avoid moral condemnation of women who conducted themselves in a less sober fashion, employing the see, judge, act method to understand rather than to criticize the difficult situations in which others found themselves. For example, Elena discussed a *compañera* in her factory who was caught up in problematic sexual relationships with both the boss and a co-worker. She recounted, “We [in the JOC] talked about how any of us could have wound up in that situation... We didn’t know her past, what had happened.” Elena described how, supported by her base group and clerical advisor, she reached out to this woman “with humanity not religion,” eventually becoming her friend and confidante and supposedly helping her to leave the abusive relationships, despite the woman’s fear of losing her job.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Hilda Pérez, interview.

<sup>44</sup> Elena Escalona, interview.

<sup>45</sup> Elena Escalona, interview.

In the spirit of service the movement emphasized, Jocistas also sought to improve the general work environment for women, even if only aiming for incremental changes in individual factories. For example, a short piece in *Pastoral Popular* applauded the efforts of three Jocistas who worked in a factory where at lunchtime the conversations were “immoral” and included “vulgar” references to women, yet attracted the attention of the young female workers who were present. Rather than just segregating themselves from the crowd, the militants attempted to shift the focus by reading aloud from a novel with JOC themes, following up with commentary. According to the magazine, the militants over time attracted a larger and larger group of followers.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to addressing male co-workers’ licentiousness, a few stories also emerged about Jocistas confronting a boss’s sexual perfidy in a direct and organized fashion. A male militant in the movement, Luis Reyes, related in an interview how a small group of male and female Jocistas, who were working together in the threads section of Hirmas, the gigantic textile factory, dealt with a boss “who was the Don Juan of everyone.”<sup>47</sup> All the women in the section had to “pass by him,” a euphemism, Luis made clear, for having sexual relations with the man, who was married. Luis continues:

When we [the Jocistas] realized this, of course we raised hell.... we intervened and denounced him and made his life impossible, you understand, with posters that appeared denouncing the shameless scoundrel, that he’s married, that someone has to go tell his wife, whatever thing to intimidate him. There’s a characteristic of Chileans, that we

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<sup>46</sup> “Acciones Apostólicas,” *Pastoral Popular* 26 (September 1955): 16.

<sup>47</sup> Luis speculated that the factory had at least two thousand people working there.

don't like scandal. Also, we sent anonymous letters to management, things like that, almost childish, but effective.<sup>48</sup>

While Luis struck a chivalrous tone in relating his story, women interviewees when talking about confronting sexual harassment almost uniformly brought up the JOC's message, based on declarations by Pope Pius XII, that women have dignity and worth equal to men.<sup>49</sup> As one Jocista mentioned "The JOC gave the woman an important role in which it told her, you are a person, you have worth (*tú eres persona, tú vales*),"<sup>50</sup> a phrase repeated frequently in the interviews. Discussions about the respect due a woman in her job (and elsewhere) stemmed from this understanding, which the movement inculcated in base meetings, retreats, and even vacation trips. In the words of another militant, "Just because you're a woman you don't need to put up with it. You have dignity and value and can defend yourself... against the aggressive co-worker, against the boss, even if worried about losing your job.... we were always talking about dignity in the JOC, the dignity of workers, the dignity of women, the dignity of being."<sup>51</sup> Someone else stated, "We learned.... not to have fear of people, in other words not to be afraid of men... I'm a woman, and they have to respect me... There [in the JOC] I really realized that I have this value."<sup>52</sup> Several Jocistas brought up the JOC hymn with its line about "respect for our sister worker" ("*nuestra hermana obrera*"), which the advisor Pedro Castex pointed out referred to "the idea of women's dignity neither as mothers nor as workers but as women."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Luis Reyes, interview.

<sup>49</sup> JOC articles directed at women often referred to Pope Pius XII's statement, "In their personal dignity, as a daughter of God, man and women are absolutely equal." "Responsabilidad social de la mujer," *Vida Obrera*, fourth week of September, 1947, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Domingo Marilaf and Eliana Poblaza, interview.

<sup>51</sup> Elena Escalona, interview.

<sup>52</sup> Julia Rojas, et al., interview.

<sup>53</sup> "Himno internacional de la J.O.C.," in *Canciones Jocistas*, ed. Carlos Camus, [Valparaíso? 1960?], 9; Castex, interview. However, this line, to be sung by the JOC men, also has chivalrous undertones (it continues, "and gentlemen of her honor") about which more will be discussed below.

Individual acts of resistance to injustice and an emphasis on “correct” behavior to ward off male sexual advances, as well as discussions about women’s dignity, certainly did not address the larger issues of gender discrimination and male chauvinism in the workplace. However, in contrast to the secular Left, which traditionally had portrayed female factory workers as victims in need of working-class male protection, the JOC’s religious discourse helped women feel empowered to defend against and stand up to male abuse.<sup>54</sup> Men in the movement sometimes collaborated with women in these efforts, but the women themselves did not feel helpless nor accept “tropes of female victimization,” to borrow Hutchinson’s phrase.<sup>55</sup> In an environment in which the male-dominated unions (whether independent or controlled by management) had little interest in dealing with cases of discrimination against women or sexual harassment, the JOCF promoted practical and rather effective tactics to protect female workers. Pointedly, the factory in which Luis Reyes worked had a large union, yet the Jocistas felt the need to take action against the “Don Juan” boss on their own. Finally, while the Socialists and Communists “attributed inappropriate male behavior to the noxious influence of bourgeois morality... shifting blame away from working-class men,” the JOC addressed not only the problem of unscrupulous bosses but also the perfidious behavior of their male co-workers, demanding their respect in the workplace as well.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Klubock (citing Hutchinson) writes, “Male leftists and labor activists employed the trope of the victimized woman worker to exclude women from the labor market and assert their own prerogatives to protect and control women’s labor and sexuality.” Klubock, “Writing the History of Women and Gender,” 508.

<sup>55</sup> Hutchinson, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex*, 236

<sup>56</sup> Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, 83, 256. Hutchinson, albeit writing about the early part of the century, similarly argues, “Sexual harassment was... constructed exclusively as an example of class exploitation and rarely implicated working-class men in the nightmarish depictions of working women’s sexual vulnerability.” Hutchinson, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex*, 81

### 4.3 AN ESCAPE FROM THE RESTRICTIONS OF THE PATRIARCHAL, AUTHORITARIAN FAMILY

As a movement for workers, the JOC dealt extensively with labor issues, but it also served as a support network for women and men facing an assortment of problems unrelated to employment. The sense of empowerment on the job, which women workers in particular gained through their participation in the movement, translated into other aspects of their lives. Like the rest of Catholic Action, the JOC defined itself as an “integral movement,” encompassing the entirety of workers’ experiences, and the family was a central focus of concern, receiving as much attention as the workplace and neighborhood.<sup>57</sup> Social Catholicism did not subscribe to the Left’s argument that changing the oppressive structure of capitalist society took priority over resolving domestic problems. In contrast to political parties and unions, which viewed domestic issues to be of secondary, minor importance, the JOC took private matters as seriously as public ones. Whether factory workers, shop girls, or seamstresses working at home, women in the JOC forged a tight bond and provided comfort and guidance to *compañeras* who, while working outside the home, oftentimes faced severe restrictions within it.

Most Jocistas suffered from the stresses that poverty places on families, and many came from homes affected by alcoholism, violence, and sexual abuse, which hurt women disproportionately.<sup>58</sup> According to Monsignor Carlos Camus, a former JOC advisor, “The girls

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<sup>57</sup> See chapter two for more on the JOC as a poblacional movement.

<sup>58</sup> Alcoholism was the problem most mentioned in interviews and JOC documents, and according to an article in a magazine for clerical advisors, it was “one of the gravest problems confronting the working class.” The article, a reprint of a letter to the Chilean Episcopal Conference written by a group of doctors, priests, and leaders of abstinence clubs, claims that Chile at that time had the highest rate in the world of mortality and morbidity from cirrhosis caused by alcohol. “Alcoholismo: Implicancias pastorales y sociales,” *Boletín de Asesores JOC/MOAC* [1969?]: 27-34. [No issue number or date appears on either the front cover or inside pages, but the articles’ contents suggest this year of publication.]

especially suffered from the problems of poverty-- the father drunk; a fight in the *conventillo* or *barrio*; girls who had been raped. There were a lot of nervous problems, emotional problems, especially in the girls, many things to heal.”<sup>59</sup> Within the base groups, participants talked about intimate and often painful personal and familial details that outside the JOC were considered shameful and usually hidden. As occurred with labor issues, the see, judge, act method allowed women to understand that their problems were neither unique nor could take away their dignity as people, and that knowledge was transformative. Adriana Hernández, who described her father as a “terrible alcoholic,” poignantly recounted:

I was very timid... I never had friends. I didn't go out. We always lived a little embarrassed about the condition of the house. We couldn't bring a friend over... In the JOC I realized that there were a lot of girls who suffered.... Many fathers who were alcoholic. I began to realize that they also were the same as me. And one day [my sister and I] began to tell the truth. We had never said that my father beat us, that my mother worked... We never gave our opinion because we didn't dare, we were scared, we thought if we said anything my mother or father would find out and beat us... We had a lot of fear. We began little by little to talk in the meetings. I began to discover that I mattered, that I was a person (*yo era persona*), that I was a worker, that I had dignity, that I didn't have to hide.<sup>60</sup>

Just as the JOC empowered women to confront abusive bosses, it also led them to not passively accept abuse at home. Adriana related how after becoming a JOC leader at the federation level, she stood up to her father and left home, convincing her mother and ten year old sister to go with her (the other sister had since married.) She recounted:

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<sup>59</sup> Monsignor Carlos Camus, interview, Viña del Mar, April 10, 2003.

<sup>60</sup> Adriana Hernández, interview.



I arrived home from a JOC conference, and my father ordered me to go buy him wine. I refused, and he was about to throw his cup at me when I told him, ‘If you hit me, I’m going and never returning...’ I had become a JOC leader and because of it I had the strength to do this, to not put up with anymore... I had had enough. My formation in the JOC made me respect myself as a person. I was now a woman, I wasn’t going to go buy his wine like I did as a girl, just because he ordered me and hit me.<sup>61</sup>

However, most Jocistas tried to improve their domestic situation without leaving their parental home, where women traditionally lived until marriage. As a Catholic organization (in a country in which divorce was illegal and legal protections for married women were few), the JOC emphasized the importance of maintaining family unity through bringing Christ into the home.<sup>62</sup> For example, a group might advise a Jocista with an alcoholic father that perhaps he needed more understanding, love, and support because a lack of affection in his past was the root of his drinking problem. (As one interviewee commented, back then there was little understanding of alcoholism as a disease.<sup>63</sup>) Or perhaps she might discuss with her group what situations seemed to provoke a father’s violence and how to approach her mother about defending herself.

While the changes might not be dramatic, and as interviewees admitted not every problem had a solution, at a minimum the JOC’s support helped a young woman feel as if she had a little more control over her life. Referring to her experience with domestic violence, a militant explained, “Opening yourself up to the group was life-giving. You began to see that you

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<sup>61</sup> Adriana Hernández, interview.

<sup>62</sup> However, for the worse cases, when women urgently needed to leave their homes, the JOCF had some rooms available for them at its large headquarters downtown. National JOC leaders from outside Santiago lived here as well, and based on the interviews it appears that there was an early connection between this JOC housing and the housing provided migrants from the countryside through the Federation of Employees of Private Homes. Elena Escalona, interview; Hilda Pérez, interview.

<sup>63</sup> Elena Escalona, interview.

could have something different, you didn't have to stay stuck in the past, but that you yourself have to make it better, take responsibility... or you will stay exactly the same, suffering, feeling like a nobody in life."<sup>64</sup> At the least, the JOC made clear that women deserve respect and hence violence against them, condoned in many respects by the broader society, was not acceptable.<sup>65</sup> For example, women learned in the movement that if their boyfriend punched them, they should not tolerate his behavior.

Young women's participation in the JOC frequently created conflicts with parents. While their employment was accepted as an economic necessity, working-class families concerned about the virtue and reputation of their daughters frowned upon other activities beyond the walls of the home.<sup>66</sup> "In that period girls weren't allowed to go out, they weren't even allowed to walk to the corner, unless accompanied by a brother, it was another time, very distinct from now," emphasized one woman.<sup>67</sup> Another remembered, "Going out on the street was a big challenge (*un desafío grande*). It wasn't common then. Women were homebodies (*muy de casa*). You didn't go out without permission, and then only for short periods. Being out

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<sup>64</sup> Elena Escalona, interview.

<sup>65</sup> Jorge Gissi Bustos, in his article about the mythology of Chilean women, cites a 1973 study that found that women in Santiago's poblaciones "accept that 'men have the right to punish corporally the disobedience of their wife and children.'" And Heidi Tinsman, looking at the period from 1950-1973, discussed how under Chilean law husbands had a right to discipline wives through violence and that the "vast majority of women never reported or left violent partners." While Tinsman's work focuses on the Chilean countryside, the working-class poblaciones where the Jocistas lived most likely would have had somewhat similar patterns of violence because a majority of families had arrived from the countryside within the past generation or two. Nor would national laws have offered women any more protection in urban vs. rural areas. Jorge Gissi Bustos, "Mythology about Women, With Special Reference to Chile," in *Sex and Class in Latin America*, eds. June Nash and Helen Icken Safa (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976), 36 and Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict*, 67.

<sup>66</sup> The sociologist Teresa Valdés, writing about women in Chile's urban, popular sectors in the 1980s, notes, "As soon a woman enters puberty, a stage of family tension begins. It is necessary to watch over her life and protect her virginity. Father and mother, and brothers if there are any, all participate in this." This description easily fits the 1950s as well. Teresa Valdés, "Ser mujer en sectores populares urbanos," in *Espacio y poder: los pobladores*, ed. Jorge Chateau et al. (Santiago: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, 1987), 249.

<sup>67</sup> Luis Lizama and Norma Avaloz, interview.

after 8 PM was scandalous.”<sup>68</sup> A third added, “A women who left her home was seen as *una mujer fácil*, an easy woman.”<sup>69</sup> Yet activism in the JOC involved frequent attendance at meetings, and usually until quite late at night, since most of the women worked during the day. Participants also traveled, sometimes for days at a time, to workshops, conferences, and retreats.

Many stories were told of the Jocistas’ struggles to gain their parents’ permission to attend JOC meetings and events. Sonia Bravo, a national leader of the JOCF, recounted:

It took a lot to get my father to allow me to participate. For years he beat me because I went to the JOC, because I arrived home at night...decent girls couldn’t be out on the street at night. My father couldn’t understand that I was involved in something good. I fought with my father; I fought for years until finally I was able to convince him... I told him that if he continued like that I would leave the house... but it cost me a lot of punches...There just wasn’t a way to get him to understand.<sup>70</sup>

Sonia’s tale of never-ending arguments with her father was oft repeated in the interviews, although the physical violence she experienced as a result represented an extreme example. In other cases it was a mother or stepmother who staunchly opposed a daughter’s participation, but fathers, as the heads of what were typically hierarchical and authoritarian family structures, seemed to have been the biggest obstacle.<sup>71</sup> The interviewees pointed out that there were women who did not have the desire or strength to keep arguing with their parents, as Sonia did, and simply left the movement. Nor did the issue go away when the movement entered the decade of

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<sup>68</sup> Elena Escalona, interview.

<sup>69</sup> Armando González, Matilde [no last name provided], and Vicky Galindo, interview, Coronel, April 14, 2003.

<sup>70</sup> Sonia Bravo, interview.

<sup>71</sup> Valdés describes a family structure in which “the father exercises power over the mother and all the family, often times with violence.” Campero similarly describes fathers as dominating Chilean families in the popular sector. Valdés, “Ser mujer,” 248; Guillermo Campero. *Entre la sobrevivencia y la acción política: Las organizaciones de pobladores en Santiago* (Santiago: Ediciones ILET, 1987), 72-73.

the 1960s. A publication for advisors from 1966 mentioned a newly formed base group that dissolved after parents prohibited two girls from returning because they arrived home a little late.<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, men plainly did not confront the problem of parental permission. Not a single male interviewee raised it as an issue. One man, when asked if his father, who had never been socially or religiously involved, supported his JOC activities, replied tersely, “At the heart of it, there was little or nothing for him to say.”<sup>73</sup>

The clerical advisor’s support was crucial to many female militants’ continuation in the movement. A priestly visit (or two or three) to the home was often enough to reassure a skeptical parent. However, not all parents, especially fathers, held clerics in high regard.<sup>74</sup> In Sonia’s case, she was afraid to have a priest visit her home because, in her words, “my father was a very tall, solidly-built man... he said that he was a priest-eater (*comecuras*), that the priests were a bunch of jerks (*eran unos tal por cual*).”<sup>75</sup> Lidia Bravo, also a national JOC leader who struggled constantly with her father for permission, said that he was not even placated when the advisor himself brought her home after late-night meetings. “What would other people think of her running around with the priest in a pick-up truck late at night!” he exclaimed. Every time Lidia’s JOC responsibilities required travel outside the city, her father’s resistance was especially fierce. Eventually, when she was elected to travel as a Chilean representative to a JOC congress in Europe, the bishop himself spoke to her family, but ultimately it was her Catholic grandfather’s intervention that finally made this and other trips possible for her.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> “Como empezó la JOC en San Bernardo,” *Boletín de Asesores JOC/MOAC* 5 (July-August 1966): 13-20.

<sup>73</sup> Patricio Pino, interview.

<sup>74</sup> Working-class skepticism of the Catholic Church was reflected in and reinforced by the Left’s depiction of the Church as a “retrograde institution favoring the rich” and by their portrayal of priests as sexual abusers. Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, 204.

<sup>75</sup> Sonia Bravo, interview.

<sup>76</sup> Lidia Bravo, interview.

Parents resisted their daughters' JOC participation not only because it meant a loss of control and risked reputations, but also because it pulled them away from their domestic responsibilities. As interviewees pointed out, most Chilean working-class women in the 1950s and 60s did not have access to refrigerators, washing machines and other electric appliances, so housework was extremely laborious. Husbands and sons generally helped little with domestic responsibilities. Julia Valenzuela remembered, "Before, you had to do everything. The women's work was too much. My mother didn't even go to mass because she had no time, preparing the food, fixing up the house, my father was very patriarchal." Daughters were responsible for helping their mothers within the home; elder daughters faced the added burden of caring for younger siblings (at a time when there were no disposable diapers.) Julia continued, "Parents did not want us out for long periods of time because you had to arrive home to do everything that a mother or wife did, not like today."<sup>77</sup> Another Jocista recounted, "I had to have all the housework done early and tearfully beg for permission in order to attend JOC meetings."<sup>78</sup>

In order to favorably predispose parents toward the movement, the JOC offered courses in the community that taught skills considered useful to women in the home, such as sewing, embroidery, and pastry making, according to former JOCF president Lidia Bravo. (These classes also helped recruit new members.<sup>79</sup>) Furthermore, Lidia mentioned that JOC leaders hoped the new skills would enable women to sell a few items for extra income.<sup>80</sup> JOCF documents emphasized to readers the importance of helping their families more, both financially and even more importantly with domestic duties, demonstrating that the movement, while reaching out to women as workers, also embraced their traditional roles as (future) wives and mothers. For

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<sup>77</sup> Rubén Callao and Julia Valenzuela, interview, Santiago, March 1, 2001.

<sup>78</sup> Luisa Torres, interview.

<sup>79</sup> See chapter 2 for more on JOC classes and recruitment.

<sup>80</sup> Lidia Bravo, interview.

example, a 1954 booklet entitled *A Message for my Family* devotes a page to describing how individual Jocistas were contributing in their homes, from one young woman who made new curtains to another who rearranged the kitchen, including painting cans to serve as a canister collection.<sup>81</sup> Elena Escalona explained that she and other JOC leaders discussed with movement militants and sympathizers:

You had to learn to defend yourself against the family's refusal to participate but more than anything you had to demonstrate to your parents that you were reliable... promising to help extra in the house, promising to help take care of the children, etc. and then doing so without being obligated... In other words, you had to show your parents that you were responsible, that you're learning to be even more responsible and that in the long term [your JOC participation] will be beneficial for them."<sup>82</sup>

The JOC also organized family outings (*paseos familiares*), such as daytrips to the countryside, as a means of helping parents feel more comfortable with their daughters' participation in the movement. A Jocista explained, "It was a way to give testimony to the families about who we are, because parents didn't understand what happened in meetings."<sup>83</sup> Another woman attested, "Once parents were involved, it was easier to get permission."<sup>84</sup> In addition to outings for the entire family, base groups held special teas for the mothers of Jocistas.<sup>85</sup> Starting in 1952, the JOCF also organized week-long vacation trips for them.<sup>86</sup> (The JOCM never organized any such events for fathers.) These activities marked the first time that many mothers had participated in any type of a group or left their home for any extended period

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<sup>81</sup> Juventud Obrera Católica Femenina, *Un mensaje para mi familia* (Santiago, Chile: n.p., 1954):17.

<sup>82</sup> Escalona, interview.

<sup>83</sup> Sonia Bravo, interview.

<sup>84</sup> Luisa Torres, interview.

<sup>85</sup> These teas were similar to the ones used to initially attract young women to the movement.

<sup>86</sup> "Descanso al que trabaja," *La Voz*, August 24, 1957, 7; Sonia Bravo, interview; Luisa Torres, interview; Lidia Bravo, interview; Julia Rojas, et al., interview.

of time. A national JOC leader explained, “I think that the [events] for the mothers were fundamental. It allowed them to get to know each other, to exchange experiences regarding their daughters, and to see them in a different light. They understood many things as a result and afterwards supported us a lot.”<sup>87</sup> Reflecting back on her mother’s experience on several JOC trips, Marta Olivares said, “Her life, her world was very small, only the world of the home, never had my mother gone on a vacation, by herself, to a place she didn’t know. Getting to go out, to know other mothers, to converse, my mother changed a lot with this, she understood what I was doing... [and] afterwards she had more opinions.”<sup>88</sup>

None of the Jocistas interviewed had a mother who had ever been politically or socially active or whose church participation had extended beyond traditional worship, and female militants frequently contrasted their mothers’ more limited existence, mostly as housewives, with their own experiences in the movement.<sup>89</sup> Under the auspices of the Catholic Church and the clerical advisors, which despite parental resistance did in the end provide a reassuring aura of respectability and safety to JOC activities, the lives of militants were a non-stop series of meetings, retreats, campaigns, and demonstrations.<sup>90</sup> Several Jocistas used a form of the verb “soltar,” which literally means “to free, to let or turn loose” in describing the liberation they felt their JOC activities provided from restrictive, authoritarian family structures. Marta exclaimed:

We were of the street. We only came home to sleep... It was total devotion (*entrega total*), including Sundays and vacations... Before the JOC I rarely was allowed out anywhere, even to a party, but imagine, in the movement I arrived every day at 11, 11:30

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<sup>87</sup> Elena Castillo, interview.

<sup>88</sup> Marta Olivares, interview.

<sup>89</sup> Some mothers did work or had worked in the past, but only a few had factory experience. Mothers’ work experience tended to be as domestics or laundresses.

<sup>90</sup> According to Valdés, the most legitimate form of social participation for women in popular sectors was religious activities. Valdés, “Ser mujer,” 242.

at night, total liberation (*suelta total*). Yes, the priests had to come and give the necessary explanations, until my mother went to El Quisco and got used to me being in meetings, got used to me running around doing this and that.<sup>91</sup>

Another female leader, raised by a strict stepmother and father, explained, “For me, it was like being let loose (*como soltarme*)... it really was a different life. For that reason I began participating with so much enthusiasm, because [the JOC] opened a huge window for me.”<sup>92</sup>

#### **4.4 A SPACE WHERE WOMEN DEVELOPED AS LEADERS, EQUAL TO MEN**

The JOC not only facilitated women’s activism outside the home but also allowed for a level of participation and leadership remarkably equal to that of men. Besides a shared philosophy and method, the feminine and masculine branches of the movement had similar programs. The JOCF and JOCM national executive committees, although separate, shared a headquarters in downtown Santiago and worked closely together planning national events and campaigns, such as the coordinated effort to support reform of social security laws, as well as on the yearly work plans issued for the entire movement. Significant cooperation between the two branches also existed at the level of the dioceses, which had their own *directivas*, and at the local level, where the JOCF and the JOCM base groups jointly planned and organized parish activities and celebrations. However, while in close relationship, the fact that the movement was segregated by sex allowed some flexibility for the women to focus on issues of particular concern to them, and the men to do the same. It also enabled women to develop leadership skills

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<sup>91</sup> Marta Olivares, interview.

<sup>92</sup> Elena Castillo, interview.



and confidence in their organizing capabilities in an environment in which the patriarchal structures that dominated the larger society had less power.

Unlike in other organizations such as political parties, where the separate “women’s departments” common at that time had at best supportive roles, the JOCF leadership possessed the same level of authority and power within the movement as the JOCM leadership.<sup>93</sup> Referring to the two executive committees, a former female president said succinctly, “No one ordered anyone.”<sup>94</sup> Interviewees all remembered that whether in small meetings or large events, an equalitarian spirit prevailed. In the words of another JOCF leader, “If a man proposed one topic and led a discussion, a woman proposed another topic and led the next discussion; if a man gave a speech, a woman gave a speech; the men put together some programs, the women did others. It was a tremendous option for women to be able to participate in the JOC, equal to men.”<sup>95</sup>

Male leaders echoed this sentiment. Martín Rivas, a JOC leader at the local level, attested, “The women had a prevailing role, but so did the men. We did so many things together, without saying that the women are leading, or the men, we just did them. Sometimes an idea came from the women, another time from the men, and we just went with it. I don’t remember discrimination, in which we wouldn’t do what the women suggested, we were one.”<sup>96</sup> Reflecting women’s authority in the movement, an article on the JOC Page in *Vida Obrera* reports that at a major gathering of Santiago’s base groups, two major speeches were given-- one by a

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<sup>93</sup> The Christian Democratic Party, for example, had a feminine department through the 1960s. For more on women’s subordinate role within Chilean political parties, see Kirkwood, *Ser Político en Chile* and Kirkwood, *Feminismo y participación política en Chile*, Working Paper no. 159 (Santiago: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, 1982). Also see Elsa Chaney, *Supermadre: Women in Politics in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973).

<sup>94</sup> Juanita Pérez, interview.

<sup>95</sup> Elena Escalona, interview. Of course, as one woman pointed out, male priests had the ultimate power over the JOC movement. However, while under hierarchical control, the church left the day-to-day planning and running of the movement to the lay leaders. It simply did not have the personnel available to closely involve itself. Gladys Rojas, interview, Santiago, April 25, 2003.

<sup>96</sup> Martín Rivas, interview.

representative of the JOCF and another by a JOCM representative. According to the article, the speech of the female militant was “brilliant” and because of its importance would be printed in its entirety in a subsequent issue of the newspaper. The paper also noted that the speech of the male militant received deep applause, although his speech was merely summarized and apparently not to be printed.<sup>97</sup>

Martín compared the relative gender equality in the JOC to the unions, where he said, “If a woman were a candidate for leadership, people would say, ‘And what is that poor woman going to do there? You’re crazy!!! Vote for Juan Diego, how can you vote for a woman? No way!’ There’s a complete devaluation [of the woman] right away.”<sup>98</sup> María Mataluna similarly recounted, based on her own experience in several factory unions, “There were very few women who participated as leaders. Why? Because it was as if a woman didn’t have any right to open her mouth. It was because of the *machismo*.”<sup>99</sup> Those female Jocistas who upon leaving the JOC in the late 1960s joined political parties on the Left similarly found the party leadership to be dominated by men.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, not only did family and personal issues have little importance, which several interviewees said they missed after their JOC experience, but they had to confront an attitude among some male *compañeros* that “the more women you have, the more revolutionary you are.”<sup>101</sup> Elsa Chaney, in her now classic book *Supermadre: Women in Politics in Latin America*, indeed wrote about how the Leftist press during Chile’s Popular Unity

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<sup>97</sup> “Extraordinario brillo alcanzó asamblea jocista del 29,” *Vida Obrera*, first week of July, 1947, 2. The Santiago assembly paralleled a JOC World Congress meeting in Canada at the same time. Later articles in the Catholic working-class newspapers about JOC assemblies similarly recognize the leadership role of both male and female militants and mention women giving speeches alongside men at conferences, major stadium events, etc. In an interview, JOCF president Lidia Bravo talked about her experience speaking in front of thousands for a big international JOC even in the national stadium. Lidia Bravo, Jan. 25 interview.

<sup>98</sup> Martín Rivas, interview.

<sup>99</sup> María Mataluna, interview.

<sup>100</sup> See chapter four for more on Jocistas’ political participation.

<sup>101</sup> Victoria Plaza, March 19 interview.

government presented militant women as sexual objects, trivializing their political action. At the same time, the government articulated an image of women as dependent “yet instinctively the self-sacrificing and heroic mother,” ignoring that any other role or identity outside of motherhood might exist for them.<sup>102</sup>

In contrast to unions and political parties, the most common words interviewees used to describe the relationship between men and women in the JOC were respect and fraternity, again rooted in the JOC ideal of men and women’s mutual dignity and value. A female militant explained:

In the JOC, without even talking about nor mentioning the term feminist, just from the religious point of view that we all are children of God and as such we are equal, we are two equal human beings... a climate of a lot of respect [for women] was created... You didn’t have to worry about a man making eyes at you, making you feel uncomfortable, the jokes... a lot of strong friendships [between men and women] were formed.<sup>103</sup>

Other Jocistas emphasized, “We had to see that Christ was in the men and at the same time they also saw that Christ was in the women, therefore the respect. It was a very beautiful thing.”<sup>104</sup>

This environment of respect allowed men to take women seriously as leaders. They considered women “as persons, as Jocistas... as *compañeras*,” moving beyond the general depiction of females in the public sphere as either sexual objects or mother figures.<sup>105</sup> A male militant, who admitted to having “played around” with women prior to joining the movement, reflected:

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<sup>102</sup> Chaney, *Supermadre*, 46. For more on the Left’s chauvinism and failure to address gender issues, see Kirkwood, *Ser política en Chile*.

<sup>103</sup> Cotilde Silva, interview, Santiago, November 20, 2000.

<sup>104</sup> Herminia Bastías, et al., interview, Santiago, May 12, 2002.

<sup>105</sup> Armando González, et al., interview.

You learned to relate to women from a perspective very distinct from that which we knew as young workers, in which everything was viewed with malice, as a conquest... to conquer the woman almost to dominate her. But in the JOC we saw the woman... on another plane. The women themselves made us respect them. We saw that they were intelligent, that they were capable, that they were courageous, that if something had to be done they went and did it.<sup>106</sup>

The women too felt that the JOC provoked a shift in men's attitudes towards them. According to Elena Escalona, "Men saw women working as leaders, as capable. This was powerful, intense for them. It changed their concept of women... Before, women were mainly seen with an apron."<sup>107</sup> Similarly, a clerical advisor remarked, "In the movement women came across as more decisive, with more authority, more personality, more presence, they weren't just of the home."<sup>108</sup>

Women in the JOC clearly held their own against the men, belying the dominant ideology favoring female passivity and deference to the opposite sex. A male leader commented, "One was more accustomed to women who were less aggressive...in the manner in which they passionately proposed and expounded things."<sup>109</sup> Many other men who were interviewed also spoke, usually with admiration, of the female militants' strength and force of personality. For example, they described them as having "a lot of guts, they pushed things forward more than we

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<sup>106</sup> Luis Reyes, interview.

<sup>107</sup> Elena Escalona, interview.

<sup>108</sup> Father Osvaldo Martínez, interview, Santiago, April 29, 2003. Ana María Bidegain, referring to her personal experience in Catholic Action in Colombia, similarly felt that women's shared experience with men in the movement helped teach them that "women have a right to a place in society and the church not as minors, or indeed as children without the use of reason, but on an equal footing with men. Men learned that women, too, have a right to make decision." Ana María Bidegain, "Women and the Theology of Liberation," in *The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutiérrez*, eds. Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 113.

<sup>109</sup> Ramón Santender, interview, Santiago, January 22, 2001.

did,” and referred to the JOCF’s national executive committee as “powerful (*potente*)... with women of strong, strong temperaments.”<sup>110</sup> A JOCM leader held up as an example a woman with whom he worked on the diocesan executive committee, saying, “You had to have a lot of arguments to debate with her, because she was brilliant and very strong, she didn’t get intimidated.”<sup>111</sup> The women themselves fully embraced this characterization, for example describing female leaders in the movement as having “hearts of war,” but at the same being careful to emphasize, “We argued, but in a good sense, without major conflicts.”<sup>112</sup> Some militants portrayed themselves as always having had a forceful personality, but as indicated previously, a majority credited their JOC participation with transforming them from a timid, quiet person to a woman comfortable speaking her mind.

The division of labor at the retreats and conferences that leaders of the two branches attended together perhaps best reflects how female Jocistas broke away from traditional submissiveness and domesticity. Men and women, whether having entered the movement in its earliest years or in the late 1960s, affirmed that both sexes took turns with the chores, dividing the cooking and cleaning among everyone. For example, Martín Rivas stated, “In the JOC we did everything together, the women even would say, ‘OK, now all the men get washing.’ And all the men would go wash the plates, and then the next time it would be the women’s turn...so we began to feel that either a man or a woman could cook or wash. We learned that it wasn’t dirty or sinful to do these things, as many people said, that it was only for women.”<sup>113</sup> Rosa Morales explained, “Sharing in washing plates, etc. was part of the camaraderie.... equal to equal. We all worked for a cause, that cause was Christ, we were there to serve him and if you had to sweep,

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<sup>110</sup> Moises Leighton and Johnny Carrasco, interview, Santiago, May 25, 2002; Catalina Basaure, et al., interview.

<sup>111</sup> Father Jorge Murillo, Santiago, May 6, 2002. Father Murillo joined the priesthood upon leaving the JOC.

<sup>112</sup> Catalina Basaure, et al., interview; Rosa Morales, interview, Santiago, November 22, 2000.

<sup>113</sup> Martín Rivas, interview.

you swept, if you had to clean, you cleaned.”<sup>114</sup> Sociological research showed that even in the early 1970s it still was rare for Chilean men to help in the home, especially among working-class families. They considered housework to be women’s work and “contrary to their conception of masculinity,” indicating just how radical the splitting of domestic duties in the JOC was.<sup>115</sup> According to the Jocistas, it was the first time that many of the men, “accustomed to their mamas attending to them like they were kings,” had ever picked up a broom.<sup>116</sup>

While men and women serving together as JOC leaders transmitted, although never directly articulated, a message of gender equality, male chauvinism certainly was not absent, including among top leaders. It was not easy for men to let go of deeply ingrained attitudes regarding women’s place in society. A male JOC leader stated, “It was the man who gave the orders in the culture, and many times the JOC, which was different, clashed with this culture that one brought to the movement.”<sup>117</sup> Similarly, a JOC advisor commented, “In the beginning, the young men were a bit *machista*. They laughed at the women. They thought that the apostolate of the JOC was more for men.”<sup>118</sup> Providing a female perspective, Elena Escalona posited, “We learned to work together... but it was hard, it was hard for both of us, for women to accept the closeness and for the men to let us be with them because they were used to this territory being theirs and that is yours.” Elena’s lengthy example of a soccer game at a leadership conference in El Quisco, attended by both male and female militants, symbolically illustrated how some men could never fully accept the equal presence and strength of JOC women:

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<sup>114</sup> Rosa Morales, interview.

<sup>115</sup> Gissi Bustos, “Mythology About Women,” 35; Armand and Michele Mattelart, *La mujer chilena en una nueva sociedad: Un estudio exploratorio acerca de la situación e imagen de la mujer en Chile* (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1968), 68.

<sup>116</sup> Armando González, et al., interview. Various other male interviewees also mentioned that they had never before helped with domestic chores.

<sup>117</sup> Fernando Alarcón, interview, Santiago, May 3, 2002.

<sup>118</sup> Monsignor Carlos Camus, interview.

The men started to play soccer, with the woman over in a different area... We began to bug them to let us play with them. We were quite forceful... When a leader... he was an international JOC leader, saw that the women were beginning to play with the men, he stopped on the terrace and let out some shouts and rebuked the men... He became furious, because of his *machismo* he couldn't handle it, and he was an excellent man, a fabulous man, but for him it was ridiculous that the women played with the men. And we were really playing, kicking the ball. We played all out, but totally innocent, not harming anyone. However, he was terribly *machista*, and he began to shout, 'Come here,' and the men took off running, leaving us alone, to such an extent was the *machismo*.<sup>119</sup>

The chivalry that interviewees uniformly said characterized JOC men also could be considered a subtle form of chauvinism. The oft-repeated refrain from the JOC hymn, in which the men sing, "We respect our sister workers and are gentlemen of their honor," symbolizes the movement's promotion of a chivalry which, while based on respect, also assumes that women are weak ("delicate" was the term frequently used) and need protection, especially sexually.<sup>120</sup> However, far from criticizing or resenting JOC men's gentlemanly ways, female interviewees framed this behavior in positive terms of not only respect but also caring and trustworthiness. Many women expressed their appreciation that their *compañeros* "took care of us." One militant said, "If you didn't have any brothers, for example, then it felt good having boys that worried about you."<sup>121</sup>

Treating women as if they were sisters undoubtedly helped eliminate some of the sexual tension that otherwise might have been more pronounced as leaders not only worked together but

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<sup>119</sup> Elena Escalona, interview. Elena did provide the name of the leader in question, a Chilean, but I omitted it out of respect to him. This man is no longer alive and hence could not be interviewed.

<sup>120</sup> "Himno internacional de la J.O.C.," in Camus, *Canciones Jocistas*, 8.

<sup>121</sup> Elena Castillo, interview.

also, despite the social taboos of the time, traveled together. (One national male leader, referring to his travels with a female leader, commented, with a slight tinge of sarcasm, “We were like angels.”<sup>122</sup>) Moreover, female Jocistas especially valued that their mothers learned they could trust them with JOC men, which made it easier to be allowed to attend mixed JOC events, even parties and dances. A militant explained, “Because the mamas knew that the young men were all good boys (*cabros buenos*), they would tell them, ‘she can go but under your responsibility, you take her and bring her back.’”<sup>123</sup>

Whatever *machismo* existed in the JOC, the numerical advantage and greater organizational capacity of the women’s branch of the movement served as an important bulwark against it. Men and women, as well as advisors, agreed that overall the JOCF was more creative and effective when it came to recruiting and planning activities, and many interviewees of both sexes opined that women generally had more dedicated leaders. Some advisors pointed to the greater maturity of women in early adulthood compared to men as an explanation for this difference. Expressing a fairly common complaint about the men, JOCM advisor Mariano Arroyo wrote in 1965, “In my JOC group the principal problem that I found is the lack of responsibility. The men have a lot of good will, they want to commit themselves, they know a lot about the JOC. But they... are not punctual, they miss the meetings for unimportant reasons, they don’t value the serious commitments they have made, etc.”<sup>124</sup>

However, the most common and not totally unrelated explanation for the JOCF’s dominance was that “the men had more distractions,” as one female leader put it. For example, she remembered a male militant who also was a cyclist and others who were soccer players, with

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<sup>122</sup> Manuel Vergara, interview.

<sup>123</sup> Gladys Abarca, et al., interview.

<sup>124</sup> Mariano Arroyo, “Laguna que urge llenar: Una JOC para el adoescente obrero,” *Boletín de Asesores JOC/MOAC* 1 (July-August 1965): 39.



the JOC secondary to their sporting pursuits.<sup>125</sup> National JOC advisor Pedro Castex stated, “Boys had that youthful experience (*esa vivencia juvenil*) in the neighborhoods, in the football clubs, on the corners smoking, where they got together... Women in that period couldn’t do this, the girls were more solitary.”<sup>126</sup> Finally, men more than women were likely to have leadership positions elsewhere, such as in unions, and hence although active militants, would be less interested in becoming JOC leaders.

In the end, perhaps it could be argued that women’s position in the JOC had as much to do with it being “just another Church organization,” in which women traditionally dominated, as with its emphasis on respect and dignity for both sexes. As Carol Drogus wrote, “Historically and culturally women have been considered the primary bearers of religion in Latin America.”<sup>127</sup> Or as a JOCF leader put it, “Back then you could count on your fingers the number of men at 8 AM mass.”<sup>128</sup> Advisors mentioned that they struggled against the embarrassment among working-class men of being seen as a Christian or, in the words of one man, for “being under the priest’s cassock.”<sup>129</sup> An article in the *Boletín de Asesores* about orienting young men who were new to the movement mentions that working-class males “...feel a great religious timidity, it embarrasses them to exhibit their religious feelings.”<sup>130</sup> And a female militant in the 1950s recalled that Jocistas would hear, “No, this is for women, not for me.”<sup>131</sup> Statistics support these personal observations. Surveys from 1958-1964, a period in which the Church made great

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<sup>125</sup> Sonia Bravo, interview.

<sup>126</sup> Pedro Castex, interview.

<sup>127</sup> Drogus, *Women, Religion, and Social Change*, 7.

<sup>128</sup> Lidia Bravo, Jan. 25 interview. She claims that today one sees many more men in Church compared to when she was younger.

<sup>129</sup> Pedro Castex, interview; Gladys Abarca, et al., interview.

<sup>130</sup> “Experiencias: Una jornada de iniciación,” *Boletín de Asesores JOC/MOAC* 3 (January-February 1966): 41.

<sup>131</sup> Elena Escalona, interview.

efforts to reach out to non-practicing Catholics, show that women and children continued to constitute the vast majority in attendance at weekly mass.<sup>132</sup>

What calls attention, then, is that the JOCM attracted as many men as it did. In contrast to earlier Church groups, as well as the Christian Base Communities that emerged en force in the 1970s, the numerical difference between women and men was never vast. By the late 1950s it almost disappeared completely, as the movement matured and a more dynamic male leadership attracted a new generation of youth.<sup>133</sup> The JOC's emphasis on social and labor issues and its support for union activism, in contrast to the traditional church activities of charity work, devotional societies, and festivals, attracted men who otherwise probably would have had little connection to Catholicism.<sup>134</sup> So too did the youthful clerical advisors with progressive ideas that distinguished them from the older, more traditional parish priests.

Of course, like the women, many male Jocistas initially joined not for reasons of social or religious consciousness but simply because the movement offered somewhere to hang out besides the street corner and, in the case of some, a place to meet girls. However, as Luis Reyes said, those like him who joined for a "less saintly reason" stayed because they connected with the movement's social Catholic message of uplift or *superación* for the working class.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, although the men talked in less depth about intimate issues compared to the women,

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<sup>132</sup> Smith, *Church and Politics in Chile*, 116. Smith cites the Office of Religious Sociology (OSORE), Secretariat of the Chilean Episcopal Conference, Santiago.

<sup>133</sup> On women's predominance in base communities in Latin America, see Drogus, *Women, Religion, and Social Change*, 7-8. As mentioned in the previous chapter, no precise membership figures exist for the JOC. The conclusion that the numerical difference between men and women decreased with time is based only on interviews. People active from 1947 until about the mid to late 1950s stated that the JOC groups in their parishes attracted more women than men, with some remembering about twice as many women. (Sonia Bravo, Lidia Bravo, Castex, Abarca, et al., and others.) However, Jocistas who entered the movement in the late 1950s and in the 1960s remembered more balance in the numbers. There even were parishes where the men predominated (José María Caro, San Gregorio), although women still predominated in others. As the movement decentralized in the 1960s, the personality of the parish priest and his ability to relate to women seems to have become a bigger factor in the female/male ratio.

<sup>134</sup> In the Christian Base Communities, on the other hand, the poor, not workers, were the rhetorical focus.

<sup>135</sup> Luis Reyes, interview.

they too found a support network that helped them cope with difficult work and family environments. While the JOC offered woman an escape from the restrictions of home, many men credited the movement with saving them from lives of delinquency on the streets.

#### **4.5 FEMALE MILITANTS AND GENDER IDENTITY WITHIN A PATRIARCHAL CHURCH**

In the JOC women found a unique social space relatively free of male domination, but the movement was embedded in a patriarchal Church whose official doctrine stressed women's domesticity and barred them from positions of authority within its hierarchy. As part of Catholic Action, the worker's movement was originally conceived as a means to strengthen the traditional patriarchal family, which the Church considered "the foundation of the social order," in the face of its supposed disintegration due to influences such as modernization, secularization, and urbanization.<sup>136</sup> A crucial aspect of this familiar effort was preparing young women for marriage and motherhood.

While part of the movement's explicit agenda was "to educate the young woman for her life of work," JOC documents presented employment outside the home as only a temporary state. Reflecting the broader societal discourse, they also reveal a deep concern that the crude factory environment makes a girl "forget her mission of preparing herself in the best way possible to fulfill her great mission as mother and wife," as JOCF president Hilda Pérez stated in a 1956

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<sup>136</sup> "Juventud Obrera Católica reunió dirigentes nacionales," *La Voz*, November 12, 1955, 135; Vitalis, *The Significance of Changes in Latin American Catholicism*, 2/15; Stewart-Gambino, *Church and Politics in the Chilean Countryside*, 33-34.

interview with *La Voz*.<sup>137</sup> The JOC booklet *In My Working-Class Family*, edited by a group of JOC militants, admonishes, “In any girl you should see a future mother of a Christian home. The *compañera* in the factory, the dressmaker, the domestic employee all should be seen in this manner.” Stressing that employment can destroy women’s delicate nature and violate their sacred vocation as guardian of the Christian home, the text continues:

Understanding the nature of girls is to see their vocation as wife and mother, which everyone ought to respect and protect... The heavy labor in certain factories that uproots women from their emotions and sensitivities (*delicadezas*) is a despicable crime against all Society. When the young worker loses her contact with the home and with the Church, when she loses all feeling for her vocation, everything has ended: Christian education, love, the family are finished. The woman’s mission is to be a wife, the complement and happiness of man.”<sup>138</sup>

In the JOCF publication *A Message for My Family*, women who continue working and socializing outside the home after marriage are implicitly criticized, while they are lauded when they make husband and children their primary focus. Published as part of the movement’s 1954 family campaign with the slogan “Better homes will make a better world,” an opening passage in this booklet describes a Jocista named Adela who at work befriended a married woman. The omniscient narrator asserts disapprovingly that this woman “worked at first out of necessity, but now works because she became accustomed to being independent. Her family life was very bad, her children and husband were almost abandoned. She was more interested in her friends with whom she went out occasionally.” Adela, the heroine of the short passage, convinced her co-

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<sup>137</sup> “Los dirigentes de hoy: Los presidentes de la JOC masculina y femenina enfocan problemas de la jóven y el jóven obrero de hoy,” *La Voz*, April 8, 1956, 6.

<sup>138</sup> Juventud Obrera Católica, *En mi familia obrera* (Santiago: Lito.Stanley, 1952), 24-25.

worker to focus more on her domestic responsibilities. Eventually, thanks to the Jocista's influence, the woman supposedly saved enough to buy a sewing machine, enabling her to leave the factory and work from home. The narrator concludes, "Today she earns a little less, but she has reconquered the affection of her children and husband."<sup>139</sup>

The JOC, as part of its focus on strengthening the family, regularly organized marriage preparation courses (for women and men). Catholic priests taught these courses, which were open to anyone in the parish.<sup>140</sup> The courses were grounded in the Catholic concept of men and women's complementary roles, with women the nurturer and men the provider.<sup>141</sup> While no documents from the marriage courses are available, other writings reflect the movement's basic acceptance of the idea of gender complementarity, as well as of the Catholic belief that the two sexes, while equal in spiritual and moral terms, have essential biological and emotional differences, which place women in a subordinate position within the family (and society.)<sup>142</sup>

In one graphic example, *Tú*, a JOC magazine from the mid-1960s edited by movement militants, lays out in two parallel columns on its "feminine page" the differences between men and women's "mission." At the top of the men's column is written "boss" (*jefe*, which also could be translated as "leader" or "chief") and at the top of the women's column, "mother." Categories that follow include characteristics of the man (strength, reason, dominating love) and

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<sup>139</sup> JOCF, *Un mensaje para mi familia*, 4-5.

<sup>140</sup> One of the first Chilean JOC publications, a booklet entitled *Nuestra JOC*, refers to the movement's "Preparation for Marriage" as a reaction to the "scarce or non-existent marriage preparation for young couples" in the poblaciones, leading to "irremediable failures." These marriage courses were separate from the movement's classes promoting women's domestic skills, discussed earlier, although some overlap of themes existed. Juventud Obrera Católica, *Nuestra JOC* (Santiago: Editorial Teguolda, 1946), 30-31.

<sup>141</sup> Rosa Loyola, interview.

<sup>142</sup> Pope Pius XII, addressing youth in the Italian Catholic Action, clarified, "It is certain, without a doubt, that man and woman, in reference to character, have equality in honor, dignity, worth, and esteem... But they are not equal in everything. Certain gifts, certain inclinations and natural dispositions are unique to the man or the woman... Nature had given them different field of activities and roles." "Se proclaman los derechos y deberes cívicos de la mujer," *La Voz*, May 24, 1959, 10-11.

of the women (sensitivity, intuition, love of sacrifice), followed by physical as well as intellectual comparisons (coldly rational, stubborn vs. thinks with heart more than head, spontaneous) and ending with another stark contrast between men and women's emotional makeup (conquest in love vs. seeking to please.) The photo of a young couple dancing that accompanies the chart has a caption reading, "Yes, we are different." At the same time, the short text recognizes, "Some things may be debatable," and ends by asking, "What's your opinion?" leaving open the possibility that not all Jocistas will accept these differences as definitive.<sup>143</sup>

Not surprisingly, considering their background in the movement, female militants did not unequivocally embrace Catholic ideology's biological essentialism and belief that motherhood is women's "natural" vocation. The JOC's emphasis on female domesticity always existed uncomfortably with the grounding in labor and social issues that the movement provided. The documents themselves at times reflect this more complicated and contradictory message regarding women's proper role. For example, an article that appeared on "the JOC Page" of *Vida Obrera*, entitled "Social Responsibility of Women," asserts without judgment that the family "until now unyielding in the face of [social] changes," has undergone fundamental shifts that profoundly affect women's role in society. According to the article:

Transformations have come even to this intimate sanctuary and have touched women. Leaving the protective shelter of the home that at one time was the only field of activity, we see women today occupying a place in the liberal professions, in the factories, in the industries, not exactly because she rejects as antiquated.... the saintly and noble mission of maternity, but because the transformations... in science, in industry... have completely changed the total concept of life.

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<sup>143</sup> "Somos diferentes," *Tú* 1, no. 3 (June 1966): 2.

Finally, mentioning the two sexes' "absolute equality in dignity," the article exhorts women to play a public social role so that "a Christian voice arises, inspired by the source of all light, the Gospels and the Pope's words." It ends by encouraging young women together with young men "to fight with all their energies in order to establish the Church's social doctrine... It's time for the youth of both sexes to speak up together."<sup>144</sup>

It was this progressive social message, although overshadowed in JOC publications by a more traditional focus on women's domestic role, that most impressed young women in the movement. Speaking for her *compañeras*, a JOC leader noted that the church's discourse about women as wives and mothers "fell flat (*se les caía*) because the majority were girls who worked... Although I think we still had matrimony very internalized as a life project, of having children... this discourse didn't get very far (*no corría mucho este discurso*)."<sup>145</sup> Another leader affirmed, "Truth be told, I could have married early, but I didn't do so because of my social consciousness and desire to keep working with the Church on social issues (*en lo social*).... The JOC motivated you to participate, not to be at home."<sup>146</sup>

With their active involvement as workers in struggles for social change in the factory and others places of employment, as well as in the community, the female militants who were interviewed without exception related that their lives were too busy and satisfying to be concerned about finding a husband and getting married. "Between all the JOC responsibilities

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<sup>144</sup> "Responsibilidad social de la mujer: Nuevos problemas de actualidad," *Vida Obrera*, fourth week of September, 1947, 2. This article appeared two years before women achieved full suffrage in Chile, which the Church supported. However, even after women gained the vote, the Church continued to send contradictory messages to women regarding their appropriate domestic vs. public role, with the JOC in particular maintaining its support for female participation in social struggles. For example, an article in *La Voz* almost ten years later, in a section of the paper also entitled "Vida Obrera," deplors that modern life takes away from women's maternal mission. At the same time, the article encourages working women to actively participate in unions and other social organizations in order to protect their rights in the face of unscrupulous bosses. "Vida moderna quiere esclavizar a la mujer y quitarle su misión de madre," *La Voz*, September 17, 1955, 5.

<sup>145</sup> Clotilde Silva, interview.

<sup>146</sup> Nury Ramos, interview.

and activities and working in a factory, no time was left to date. In my case, for example, I worked shifts... a free evening or day off I had meetings. You had all your time occupied, for me it wasn't about getting married because my life was so filled with activities, and I was so personally fulfilled,"<sup>147</sup> said one Jocista. Another women explained, "The devotion (*entrega*) to the JOC was so great... a *mística* to which you devoted yourself, a total devotion, that the years went by and you were still single... In my case, I was so, so involved, that the other part, the emotional part of children, of marriage, you didn't even visualize it, you didn't need it... It wasn't until I left the JOC that I started thinking about it."<sup>148</sup>

Various Jocistas also mentioned that they dated little and married late (or not at all) because, rather ironically, matrimony was so idealized in the movement. They wanted to avoid all the family problems they witnessed around them. "The JOC influenced you to want the best, most perfect marriage possible," noted one woman, and Jocistas were willing to wait for just the right Christian man.<sup>149</sup> A militant explained, "There was so much respect in the JOC, it was something so beautiful, so elevated. One time an acquaintance asked me, 'Why are we so demanding?' I think that I looked for an ideal man that I couldn't find." A close friend of hers, interviewed at the same time, retorted, "We fell in love with Christ."<sup>150</sup>

Dating too was idealized in the JOC. The movement taught that women (and men) should date only with an eye on marriage, not simply to have a good time. For women, the Virgin Mary was held up as a model of female purity to emulate. Female interviewees remember the clerical advisors telling them, "You need to imitate the Virgin, to be *señoritas*, to be modest,"

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<sup>147</sup> Catalina Basaure, et al., interview.

<sup>148</sup> Adriana Hernández, interview.

<sup>149</sup> Nury Ramos, interview.

<sup>150</sup> Sister Herminia Bastías, et al., interview.



and of course to arrive to the sacrament of marriage “as God commands.”<sup>151</sup> However, abstinence from pre-marital sex was as much out of a sense of dignity as avoidance of sin.<sup>152</sup> One woman commented, “It was framed in the context of respecting yourself. You have to dignify your life, your person.”<sup>153</sup> Another explained, ““If I took care of myself and was only for the man that was going to be my husband, it was because, shoot, I have worth, I have worth, I always have worth.”<sup>154</sup> In the opinion of a third woman, “It was based on mutual respect... the idea that you don’t have to allow yourself to be run over by your boyfriend, so to speak.”<sup>155</sup>

Female militants in fact identified more deeply with the Worker Christ than the Virgin Mary, who was almost never mentioned in the interviews and documents apart from references to clerical advice regarding sexuality or the Month of Mary celebrations.<sup>156</sup> And even these celebrations, in which both JOC women and men participated, seemed more a means by which to reach out to parish youth and their families than a deep expression of sentiment for the Virgin.<sup>157</sup> JOC women, working outside the home and concerned with rights and justice for the working class, did not relate much to traditional Mariology or *marianismo*, which exalts individualistic

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<sup>151</sup> Rosa Loyola, interview. Male Jocistas also were advised to be chaste and “not profane love because the future will judge us,” according to a line of the JOC hymn directed specifically to the men. “Himno internacional de la J.O.C.,” in Camus, *Canciones Jocistas*, 8.

<sup>152</sup> With birth control largely unavailable to working-class Chilean women at this time, sexual abstinence also was the only certain way to protect against unwanted pregnancies, a common phenomenon among young women in the poblaciones. The risk of syphilis and other venereal diseases was high as well. French and James, *Gendered Worlds*, 14; Vitale, *De Alessandri a Frei*, 211-212; Gissi Bustos, “Mythology About Women,” 43.

<sup>153</sup> Armando González, et al., interview.

<sup>154</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vitta, March 18 interview.

<sup>155</sup> Nury Ramos, interview.

<sup>156</sup> The sharp differences between men and women’s religiosity that Susan B. Whitney noted in the French JOC of the interwar period seemed less pronounced in Chile in the 1950s and 60s. For both sexes, the level of religiosity varied, with JOC men, once in the movement, participating actively in masses, liturgies, etc., just like the women. The religious differences seemed to depend more on the characteristics of a particular parish or advisor than on gender differences. Susan B. Whitney, “Gender, Class, and Generation in Interwar French Catholicism: The Case of the Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne Féminine,” *Journal of Family History* 26, no. 4 (October 2001): 489.

<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, the cult of the Virgin Mary usually is associated with traditional popular religiosity, which the JOC never embraced. See chapter two for more on the JOC’s involvement in these celebrations.

moral virtues, promotes female humility and submissiveness, and idealizes women's absorption in domestic activities, leaving the affairs of the world to men.<sup>158</sup>

Furthermore, the Jocistas' relationship with Christ, while profound, was not defined by the mystical and intimate emotionality characteristic of traditional female piety. Rather, a deep commitment to Christ's social message and moral teachings shaped both female and male militants' spirituality from the movement's earliest years.<sup>159</sup> For example, Cardijn's vision of Christ as a model for action and sacrifice in the service of young workers' material and spiritual well-being dominates two mimeographed JOCF newsletters from 1949. Frequently quoting the JOC founder, the newsletters focus not on personal spirituality but on practical methods for bringing the JOC out of the parish and into the street and workplace so that the movement, "with God's help, may be the salvation of the working class."<sup>160</sup>

Adapting what could be considered a male-oriented religiosity reflects how JOCF militants in some respects shed their feminine identity, acting like men or at least asexual beings

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<sup>158</sup> This definition of marianismo was drawn from Drogus, *Women, Religion, and Social Change*, 4-5; John Burdick, *Legacies of Liberation: The Progressive Catholic Church in Brazil at the Start of a New Millennium* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), 60-61; Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "Mujeristas: A Name of Our Own," in *The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutiérrez*, eds. Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 482; Evelyn P. Stevens, "Marianismo: The Other Face of Machismo in Latin America," in *Female and Male in Latin America*, ed. Ann Pescatello (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), 89-101. Marianismo also is associated with a spirit of sacrifice and suffering, setting aside one's own needs in order to satisfy those of others, which some female interviewees portrayed themselves as doing. For example, one leader mentioned oftentimes going all day without eating because of the all-consuming nature of her movement work. However, the JOC documents strongly encouraged a spirit of sacrifice in both male and female militants, referring to Christ's life as a model, and hence cannot be attributed to marianistic influences.

<sup>159</sup> Whitney, writing about the JOCF in France during the interwar period, also noted an intense relationship between Jesus and female Jocistas. However, according to Whitney, a mystical Christ "consistent with nineteenth-century notions of female piety," dominated religious imagery in the French JOCF documents. The difference in time period, with the Chilean JOC reaching its peak as changes in the Church leading up to Vatican II were occurring, may account at least in part for this contrast between the French and Chilean JOCs' spirituality. It must be noted, though, that few documents specific to the JOCF in Chile exist. Especially lacking is documentation from the movement's many spiritual retreats. Whitney, *Gender, Class, and Generation*, 488-489.

<sup>160</sup> *Boletín de la Juventud Obrera Católica Femenina J.O.C.F.* (June 1949): 1. Also, *Boletín de la Juventud Obrera Católica Femenina J.O.C.F.* (October 1949).

in order to more easily operate as equals within a patriarchal church and society.<sup>161</sup> As mentioned previously, men in the JOC both viewed their female counterparts as more aggressive than typical women and related to them like sisters, while some interviewees from the JOCF admitted that they could come across as sanctimonious and “nun-like.” At least one national advisor expressed concern about JOC women’s lack of femininity. Elena Escalona, a leader in the late 1950s, remembered that Father Gabriel Larraín, reacting to the tendencies of JOC women to dress plainly, expressly told them “to continue being yourselves, normal women. Dress as you like—the JOC will continue being the JOC.”<sup>162</sup>

Larraín, after becoming bishop, organized a meeting with nuns who were interested in advising JOC groups, and in an article in the *Boletín de Asesores*, these nuns speculated whether the number of JOC women who did not date and remained single could be due to the masculine influence of the male advisors. They wrote, “Is it because they don’t want to marry, after completely giving their time to the JOC... or perhaps there’s another connected reason? It could be that the formation received from male advisors gives them a mentality that is too masculine, or, at least, they do not fully develop their feminine qualities. Perhaps they want to order their boyfriend...”<sup>163</sup> One JOC leader who never married in fact recounted in an interview that a man

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<sup>161</sup> Bidegain wrote that women among her generation (1960s) of activists in Colombia’s Catholic Action movement had to “practically disguise ourselves as men,” unconsciously abandoning their female identity, in order to achieve the same level of responsibility within the movement as their male counterparts. Hutchinson and Roseblatt both noted a similar phenomenon among female militants in Chile’s Socialist Party in the first half of the twentieth century. Bidegain, “Women and the Theology of Liberation,” 113; Hutchinson, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex*, 91-94; Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, 222.

<sup>162</sup> Elena Escalona, interview. Yet Father Gabriel did add, “If you want to walk in tennis shoes when going around the poblaciones, that’s OK too,” in acknowledgement of the JOC women’s unusually active lives.

<sup>163</sup> Equipo de religiosas asesoras, “Respondiendo a un llamado del Concilio: Asesoras religiosas,” *Boletín de Asesores JOC/MOAC*, no. 3 (January-February 1966): 37.

who expressed interest in her later told her, “I really like you, and you’re such a good woman... but too bossy,” an opinion which she, however, attributed to his *machismo*.<sup>164</sup>

Whether or not an influence of their advisor, Elena and other female militants who entered the JOC in the mid to late 1950s claimed that they were not as serious and religious in demeanor and style as those who joined the movement in its earliest years.<sup>165</sup> However, this shift was not purely a gender issue but had strong class overtones as well. Former JOCF president Lidia Bravo, who first joined in 1948 and remained until 1960, mentioned that in the movement’s first years it was considered best to dress humbly and not fix yourself up too much so as to better identify with the working class. The men shared this attitude, for example wearing overalls even when not actually at work. Later, the Jocistas rejected this fashion tendency as representing a “complex about poverty” (“*un complejo de pobres.*”) Men as well as women in the movement began to dress more elegantly to reflect the pride and dignity they felt as workers, with the women in heels and carrying purses (an item usually associated with Sundays or upper class women) and the men in ties.<sup>166</sup>

Even after this style change, female Jocistas noted that they still were not the type to adopt the miniskirt and pants, or to go out much with men. As one woman from this later period wryly commented, “We weren’t exactly Miss Universes.”<sup>167</sup> The few exceptions to this characterization seemed to just prove her point. A national leader from the mid 1960s, whom several interviewees referred to as “different from the rest,” described herself as outgoing, frequently dating, dressing in tight pants, and in her words not like the other militants who were

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<sup>164</sup> Ana Hernández, interview, Talca. April 13, 2003.

<sup>165</sup> Interestingly, the JOCF’s relationship with the JOCM apparently grew closer at about the same time, although this shift probably had less to do with changing attitudes about femininity than the growing strength of the JOCM.

<sup>166</sup> Lidia Bravo, Jan. 25 interview; Elena Escalona, interview. Photographs from the era reflect the change.

<sup>167</sup> Adriana Hernández, interview.

so “*quitada de bullada*,” a Chilean expression literally meaning “with all the racket taken out of them.”<sup>168</sup> (Another militant employed this same expression when describing herself and her companions in the movement as “good, hard-working girls.”)<sup>169</sup> A JOCM leader, meanwhile, spoke of a woman with whom he worked on the diocesan level who was “very feminine and enchanting... We [the men in the movement] all loved her because she never abandoned her feminine nature (*su ser femenino*),” implying it seems that the other female leaders did. He then continued, as if it were contradictory to what one would expect in a woman like her, “but she was a strong and brilliant debater.”<sup>170</sup>

#### **4.6 A CATHOLIC MOVEMENT AT THE VANGUARD OF SEXUAL EDUCATION**

Despite their restraint in dress and behavior, JOC women were in the vanguard when it came to teaching about female sexuality. In contrast to traditional Catholic discourse, which focused on sexuality’s moral aspects, the women’s branch of the movement established classes on the subject that actually were quite detailed for their time. Calling it “puericulture,” a term referring more to child-bearing than sex, and which under the Popular Front governments had been largely associated with middle/upper-class feminist groups and state social workers, the JOC militants brought in midwives to discuss the biology of menstruation, conception,

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<sup>168</sup> Nury Ramos, interview. Nury added that she felt accepted by some within the JOC for who she was, while others, especially some priests, expressed skepticism that she would continue in the movement for any length of time. However, the few interviewees who spoke of her did so with affection and considered her to have been an effective leader.

<sup>169</sup> Virka Méndez, interview.

<sup>170</sup> Father Jorge Murillo, interview.

pregnancy, and birth.<sup>171</sup> Once trained, JOC militants also conducted workshops themselves. The movement eventually was providing instruction on sexuality in the parishes, on retreats and the beach vacation trips, as well as part of the movement's marriage courses, which had previously just involved priests teaching about forming a Christian home and raising Christian children.<sup>172</sup>

Even though never directly addressing in any detail the nature of sexual relations between partners, Jocistas still talked at some length in the interviews about what a shock it was for young women when they attended these classes because the subject was so proscribed within Chile's conservative society. One woman revealed, "When I first menstruated, I was terrified because I didn't know what was happening to me. It was such a taboo, that no one said anything, no one explained anything to the youth."<sup>173</sup> Another Jocista explained, "There was so much ignorance. It was talked about either in a coarse, crude manner or in a very spiritual way, and no one understood either... Men in one form or another learned about sex on the street, but women, who had to remain 'pure and virgin,' were sheltered and kept in ignorance."<sup>174</sup> A militant who organized puericulture classes in her población remembered having to go door to door seeking permission for daughters to attend, and she said that after some of the students showed their mothers the class notes, or simply conversed with them about the material, they were forced to withdraw.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> See Roseblatt for more on puericulture under the Popular Front, *Gendered Compromises*, 87,150, 168.

<sup>172</sup> Marta Olivares, interview; Lidia Bravo, Jan. 29 interview; "Aprender para los hijos," *La Voz*, January 29, 1956, 5. The militants also added some nuance to the marriage courses' message about domestic relations by bringing in lawyers to teach about the (few) protections the law offered women in the event of spousal mistreatment or abuse, especially when life was at risk, as well as the obligations of each party in the event of separation. Other guest speakers such as social workers taught women about running a household, which included how to manage family finances. Rosa Loyola, interview; Armando González, et al, interview.

<sup>173</sup> Marta Olivares, interview.

<sup>174</sup> Sonia Bravo, interview. A male Jocista confirmed that although poorly informed, men "one way or another" learned about sexuality from their friends. Luis Lizama and Norma Avaloz, interview.

<sup>175</sup> Luis Lizama and Norma Avaloz, interview.

While state officials under the Popular Front governments had sought to instruct women in domestic economy and puericulture as a means to strengthen the nuclear family, a more specific desire to help women feel comfortable with their sexuality upon marrying motivated the JOC leaders who instituted these courses.<sup>176</sup> Sonia Bravo, a JOCF president who was at the forefront of these efforts, recounted that when she and a 27-year-old JOC friend were practically engaged, they realized, “We had absolutely no idea what it meant to get married, how the babies formed, what happened... One couldn’t just go ask the priest to explain things, so we began to read and to ask other people.”<sup>177</sup>

Sonia and her friend began campaigning for meetings and courses to explain sexuality to women, and they and other leaders quickly realized the extent of the need. For example, another close JOC friend divulged that consummating her marriage had been traumatic for her psychologically, and Sonia found out that for her sister, recently married to a JOC leader, sex was a similarly negative experience. A JOC advisor who after leaving the movement worked for many years with MOAC, the branch of Catholic Action for working-class couples, which also instituted workshops about sexuality, affirmed the commonness of these experiences. He stated bluntly, “To put it in vulgar terms, women did not even suspect that that had to open their legs to have relations with their husband... Even with couples married five years, with 3 kids, husbands never made love to their wives, they just raped them.”<sup>178</sup>

Without ever questioning the movement’s emphasis on virginity for unmarried women, the courses provided women a basic understanding about their bodies that the Jocista said

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<sup>176</sup> Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, 149-150.

<sup>177</sup> Sonia Bravo, interview.

<sup>178</sup> Luis Vásquez [pseudonym], interview, Santiago, March 16, 2001. Gissi Bustos, drawing upon assorted sociological research from the early 1970s, wrote that sexual problems were a cause of “frigidity” among close to 70 percent of lower-class women.. Gissi Bustos, “Mythology About Women,” 43. Tinsman wrote about the high incidence of sexual violence in the countryside during this same period of history, but no such studies exist for urban areas. Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict*, chapt. 2.

allowed them to feel more comfortable with their sexuality, even making just going to the doctor an easier experience. As one militant said, “The JOC helped us to discover ourselves, to know ourselves, our sexuality.”<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, besides the biology of reproduction, JOC leaders also introduced discussions about preventing pregnancy, at least through the natural method, the only form of birth control sanctioned by the Church.<sup>180</sup> (And as a practical matter, Chilean working-class women in this period had little access to medical contraceptives.)<sup>181</sup> With *La Voz* celebrating large families with ten to fifteen children, and at a time when sociologists reported that women from lower social classes usually had children without planning or wanting them, even this bit of information potentially could make a powerful difference in women’s lives.<sup>182</sup>

#### **4.7 MILITANTS RECONCILE THEIR VOCATIONS AS WORKERS, WIVES, AND MOTHERS**

Although the militants joked that the JOCF was a “club of old maids,” in the end most did marry, often to other Jocistas, but at an age significantly older than that at which their peers in the poblaciones entered matrimony. Among those interviewed, most married in their mid to late twenties, and some well into their thirties, while the average age for women in the urban, lower class was about 19 years.<sup>183</sup> According to one JOC militant who married in the late 1950s, “People married at 14, 15, 17 years of age. Me, I married at 23, which at the time was to have

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<sup>179</sup> Elena Escalona, interview.

<sup>180</sup> Sonia Bravo, interview.

<sup>181</sup> Vitale, *De Alessandri a Frei*, 211-212; Gissi Bustos, “Mythology About Women,” 43.

<sup>182</sup> Gissi Bustos, “Mythology About Women,” 43.

<sup>183</sup> Mattelart, *Mujer chilena en una nueva sociedad*, 77. This statistic is from 1968. No data were found for the 1950s.



been left on the shelf (*para vestir santos.*)”<sup>184</sup> A Jocista from a later generation, who married in 1972 when 27 years old, described herself as “already very old, terribly old, that was old back then.”<sup>185</sup> Even the leader mentioned above for her outgoingness with men did not marry until her late twenties, despite having many earlier opportunities.<sup>186</sup> In the interviews, a few men also mentioned marrying slightly later than their peers, but unlike with the women, it was not an issue that received much comment, since single men did not face the societal pressure that confronted unmarried women past a certain age.

Postponing marriage allowed female militants to ignore the contradiction between the JOC’s messages regarding social and maternal vocations. Many left the movement, having completed their leadership terms or reached an age much older than the average militant, to devote themselves to social activism in other venues, including union and political work, before finally marrying. A relatively high percentage of Jocistas, especially those in the movement’s upper levels of leadership, chose to never marry.<sup>187</sup> Of the ten unmarried Jocistas who were interviewed (out of fifty women in total), all gave as their principal reason for remaining single a desire to be able to devote their lives to serving the working class without the limitations of matrimony.

Ironically, included in this group is Hilda Pérez, the JOCF president mentioned earlier for her interview in *La Voz* about women’s “great mission as wife and mother.” After leaving the JOC, Hilda became a union leader and then later was a leader in the cooperative movement connected to the Catholic Church.<sup>188</sup> Another unmarried former JOCF president spoke of

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<sup>184</sup> Armando González, et al., interview.

<sup>185</sup> Victoria Plaza, Nov. 17 interview.

<sup>186</sup> Nury Ramos, interview.

<sup>187</sup> No precise statistics for the number of female JOC militants who remained single exists.

<sup>188</sup> Hilda Pérez, interview.

breaking her engagement to her boyfriend and telling her parents “marriage was not my vocation but social work,” causing an uproar in her family. She later entered leftist politics while also remaining active in Church organizations.<sup>189</sup> A local leader, who after the JOC worked organizing peasant women through the Catholic Institute of Rural Education, reflected back to when she broke her own engagement, concluding, “I think my commitment to my [social] class influenced my decision. Since I was sixteen I had worked as a militant in the JOC. Consequently I made this personal decision... I wasn’t meant to get married. I was born to be a free woman and to serve all people.”<sup>190</sup>

While a few unmarried militants bucked societal opinion and lived alone, outside of any religious community, most chose to eventually take religious vows, the more socially acceptable alternative to marriage and motherhood. According to *La Voz*, as of 1956 more than fifty female Jocistas had chosen religious vocations. (Only 8 male Jocistas had done so.)<sup>191</sup> In addition to those who entered orders, many more JOC women, rather than becoming nuns, opted to join secular institutes as consecrated laywomen (*laicas consagradas*- in English more commonly known as consecrated virgins.)<sup>192</sup>

Unlike the religious orders at that time, in which nuns all wore habits and lived in convents separate from the rest of the population, women in the secular institutes dressed in

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<sup>189</sup> Juanita Pérez, interview.

<sup>190</sup> Ana Hernández, interview.

<sup>191</sup> “Un movimiento obrero dirigido por obreros,” *La Voz*, April 8, 1956, 6-7. However, a 1958 article about Chilean Catholicism in *Informations Catholique Internationales* puts the number of JOC women taking religious vows at only forty, with fifteen male Jocistas becoming priests. “Catolicismo en Chile,” *Informations Catholiques*, 20.

<sup>192</sup> According to national JOC advisor Pedro Castex, when Father Rafael Larrain, the founder of the Chilean JOC, was national advisor to the women from 1947 until about the mid 1950s, he encouraged at least forty female Jocistas to choose consecrated virginity. (Apparently under subsequent advisors the numbers were less dramatic.) This unusually high number of secular vocations, mentioned in other interviews as well, is a major reason that the Jocistas from the mid to late 1950s considered the first generation of JOCF militants to be more religious than they. Pedro Castex, interview.

regular clothes and did not withdraw from society.<sup>193</sup> The Jocistas who accepted consecrated virginity continued living in *poblaciones*, their religious commitment oftentimes unknown to their neighbors, and working in regular jobs to support themselves. This lifestyle appealed to many former militants because, in the words of one, “It had the same characteristic as the JOC of transforming the world from within. Discovering the secular institute was for me, at least, like discovering the eighth wonder because I could continue with the movement’s Christian, apostolic spirit... I could be active in the world, as a regular Chilean woman (*una chilena común y corriente.*)”<sup>194</sup> Another Jocista who was on the road to becoming a nun later changed her mind because she felt like it was separating her from “her people.” Instead, she too opted to take a vow of consecrated virginity.<sup>195</sup>

For those Jocistas who married, the experiences they had accumulated in the JOC inevitably influenced their expectations regarding domestic relations. “JOC marriages were different,” was a sentiment commonly expressed in the interviews. Accustomed to working in relative equality with the men in the movement, female militants could not easily accept the authoritarianism that marked many of their parents’ relationships, and they did not feel that they owed their husbands the obedience that both the Church and the broader society expected of them.<sup>196</sup> Elena Escalona recounted that her father “was king in the house. My mother had to

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<sup>193</sup> In 1947 Pope Pius XII issued a papal encyclical defining and explaining the need for Secular Institutes as a response to modern society. The encyclical laid out the three essential characteristics of these institutes: secularism, consecration, and apostolate. “Institutos Seculares,” *Pastoral Popular* 93 (May-June 1966): 66-68.

<sup>194</sup> Sister Herminia Bastías, et al., interview.

<sup>195</sup> Tiera Barrios [pseudonym], interview, Santiago, May 10, 2001. However, she met on a regular basis for religious communion with other women who had taken similar vows.

<sup>196</sup> According to sociological research in early 1970’s Chile, the dominant belief was that nature had granted authority to men, and among working-class families it was not uncommon for a wife to need her husband’s permission just to attend a school mothers’ meeting. Catholic ideology supported such hierarchical domestic relations. For example, Pope Pius XI, criticizing the struggle for “women’s emancipation,” stated that those who ignore “the trusting and honest obedience that a woman should show her husband tarnish the institution of marriage... many of these same people dare to say, with even greater audacity, that the servitude of one spouse to

serve him, whatever my father needed. She even had to get his handkerchief for him... It was the same with my grandfather.” However, she clearly remembered discussing in JOC meetings the respect due a wife from her husband. According to Elena:

At that time we women, just to go buy bread, had to ask our husbands for permission. ‘Can I go buy bread?’ ‘Can I go visit my friend?’ ‘Can I go visit my mama...?’ [In the JOC] we didn’t talk about women’s rights, but we did discuss how the women’s mission of mother and wife does not make her an object. In other words, it’s not the man who has to decide everything. The man doesn’t decide if you go or you don’t go. You defend yourself... You don’t ask for authorization, you only inform. You have the right to go to mass if you want, to go to a meeting, to go to the movie, to go for a walk, to go here, to go there.... The husband has to learn to respect your decision and trust that you are reliable, as long as you give him reasons to trust. Even though we were single, when we began to do the Revision of Life these issues came up, examples we brought up from our families. There’s a mama who’s not respected, who doesn’t let herself be respected.”<sup>197</sup>

Elena Castillo agreed, “We had another perspective, we saw the passive role that our mothers played, and we didn’t want to repeat that pattern. We saw how so often the women depended on the husband, which didn’t seem right to us. So we looked at how to change patterns... that the relation be more equal.”<sup>198</sup>

Male militants’ expectations about matrimony also changed through their participation in the JOC. Just as the movement stressed women’s duties as wives and mothers, it inculcated in men their obligations as husbands and fathers. In many ways, the model of masculine

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another is an indignity, that the rights of both spouses are equal.” Gissi Bustos, “Mythology About Women,” 36; Pope Pius XI, “La verdadera libertad de la mujer,” *La Voz*, December 17, 1955, 7.

<sup>197</sup> Elena Escalona, interview.

<sup>198</sup> Elena Castillo, interview.

responsibility that the JOC sought to impart paralleled earlier efforts by the state, organized labor, and the Left to turn working-class men into “respectable” family heads through appeals to moderation and personal betterment, with the focus on correcting characteristically male habits such as drinking, betting, and womanizing.<sup>199</sup> However, beyond just being a faithful, reliable breadwinner, the JOCM concerned itself with more intimate details of marital relations, which similar to the women’s branch, emerged during group discussions based on the see, judge, act method.<sup>200</sup>

Family issues received a smaller portion of attention in the JOCM than in the JOCF, but men’s experience working directly with female militants reinforced discussions about the importance of mutual respect and understanding in marriages.<sup>201</sup> One man mentioned talking in the movement about treating a wife as a *compañera* and an equal human being.<sup>202</sup> Crediting the JOC, various men contrasted their own behavior to the domineering nature of their fathers. For example, Martín Rivas recounted that his father, who was an alcoholic, “was a terrible *machista*, a man who did what he wanted, period.” He goes on to relate how his sister married a man very much like him, one “who arrives to the house and waits until he’s served. If it’s not right away, he starts swearing.” However, according to Martín, quoted earlier about learning in the JOC that

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<sup>199</sup> Roseblatt writes at length about campaigns, under the Popular Front governments, to control male sexual and social behavior according to an ideal of male responsibility. Thomas Miller Klubock, writing about the northern copper mines in the first half of the twentieth century, discusses similar efforts by company officials to promote male responsibility. Other such projects intended to “modernize” patriarchy were common elsewhere in Latin America as well. Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, chaps. 5 and 6; Klubock, *Contested Communities*, 59-62, 69-70. See also Klubock, “Writing the History of Women,” 513-514.

<sup>200</sup> Armando González et al., interview; Martín Rivas, interview; Luis Lizama and Norma Avaloz, interview; Fernando Alarcón, interview.

<sup>201</sup> Susan K. Besse discusses efforts of Brazilian state agencies under the populist leader Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945) to teach husbands that behaving like despots with tyrannical power over their wives was not acceptable. State-employed professionals argued that modern, “hygienic” married should be constructed on a base of reciprocity and mutual understanding, without questioning that women’s primary and essential roles were as wife and mother. In many ways, the rhetoric of these professionals seeking to “modernize” family relations mirrored those of the JOC, but with grounding in science rather than religion. Susan K. Besse, *Structuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 6.

<sup>202</sup> Armando González et al., interview.

housework is not just for women, his attitude is very different. “Sometimes my wife serves, sometimes I serve. There are no servants for anyone,” and he insists, “We both helped take care of the children.”<sup>203</sup> Another man commented that his family was “very traditional... My mother barely spoke,” but in the JOC he “learned to be tolerant, that you have to see your wife as a person, that she has to converse, talk, develop herself just like you. The two of you can talk about whatever problem you have.”<sup>204</sup>

Female and male Jocistas who married fellow militants stressed that the shared values and the strong friendships forged between men and women in the movement tended to translate into stable marriages of relative equality. One JOC advisor who later worked as a parish priest claimed, “It was different when I went to the JOC homes. Women joined in the conversations about the world. They weren’t just there warming up the food.”<sup>205</sup> Julia Valenzuela, who participated with her husband in the MOAC, the branch of Catholic Action for married workers, asserted that she always could tell the difference between the couples who had participated in the JOC and those who had not. According to Julia,

Women were very inhibited, educated to be housewives, to serve the husband and worry about the children, so when they went to the meetings they almost didn’t participate at all. Only the men spoke... The women were afraid of having difficulties with their husbands when they got home because of what they said... and almost always stayed quiet... But I didn’t have this problem, I participated, talked, said my piece and with Rubén [her husband] didn’t have problems.”<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Martín Rivas, interview.

<sup>204</sup> Fernando Alarcón, interview.

<sup>205</sup> Pedro Castex, interview.

<sup>206</sup> Rubén Callao and Julia Valenzuela, interview. Julia explains that this greater capacity to express oneself is a reason that many JOC couples did not continue with the MOAC.

Female militants who married outside the movement forged strong, lasting relationships with their partners as well, but these women tended to marry men who, while not in the JOC, also were socially committed, whether in unions, political parties, or other Church organizations. More importantly, they countenanced not only their wives' more outgoing manner but also their continued interest in activities outside the domestic sphere. For example, after the JOC, Victoria Plaza became active in the extreme left party MIR. She then married a Communist Party militant who, in her words, was "super machista." However, he never opposed either her continuing political or church involvement, and during the period of dictatorship they participated together in the resistance. They also shared household duties. Victoria relates, "Within a week of marrying, I told him, '*Compañero*: You are in a political party and we are equal, therefore this house is a democracy.' We took turns. Sometimes he washed; sometimes I cooked. He learned to change diapers much better than I did."<sup>207</sup>

On the other hand, Nury Ramos, a former national leader who married a man with whom she was very much in love but who did not share her social concerns, blamed this difference for their eventual separation. She claimed that her husband could not even understand her desire to work with a small neighborhood group campaigning to have the block paved. According to Nury, during the initial years of her marriage, which coincided with the heavy repression of the dictatorship that banned most civic and political organizations, she managed to focus on home and child. However, despite her husband's objections, over time she gradually became more socially involved, lamenting, "It was very, very hard for me to just be in the house, being enclosed within walls without much social contact."<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Victoria Plaza quoted in Lowy, *Sembradoras de fe y esperanza*, 61.

<sup>208</sup> Nury Ramos, interview.

Most JOC women, having tasted fulfillment outside the home, did not willingly retreat into domesticity, notwithstanding that the Church asked them to sacrifice themselves to the demands of the patriarchal family, putting husband and children first. The majority of women interviewed continued working after marriage.<sup>209</sup> Once children arrived, most Jocistas did stop, at least temporarily, but they framed this withdrawal from the workforce in a practical context, more specifically the lack of daycare, rather than attributing it to Catholic ideas concerning motherhood. In fact, several Jocistas discussed trying to keep working after the birth of their first child, leaving the infant with family or friends, but found it too difficult to balance their domestic and work obligations and left their jobs within a year or two, often with the birth of a second child. In one case, a baby fell very ill, and the mother stopped working to care for it.

Even as housewives, all of the Jocistas interviewed, without exception, continued to be active in their communities, schools, and parishes, some through the brutal years of repression.<sup>210</sup> They explained that the JOC imbued them with a desire to serve that continued to burn strongly even many years after leaving the movement. Furthermore, because of the leadership and organizing skills learned in the JOC, these women claimed they stood out from other participants and were quickly tapped to become presidents, committee heads, etc. As one former militant said, “As soon as you opened your mouth in a meeting, you became the leader because of all the JOC training you had.”<sup>211</sup>

Yet involvement in the JOC, although pushing against the boundaries of what was considered appropriate female activity and behavior, never led to a direct questioning of

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<sup>209</sup> A former JOCF president said that it actually was her advisor who encouraged her to remain in the workforce, telling her, “How are you going to just be there doing nothing? You have skills that you can’t just lose.” Lida Bravo, Jan. 29 interview.

<sup>210</sup> For example, former militants played leading roles in the Christian base communities that emerged as a crucial point of resistance to the dictatorship.

<sup>211</sup> Adriana Hernández, interview. More on this long-term commitment to activism is in Chapter 4.



patriarchal cultural norms. As Deborah Levenson-Estrada wrote about female Guatemalan trade unionists, “The tension between accepting and rejecting one’s ‘proper’ role, rights, and obligations as a female remained a largely unresolved matter.” Hence, as Levenson-Estrada pointed out for the Guatemala unionists, the JOC militants’ activism does not fit neatly into the categories that scholars have often used to describe women’s activism.<sup>212</sup> The JOC militants were not “maternal” or ‘womanist’ in their outlook. They were not acting to defend their families and actually ignored in many respects the Church’s discourse about women’s proper domestic role. However, neither did the Jocistas have a “feminist” consciousness, instead viewing their activism primarily through the prism of class (as workers) and religion. Many of the female militants’ concerns were what could be considered “strategic” gender interests, from sexual harassment in the workplace to authoritarianism in the home, but the militants never located these concerns within the broader context of women’s subordination. They analyzed problems facing women as individual occurrences of moral failing, not as systemic to a patriarchal system.

Perhaps what made the JOC so attractive to working women, and such a powerful influence on their lives, was that the movement addressed the multiplicity of their identities as women, as workers, and as Catholics. It did so at a moment in Chilean history in which, as the interviewees themselves pointed out, terms such as “feminism” or “women’s rights” were not a part of public discourse, especially among the working class. The Chilean feminist movement, which had been a largely a middle-class affair, was moribund in the decades during which the JOC was at its peak.<sup>213</sup> Women’s involvement in public life in the 1950s and 60s usually

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<sup>212</sup> Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists Against Terror*, 218.

<sup>213</sup> Chile had a well-organized feminist movement in the first half of the twentieth century, best represented by MEMCH. Focused on gaining the vote for women, the movement fell apart after universal suffrage was achieved in 1949. Only in the 1980s, under the Pinochet regime, did a strong and independent movement pushing specific female demands reemerge.

involved either a secondary role in male-dominated political parties and unions or engagement in women's groups that served as an extension of their traditional role as wife and mother, with the numerous mothers' centers of these years serving as a prime example . Viewed in this historical context, the JOC stands out both for the equality of participation and activism that it offered women as well as for the way it spoke to them as workers. Moreover, the JOC's focus on women's "dignity" and "respect" opened a space in which to discuss issues such as sexual harassment that were ignored in most other venues, planting a seed that eventually led some former militants to demand their equal rights as women from within the feminist movement that reemerged twenty years later.

## 5.0 CHAPTER FIVE – THE JOC’S POLITICAL EVOLUTION: FROM SOCIAL CATHOLICISM TO MARXISM

In the 1950s, the JOC was a self-consciously apolitical movement that considered itself above party politics. Calling for a more humane or Christian capitalism, the movement never supported radical changes to the social system, in contrast to the Marxist Left, but it also never shared the broader Church and the Right’s strident anti-communism. JOC militants, speaking loudly about social justice for the working-class, pushed vigorously for improved working and living conditions, often in cooperation with Communists and Socialists. The JOC also actively supported both men and women’s involvement in the highly politicized union movement, in opposition to Catholic groups that supported alternate Christian unions. With the Communist Party facing severe governmental repression, and Clotario Blest, an independent Catholic radical, leading Chile’s most important labor federation, the United Workers’ Federation (CUT- *Central Única de Trabajadores*), a unique but brief opportunity existed for the JOC to make notable inroads in Chilean industries both large and small.

As the 1960s advanced, the movement’s apolitical position became harder to maintain. Not only did the union moment grow increasingly politicized, but social and political organizations, many with connections to either the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) or a revitalized Left, burgeoned in the *poblaciones*. Partially in response, the JOC shifted its strategy away from mass organizing to focus more specifically on leadership development. Rather than

promoting activities and events under their own banner, militants now worked more quietly behind the scenes to spread the movement's Christian social message, although the JOC continued to have a mass presence in a number of neighborhoods through its leadership in parish-based youth centers. Furthermore, while never forging any direct connections with the PDC, through its Institute for Popular Education (CIEP) the JOC provided ample personnel for the Christian Democrats' Popular Promotion program, forming an important link between the party and its working-class base. However, the JOC's connection with the ruling party remained more social than political, notwithstanding the ideological affinity between the two organizations.

In the atmosphere of intense political fervor leading up to and following Salvador Allende's election in 1970, the JOC could no longer keep politics on the outside. Unlike the 1964 election won by the Christian Democrats, in which double militancy remained rare, many Jocistas, while still active in the movement, openly participated in parties aligned with Allende's Popular Unity coalition. A majority joined MAPU (Unitary Popular Action Movement), a Marxist offshoot of the PDC's left-wing, but a significant contingent also participated in the extreme left MIR. After Allende's election, the issue of whether or not to ally with the new socialist government created intense conflict within the movement. In the end, national leaders voted to replace the JOC's see, judge, act method with Marxist analysis, leading to a split in the movement and a significant decline in influence at the base level. However, even before this critical decision, the JOC was facing insurmountable challenges due to a steep decrease in support from the Church.

## 5.1 JOC, CLASS STRUGGLE, AND THE MOVEMENT'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SECULAR LEFT

Following the formal separation of church and state in the Constitution of 1925, the Chilean Catholic Church dissociated itself from the Conservative party, withdrew from the political arena and for the next three decades staunchly proclaimed its neutrality with regards to the country's political forces. "The Church does not want a political power that procures political aims.... It is a religious and moral force whose influence extends as far as the religious and moral domain," ecclesiastical authorities insisted, citing the words of the Holy See.<sup>1</sup> However, while frequently trumpeting that the Church "is outside and above party politics," as the Episcopate declared in 1947, the hierarchy did not conceal its strong distaste for Leftist politics and in particular the Marxist philosophy of class struggle, a position that resonated loudly in the country's working-class Catholic newspapers of mid-century.<sup>2</sup>

With headlines such as "Class Hatred is Not the Solution," and "Egoism Provokes Class Struggle," *La Voz* harshly condemned Communism as "a movement of hatred and lies, blood and slavery."<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the newspaper also criticized "individualistic liberalism and its extension, capitalism" for causing "innumerable injuries" and "terrible consequences for the working class."<sup>4</sup> Reflecting the influence of an international social Catholic discourse supported by Chile's progressive bishops, *La Voz* argued that social justice could best be achieved not through class struggle, but through a corporatist policy grounded in "harmony and collaboration

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<sup>1</sup> "La Iglesia no está sujeta a ningún partido político," *La Voz*, May 30, 1954, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Carta colectiva del episcopado chileno, January 1, 1947, quoted in "La Iglesia y la política," *La Voz*, July 14, 1957, 1.

<sup>3</sup> "El odio de clase no es la solución," *La Voz*, November 19, 1955, 13; "El capital y el trabajo se complementan en la concepción cristiana de la empresa: El egoísmo provoca la lucha de clases," *La Voz*, January 28, 1954, 7;

"Jóvenes obreros del mundo, unidos," *La Voz*, May 1, 1956, 3.

<sup>4</sup> "Prevision social es justicia, no caridad," *La Voz*, February 26, 1956.

between capital and labor.”<sup>5</sup> Such social equilibrium was feasible, *La Voz* posited, quoting Pope Pius XII, because Christ would serve as the moral link tying bosses and workers together in the creation of a more humane capitalism.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, *Vida Obrera* attacked Communism, “its hands stained with many crimes,” and warned of “the societal disorder and rancor” sowed by class struggle, while also denouncing “economic liberalism’s guilt for workers’ miserable situation.”<sup>7</sup> The newspaper affirmed, “Capital has to be made to see its role with regard to its best ally, labor...it should defend the material and spiritual progress of the working class.”<sup>8</sup>

The JOC, whose members read and helped distribute *La Voz* and *Vida Obrera*, unequivocally rejected Communist doctrine and embraced the social Catholic mandate of achieving justice for workers through inter-class solidarity undergirded by Christian spirituality. For example, a JOCM vice-president wrote in 1947 that the movement was united by “a common ideal: Christianizing the working-class mass and the rich brother,”<sup>9</sup> while a JOCF bulletin from 1949 argued that Christianity was “the third force acting in the world...directly against liberalism and Marxism.”<sup>10</sup> The JOC page of *Vida Obrera*, written by movement leaders, called for “the just distribution of profit between Capital and Labor,” and at the 1956 Festival of the

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<sup>5</sup> “Una industria para el bienestar de los hogares,” *La Voz*, February 12, 1956, 6-7. According to social Catholicism’s corporatist vision of society, the different social classes to make up an inseparable whole. As explained in a 1955 *La Voz* article, “Because society is an organism, its members cannot repel each other. Equilibrium between the classes that possess the wealth and the proletariat needs to be achieved.” “El odio de clase,” *La Voz*.

<sup>6</sup> “No pueden prosperar las reformas sociales si no hay vida cristiana,” and “Cristo: Lazo de unión de patronos y obreros,” *La Voz*, May 16, 1954, 11. Other articles in *La Voz* that reflect the Church’s opposition to class struggle and its support for Christian-inspired social reform include: “Perspectivas cristianas,” *La Voz*, May 10, 1956, 3; “La empresa y el trabajador,” *La Voz*, August 19, 1956, 6; “Trato humano y aprecio sincero, hermanarán a obreros y patronos,” *La Voz*, August 19, 1956, 7; “Comunismo y capitalismo: Fuerzas anticristianas,” *La Voz*, February 17, 1957, 11; “Entre obreros y patronos: Un diálogo positivo,” *La Voz*, August 5, 1962, 11.

<sup>7</sup> “El pueblo contra el Comunismo,” *Vida Obrera*, January 6, 1945, 1; “¿Luchas de clases?” *Vida Obrera*, February 17, 1945; “El obrero en el futuro,” *Vida Obrera*, March 10, 1945, 1.

<sup>8</sup> “El camino de la lucha proletaria,” *Vida Obrera*, first week of February, 1947, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Julio Silva, “Fuertes, puros, alegres y conquistadores,” *Vida Obrera*, second week of February, 1947, 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Boletín de la Juventud Obrera Católica Femenina J.O.C.F.*, no. 8 (October, 1949): 7.

Worker, the JOC “made a petition for social justice based on love between all men, in the collaboration between capital and labor.”<sup>11</sup>

While pushing a social Catholic agenda, JOC leaders recognized that their movement, as part of the Church and subordinate to ecclesiastical authority, was expected to honor the institution’s purportedly apolitical position. JOC documents, which frequently emphasized that the movement was without preference for any political ideology, indicate that the early leadership took this mandate seriously. Little discussion of strictly political matters appeared in the documents from the movement’s first two decades, and a JOC report from the late 1940s, signed by the JOCM and JOCF presidents, as well as the national advisor, warned that the movement “must remain, as an institution, in its own terrain,” not intervening in the affairs of political parties, unions, mutual associations, etc.<sup>12</sup>

Yet the JOC’s leaders and advisors also recognized that workers needed to apply pressure on capital for it to reform its unchristian ways, and they did not outright reject class struggle as a means to achieve this purpose. While the nucleus of the JOC’s discourse consisted of raising consciousness of workers’ personal dignity and value, rather than transforming economic structures, the movement, similar to the secular Left, spoke out loudly and consistently against their exploitation and denial of basic rights, decrying problems such as insufficient salaries, lack of workplace safety, poor healthcare, decrepit housing, and neighborhoods in abandon. Moreover, although using the term “workers’ struggle” (*lucha obrera*) rather than “class struggle” (*lucha de clases*), the JOC essentially agreed with the Left that workers should struggle as a class in defense of their interests. In particular, the movement considered itself “a school for

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<sup>11</sup> “Nuestro deber,” *Vida Obrera*, fourth week of October, 1947, 2; “Festival: 12.000 chilenos mostraron unidad obrera,” *La Voz*, October 1956, 16.

<sup>12</sup> B. Piñera, Ajila Jara, [name of JOCM president illegible], [untitled document], n.d., AAS, AC, 1940-1965, Leg. 132, no. 3.

Catholic working-class leaders [who] would become militants and leaders in diverse working-class institutions and activities,” especially labor unions, but also mutual organizations, cooperatives, and even political parties.<sup>13</sup>

The JOC also did not share the larger Church’s overriding concern with containing Communist influence, especially powerful in Chile’s unions. The JOC documents lacked the acerbic anti-communist rhetoric of the general Catholic working-class press, and movement militants were encouraged to work with Communists and Socialists to further their mutual interests.<sup>14</sup> The report from the late 1940s signed by JOC’s national advisor and the JOCM and JOCF presidents stated:

among workers, to be anti-Communist is many times seen to be anti-worker... Jocistas will resist all measures that are contrary to good sense, morals, or the true interests of the working-class. And within that context, they will meet with the Communists, as long as they share similar standards... Cardijn [JOC’s founder] distinguished between a doctrinaire anti-Communism, of which there can be no doubt [and] an anti-Communism of practice...that does not fit with *jocismo*, a certain anti-Communism that by being blind, is ineffective and counterproductive.<sup>15</sup>

Movement militants and advisors active at the base level, while conscious that communism was “the great bogeyman” of the Church, confirmed in interviews that despite their ideological differences with this political philosophy, they did not hesitate to collaborate with Communist (and Socialist) activists in trade unions and, in those poblaciones where the Left had

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<sup>13</sup> Piñera and Jara., AAS, AC, 1940-1965.

<sup>14</sup> This encouragement of cooperation with those holding divergent ideological views, in order to achieve specific ends, foreshadowed the position the Chilean hierarchy would adopt in 1962 with the release of its pastoral “Man’s Social and Political Duty Today” (“El deber social y político en la hora presente.”) Landsberger, “Time, Persons, Doctrine,” 91-92.

<sup>15</sup> Piñera and Jara, AAS, AC, 1940-1965.



a significant presence, in neighborhood groups.<sup>16</sup> As one male leader, who entered the movement in the early 1950s, explained:

Yes, anti-Marxism was in the air, it was as if the Marxists were bad, you shouldn't trust them.... But this didn't penetrate much in the JOC, based on my experience... In the JOC we weren't sectarian... We worked with Socialists, with Communists in the población, in the community, in the factories, everywhere ... in daily life we worked together... We were interested in advancing things.<sup>17</sup>

A former JOCF national leader, who first attended meetings in 1957, commented that the JOC “taught me that we all are children of God... It didn't matter whether I worked with a Communist, or with this, that, or the other.... I am for social struggle (*lucha social*); I am for a better salary, for more recognition of the worker; I am for the rights of the workers... My JOC group worked with the Communists in La Legua [her población] without problems.”<sup>18</sup> And a Jocista active in the movement in the 1960s remarked, “You had to be a tolerant militant, a militant who is open, you can't be sectarian, dogmatic... but must understand that in the end it is about the workers, it is about people organizing, [so] you can transform the situations that are affecting them.”<sup>19</sup>

In addition to Jocistas' significant involvement with Communists (and to a lesser extent Socialists) at the local level, the JOC as a movement joined the Left in national campaigns for reform of social security (1950), a minimum wage law (1952), and a law mandating a fair family

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<sup>16</sup> Pedro Castex, interview. According to interviewees, strongly anti-Communist JOC advisors, while few, also existed, especially in the north of the country, where many Canadian and American priests connected with religious orders ministered to the workers.

<sup>17</sup> Manuel Vergara, interview.

<sup>18</sup> Elena Escalona, interview. Elena Escalona lived in La Legua, a población with a historically strong Communist presence.

<sup>19</sup> Luis Contreras, interview, Santiago, April 15, 2003.

wage for workers (1955/56), including equal pay for youth and adults.<sup>20</sup> Under direction from their national leadership, JOC militants throughout the country organized talks and discussions in working-class neighborhoods in order to educate workers about the need for government action on these issues. They also conducted surveys, gathered petitions, and met with government officials to push their agenda. Finally, they were involved in organizing street protests and other mass actions, sometimes together with Chile's main labor federation, recently reconstituted as the CUT (*Central Única de Trabajadores*).<sup>21</sup> For example, when fighting for social security reform, one militant remembered that the JOC organized huge demonstrations outside of the National Congress on the days the legislation was discussed, followed by marches through the downtown that sometimes led to arrests by the police.<sup>22</sup> Another Jocista, a national leader, proudly related, "We were really out there fighting, we were out in the streets, as JOC. The *carabineros* (national police) even hit me."<sup>23</sup>

Many Jocistas pointed out that because they talked about and fought for social justice, they frequently were labeled as Communists by the police, as well as by neighbors and co-workers. Being labeled as such seemed almost like a point of pride to interviewees, perhaps confirming in their minds how distant they were from the traditional, conservative Church, and they often chuckled when describing the frequent misperceptions. One man, discussing the problems the Jocistas often had with the *carabineros*, explained, "They linked us to the Communists, they thought we were Communists.... They even thought that J.O.C. stood for the

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<sup>20</sup> As mentioned in chapter 2, in Chile the Socialist Party (PS) historically has had less presence at the popular level than the Communist Party (PC). This difference was especially pronounced in the working-class poblaciones, but the PS' presence also was weaker in the unions.

<sup>21</sup> "Acción social," *La Voz*, April 8, 1956, 7; "Campaña de previsión social," *La Voz*, February 26, 1956, 9; "Previsión social es justicia, no caridad," *La Voz*, February 26, 1956, 4; "Juventud Obrera Católica reunió dirigentes nacionales," *La Voz*, November 12, 1955; "Una campaña social," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 24 (July 1955): 5; Untitled JOC document from the personal papers of Isabela Valenzuela, personal assistant to Father Rafael Larraín.

<sup>22</sup> Estudemia García Rojas, undated interview, quoted in Aliaga Rojas, *Itinerario Histórico*, 110.

<sup>23</sup> Gustavo Canehuante, interview, Santiago, January 21, 2000.

*Juventud Obrera Comunista* (Young Communist Workers). We had to explain who we were, so they would let us go, even carrying items [such as a letter from one of their advisors] that could prove we were connected to the Church.”<sup>24</sup> A JOCF leader commented, “In general, people said if you were poor and fought for change, if you fought for better conditions, you were a Communist,” while a third militant related that in her factory, “The people confused us with the Communists, because we had a sense of class.”<sup>25</sup> In a group interview, the former militants chimed together, “People on the outside all thought we were a bunch of Communists... and in fact in many parishes the people ran from us, didn’t want us to hold our meetings.”<sup>26</sup> “Within the Church,” stated a JOCM national leader, “they called us the red Catholics.”<sup>27</sup>

While Jocistas worked together and felt some identification with Communists and Socialists, they also recognized that with all three entities preaching about rights for workers and organizing in the poblaciones and factories, they were natural competitors for adherents.<sup>28</sup> Indications of tensions at the popular level between the two camps exist, especially during the mid to late 1950s, when the JOC was at its numeric peak and the Communist Party was taking steps to reestablish its foothold in working-class neighborhoods after the past decade’s repression. For example, Jocistas mentioned that when selling *La Voz* in their poblaciones, they had problems with Communist youth selling their party’s paper, *El Siglo*, with each group trying to reach more people. Two Jocistas, from different sectors of the city, complained of being attacked by their Communist counterparts, who would say “Ah, you’re Catholics!” and start to

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<sup>24</sup> Luis Reyes, interview.

<sup>25</sup> Lidia Bravo, Jan. 29 interview; Adriana Hernández, interview.

<sup>26</sup> Gladys Abarca et al., interview.

<sup>27</sup> Manuel Vergara, interview.

<sup>28</sup> Because the Socialist Party had less presence in the poblaciones than the Communist Party, the former was mentioned much less frequently in the interviews than the latter.

insult them.<sup>29</sup> Interviewees also mentioned occasional tensions with Communists in the unions, although emphasizing that until the 1960s (and the rise of the Christian Democratic Party) it was at the level of the labor federations that the ideological differences were most pronounced.

In the end, what became clear in the interviews and documents was that despite the strident rhetoric spewing from both sides (the Communist Party was as anticlerical as the Church was anticommunist), and their competition for adherents, the Catholics and Communists in Santiago did not represent two separate ideological worlds, with only mistrust and rancor dividing them, as the newspapers might lead one to believe.<sup>30</sup> As many people pointed out, the Communists were neighbors and co-workers; they were long-time friends and lunchtime companions; often they even were family members. It was not uncommon for Jocistas to have had parents or siblings who were Communist or Socialist party members. One JOC militant remarked, “I didn’t fear the Communists or the Socialists, they weren’t going to eat me, because my father was a [Communist] militant-sympathizer, and my father was a human being, the same as me.”<sup>31</sup>

These personal connections across ideological lines reflect the fact that in Chilean culture being both Communist and Catholic was not necessarily antithetical. In one case, for example, a JOC leader’s mother had been a Communist party member, but she still had him baptized and enrolled him in the parish for his first communion.<sup>32</sup> Others spoke of party members they knew who had a close relationship with their JOC advisor or even attended JOC meetings, as did one

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<sup>29</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, Feb. 10 interview; Luis Reyes, interview.

<sup>30</sup> For examples of the anticlerical rhetoric in Chile’s twentieth century working-class press, see Hutchinson, *Labor Appropriate to Their Sex*, 86-87; 125-127 and Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, 204.

<sup>31</sup> Fernando Alarcón, interview.

<sup>32</sup> Moises Leighton and Johnny Carrasco, interview.

Jocista's (future) Communist husband.<sup>33</sup> An Argentinean priest, ministering in the early 1960s to workers in the industrial city of Valparaíso, wrote in *Pastoral Popular*, "People influenced by Marxism...represent a very special native Communism (*comunismo criollo*), where a Communist mixes a vague faith, which makes him look to the parish for the sacraments" with a belief that Communism "is the only authentic workers movement."<sup>34</sup> Similarly, a French priest and former JOC advisor in Chile explained in an interview that, in great contrast to France or Germany, "In Chile, the environment of popular religiosity meant that it didn't appear as a contradiction to be a Communist and a Christian."<sup>35</sup>

Finally, many Jocistas and their advisors felt that through their social activism, the Communists realized that their movement was committed to justice for the working-class, which in their view earned them a respect, at least at the base level, that helped place the Church in a new light. Conversely, the Jocistas realized that the Marxist activists shared many of their ideals and goals for improving workers' living and working conditions, and, although frequently criticizing the Communists for being dogmatic, close-minded, and authoritarian, they came to respect their deep mystique, which they compared to their own. One national JOCF leader noted, "Committed Communist militants had an almost religious *mística*, which I would say was a lot

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<sup>33</sup> Victoria Plaza, Nov. 17 interview.

<sup>34</sup> Father Alberto Ballerini, "Viviendo en población obrera," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 84 (November-December, 1964): 15. (In the article, Ballerini refers to not only the working class's attraction to Communism, but also to the FRAP, the political alliance formed between Communist and Socialists in 1956.) According to statistics from the early 1960s compiled by the Chilean Espiscopate, 80% of Chileans baptized their children, even though 70% of the population described themselves as "non-practicing" Catholics, with only 10% regularly attending mass, reflecting the deep cultural connection with sacramental religion despite a broad disconnection from the institutional Church. Statistic from *El plan pastoral del Episcopado chileno*, p. 8, cited in Ignacio Vergara S.I., "La evangelización por el ministerio del bautismo," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 84 (November-December, 1964): 21.

<sup>35</sup> Father Pierre Dubois, interview, Santiago, October 12, 2000. Gamucio Parker argues that throughout the twentieth century the Chilean industrial proletariat maintained a high level of religiosity compared to the European proletariat. See Gamucio Parker, "Religión y clases subalternas." Roseblatt, in her discussion of the left's portrayal of priests as sexual abusers, mentioned a JOC leader in the late 1940s who left the movement for the Communist Party after confronting, in her words, "priests who raped girls," but who nonetheless stated in an interview, "I was still Catholic, still believed in God and the Virgin." Quoted in Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, 204.

like ours. They renounced everything, gave their time... there was a lot of similarity between one thing and another.”<sup>36</sup> Another woman remarked, “Without this *mística*, whether Christian or Communist... people wouldn’t dare to organize... you had to have a *mística obrera* to be a leader...” This especially was the case in the unions, she pointed out, “where the environment was harsh, and you worried about being fired.”<sup>37</sup>

## 5.2 THE JOC AND CHILE’S LABOR MOVEMENT

The Chilean JOC’s deep commitment to syndicalism broke with the Church’s historical resistance to unionization. Not until the first social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) did the Vatican finally endorse workers’ organizations. However, the Pope still expressed preference for guilds that would unite management and labor within the same organization, while giving qualified approval to “unmixed” unions whose membership “did not include socialists, the irreligious, or those of other faiths.” Later encyclicals maintained this opposition to workers’ unions that were socialist or non-Catholic, although the Vatican gave leeway to national churches to develop policies according to local conditions.<sup>38</sup> The Chilean hierarchy, led by Cardinal Caro, defended the right of workers to unionize in a 1949 pastoral entitled “Concerning Social Problems” (“*Sobre algunos problemas sociales*”), but it emphasized the need for Christian unions parallel to socialist ones.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Clotilde Silva, interview.

<sup>37</sup> Lidia Bravo, Jan. 29 interview.

<sup>38</sup> Douglas P. Seaton, *Catholics and Radicals: The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists and the American Labor Movement, from Depression to Cold War*. (East Brunswick, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1981), 15, 29.

<sup>39</sup> Landsberger, “Time, Persons, Doctrine,” 87-88; Aliaga *Itinerario histórico*, 112.

Despite the Church's encouragement, Catholic unions never managed to establish a strong foothold in Chile, a country with a long history of Marxist-dominated syndicalism.<sup>40</sup> Reflecting this reality, the Chilean JOC opposed efforts to form confessional unions, in contrast to countries such as France, where a staunchly anti-Communist JOC was deeply committed to an established Catholic labor movement.<sup>41</sup> Supported by their advisors, Chilean JOC leaders argued that Catholic unions were impractical and would only divide the labor movement, and they sought instead to influence the secular unions from within.<sup>42</sup> This opposition to Catholic syndicalism pitted the JOC against Catholic groups interested in establishing a rival to the Marxist-dominated labor federation.<sup>43</sup>

The principal focus of Catholic unionizing efforts was the Chilean Labor Union Association (ASICH- *Asociación Sindical Chilena*), founded in 1947 by the Jesuit priest Alberto Hurtado.<sup>44</sup> A strong advocate of Catholic syndicalism throughout the 1940s, Hurtado originally intended his organization to be simply a training school for Christian-oriented unionists who could compete with the Communists. In ASICH's early years, many Jocistas attended its courses

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<sup>40</sup> The Communists, and later the Socialists, dominated the industrial unions that developed in Chile prior to the First World War. Legislation passed in the 1920s and early 30s limited unions to establishments employing more than twenty-five workers and placed tight restrictions on existing unions, forcing the labor movement to rely heavily on Leftist political parties for support. As a result, the ability of workers to form Christian trade unions in Chile was severely restricted. See Angell, *Politics and the Labour*, 6-7, 12-13, 42-68, 83-106.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Whitney's article about the JOCF's involvement in Catholic trade unionism in France and Cole-Arnal's article comparing the JOC in France and Quebec. The JOC in Brazil, the other Latin American country with a strong JOC movement, also encouraged its militants to join secular unions, but the movement's presence within the unions was less pronounced than in Chile. See Mainwaring, *Catholic Youth Workers Movement*.

<sup>42</sup> Tibor Sulik, "Sindicalismo," *Pastoral Popular* no. 38-39 (October-November 1956) 14-15; Monsignor Carlos Camus, interview; Hilda Pérez, interview; Rubén Callao and Julia Valenzuela, interview.

<sup>43</sup> While *Vida Obrera* (which stopped publication in 1949) strongly supported Catholic participation in the secular union movement, *La Voz* (first published in 1953) gave more coverage to the ASICH than to the JOC, especially by the end of the 1950s. The latter newspaper was directly under the auspices of the Santiago Archdiocese, while the Department of Worker Specialization of the Church's Social Economic Ministry published the former.

<sup>44</sup> Ernesto Moreno B., *Historia del movimiento sindical chileno: Una visión cristiana* (Santiago: Instituto Chileno de Estudios Humanísticos, 1986), 73, 78. The Catholic Workers' League (*Liga Obrera Católica*) and the Workers Social Union (*Unión Social Obrera*), both formed in the early 1940s, were the predecessors of the ASICH. Hurtado was a former advisor to Catholic Action for university student and also the founder of the well-known Catholic social service agency Home of Christ (*Hogar de Cristo*). Moreno, *Historia del movimiento sindical chileno*, 70.

focused on technical and doctrinal formation.<sup>45</sup> However, influenced by the Latin American Confederation of Christian Trade Unionists (CLASC) and backed by the Chilean hierarchy, by the late 1950s the ASICH had evolved into an alternative to the Marxist-dominated CUT. A severing of ties with the JOC resulted, although evidence exists of serious divisions between the two entities earlier in the decade.<sup>46</sup>

Highlighting these divisions, a lengthy 1954 letter from four JOC advisors to the Chilean Episcopal Commission opened by stating “almost from the beginning, there has been a serious difference of opinion between the JOC and the ASICH.” The letter then continued with a detailed argument as to why ASICH’s support for the formation of a Christian Federation of Workers was misguided and could never work. The advisors told the bishops that because of suspicion toward the Church among the working-class, and especially among unionists:

Catholic unions would be labeled as anti-worker, which would be a dead weight from the beginning. It has to be pointed out that in a system of union pluralism, in which unions that are Communist, Socialist, etc. exist, a Catholic union would have to be the most audacious and extreme in its petitions and demands to attract people. Otherwise, it would be labeled, to use the common expression, ‘yellow’ [i.e. under management’s control.]”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Moreno, *Historia del movimiento sindical chileno*, 73-74; Stewart-Gambino, *Church and Politics in the Chilean Countryside*, 99-100; “Mil sindicalistas han pasado por escuela P. Alberto Hurtado,” *La Voz*, June 15, 1958, 9. Besides offering courses, the ASICH, which received funding from Europe, also had a Department of Socio-Economic Research and a Legal Department providing advice and support to union activists. “Un nuevo local tienen los trabajadores en Valparaíso,” *La Voz*, July 11, 1954, 8.

<sup>46</sup> Moreno, *Historia del movimiento sindical chileno*, 78-79; Rubén Callao and Julia Valenzuela, interview. ASICH never managed to establish a significant presence among urban workers, but it had considerable success in the countryside. Loveman, *Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, 276-277.

<sup>47</sup> Rafael Larraín E., Fernando Ariztía R., Pedro Castex M., and Gabriel Larraín V. to the Episcopal Commission, Santiago, December 13, 1954, AAS, AC, 1931-1954, Leg. 132, no. 1. Of the four who signed this letter, R. Larraín was the only priest who was not a JOC advisor. He recently had left the movement to establish the Young Catholic Agriculturists movement (JAC) for young rural workers.



Reflecting the further deterioration of relations over time, a 1958 letter from a national JOCF advisor to the auxiliary bishop of Santiago spoke out angrily against ASICH's formation of a youth branch with goals similar to those of the Catholic Action movement. Although unlike the JOC it would not officially be part of the Church, this "duality of movement," warned the advisor, "would result in great confusion and anarchy."<sup>48</sup>

While the JOC opposed Catholic unions, it never sought to become directly involved in secular ones. Instead, the movement focused on educating young Christian workers about syndicalism and preparing them for a leadership role in it. At a 1956 regional JOC conference in Santiago, movement leaders stressed, "The JOC is an educational and apostolic movement and as such does not directly participate in syndicalism but brings about the unionization and participation of young workers in union life."<sup>49</sup> At JOC workshops, conferences, and congresses, syndicalism was a recurrent theme, with frequent talks and discussions ranging from the nature of unionism to work conditions in different sectors of the economy to labor laws. The movement often invited prominent labor leaders to come and share their knowledge and experiences at these events.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, as the movement separated itself from ASICH, it formed its own Labor Union Department (*Departamento Sindical*) that offered courses with titles such as Work Contracts, Salary, Union, and Collective Conflicts and the Company.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Fernando Ariztía R. to Monsignor Emilio Tagle C., Santiago, June 23, 1958, AAS, AC, 1955-1961, Leg. 132, no. 2.

<sup>49</sup> "Conclusiones," *Pastoral Popular* no. 38-39 (October-November 1956): 30.

<sup>50</sup> Nury Ramos, interview; Luis Lizama and Norma Avaloz, interview; Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, March 18 interview; Hilda Pérez, interview; Escalona, interview; Rosa Morales, interview; Rubén Callao and Julia Valenzuela, interview. The movement often invited prominent labor leaders to come and share their knowledge and experiences.

<sup>51</sup> "La JOC instruye a sus miembros," *La Voz*, May 1, 1957, 9. A JOC report states that the movement's Labor Union Department "seeks to provide a basic union education to all Jocistas and specifically to those that have or will have more serious responsibilities in the union sphere." *La peregrinación internacional a Roma*, Santiago, May 1957, AAS, AC, n.d., Leg. 132, no. 4.

Jocistas emphasized that the discourse about syndicalism was the same for men and women, and in general the documents differentiated little between the sexes in discussions about the importance of union participation.<sup>52</sup> *Vida Obrera* women's section (which Jocistas helped write) spoke directly to women about defending their interests through unionization. One article explained:

Better work conditions, better salaries, treatment more appropriate to our nature as women on the part of the bosses, who sometimes are the worst tyrants... These and many things that could easily be corrected, but for which sometimes the backing of others affected by the same abuses or lack of respect is needed, channeled in our own organization, such as the Union.<sup>53</sup>

Another article stressed, "Catholic women should see this participation [in the union] as an obligation of conscience, especially for our working-class *compañeras*."<sup>54</sup> Movement leaders meeting at the regional JOC conference also clearly supported women's involvement in unions. The conference's conclusions stated, "Regarding female participation, care should be taken to prepare [women] for union life."<sup>55</sup> At the same conference, the South American JOC president, noting that women were a majority in the textile industry, argued with regard to unions, "The presence of the woman will be seen as necessary, and above all, the presence of the JOC woman."<sup>56</sup> However, while the JOC leaders considered women's union participation as important, they did not feel it should be completely equal to men's; the conference's conclusions

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<sup>52</sup> However, the JOCM seemed to have had significantly more contact with the ASICH than the JOCF, and the extent of female participation in the JOC's union courses is not documented.

<sup>53</sup> "Es necesario que la mujer comprenda el valor de su unión," *Vida Obrera*, first week of March, 1948, 6.

<sup>54</sup> "Sindicato y voto femenino," *Vida Obrera*, first week of November, 1947, 6.

<sup>55</sup> "Conclusiones," *Pastoral Popular*, 30.

<sup>56</sup> Tibor Sulik, "Sindicalismo," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 38-39 (October-November 1956): 34.

pointed out that union preparation for female Jocistas should be done “respecting their characteristics as women.”<sup>57</sup>

Initial resistance to union participation among youth entering the JOC was high, according to interviewees, which accounted for the movement’s insistent efforts to raise young workers’ consciousness of the labor movement’s essential role in defending their rights. One man explained, “People didn’t want to commit themselves to union positions because you could be fired, because it would create problems, because you had to be away from home a lot, all these things.”<sup>58</sup> Besides the practical hardships, the Church’s traditional condemnation of unions permeated the Catholic working-class environment. Jocistas remembered that parish priests of that era would tell people, “The unions are bad, that syndicalism is bad,” and a former JOC advisor said, “I remember that many Christian workers used to think that they couldn’t participate in a strike or that they shouldn’t participate in a union because it was against the commandment to love [your fellow man.]”<sup>59</sup> Outside of the religious pressure, women felt social stigmatization against union participation because of their gender. A female militant commented, “Back then no one wanted to get involved in syndicalism... Working in a factory was viewed badly, because the environment was so degrading... to be in a union was seen just as negatively.”<sup>60</sup> A JOCF leader mentioned that women would say, “I’m never going to participate in a union!” but then through the JOC they “began to become aware, they would begin to participate.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> “Conclusiones,” *Pastoral Popular*, 30.

<sup>58</sup> Gladys Abarca et al., interview.

<sup>59</sup> Rubén Callao and Julia Valenzuela, interview; Father Pierre Dubois, interview.

<sup>60</sup> Marta Olivares, interview.

<sup>61</sup> Adriana Hernández, interview.

The JOC's efforts to penetrate the Marxist-dominated union movement occurred at a historically auspicious moment. With the Communist Party at a low point because of governmental persecution, and its relationship with the Socialist Party severely strained after the conflicts of the Popular Front years, the Left's traditional control over industrial unions was greatly weakened.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, stagnant salaries paired with a growing inflation rate had increased labor militancy and strikes (a majority illegal) during the first half of the decade.<sup>63</sup> In 1953, the CUT replaced the conflict-ridden CTCh, the Workers Confederation of Chile, which had fallen apart in 1946 due to the political divisions between the Communists and Socialists. Clotario Blest, a former seminarian and radical social Christian without any party or Church affiliation, was elected as Secretary-General. (Blest had no formal connection with the JOC, but according to interviewees he was an occasional speaker at JOC conferences, giving talks about the history of the labor movement.<sup>64</sup>) Although willing to work with the Communists and Socialists, during his eight-year tenure Blest fought to keep the trade union movement free from political intervention.<sup>65</sup>

The Left's decline at the end of the Popular Front period arguably created a unique opportunity for Catholic labor activists to play a more pronounced role in the secular union movement, much the way the repressive political situation had provided a space for JOC

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<sup>62</sup> The 1948 Law for the Defense of Democracy, intended to eliminate the Communist Party from the political scene, removed all union leaders of Communist affiliation from their posts and banned all Communists from standing for office. Angell, *Politics and the Labour Movement*, 59.

<sup>63</sup> Strikes increased from an average of 85 per year in 1939-46 to 136 per year in 1946-52 and then to 205 per year during the Ibáñez government (1952-58). In 1955 alone, 212 of 274 strikes were declared illegal. Drake, "Chile," 126; Vitale, *De Alessandri a Frei*, 340.

<sup>64</sup> Adriana Hernández, interview; Juan Rodríguez, interview, Santiago, August 14, 2001.

<sup>65</sup> Julio Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy in Chile: From 1932 to the Fall of Allende* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 118-119; Mónica Echeverría, *Antihistoria de un luchador: Clotario Blest, 1823-1990* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 1993), 192-193; José Aguilera quoted in Fernández Fernández, *Historia oral de la Iglesia Católica*, 151; Furci, *Chilean Communist Party*, 64; Angell, *Politics and the Labour Movement*, 219; Vitale, *De Alessandri a Frei*, 134, 338-342.

activism in the poblaciones. The CUT's program was explicitly Marxist, but according to Luis Vitale, it was the support of independent workers, many recently arrived from the countryside, that insured Blest's election.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, writing from first-hand experience, this Marxist historian remembers that during the early to mid 1950s many of the nation's largest factories had union leaders without any political connections.<sup>67</sup> How many of these leaders had Catholic affiliations is unclear, but a 1955 article in *La Voz* traced the efforts of leaders "of Christian inspiration" to eliminate Marxist language from the CUT's declaration of principles and restructure the labor federation on foundations "respectful of Christian consciousness." The article referred to workers associated with the ASICH, Falange, JOC, Christian Union Front, and specifically names ten national and local JOCM leaders.<sup>68</sup> A JOC unionist commented, "The Marxists wanted to put the means of production in the hands of the workers, while those inspired by the Church wanted workers and management (*empresarios*) to have a society in common. We wanted workers to share in the profits— to have them be better distributed, and to be part owners, with stock."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> The CUT's Marxist program reflects the fact that Communists, although weakened, together with the Socialists still dominated the labor federation's executive committee. Petras, *Politics and Social Forces*, 173-174.

<sup>67</sup> Vitale, *De Alessandri a Frei*, 340.

<sup>68</sup> "Importante debate en la Central Unica de Trabajadores," *La Voz*, November 19, 1955, 10. *La Voz* mentions Catholic leadership of union directorates at individual factories, such as a silk factory in Viña del Mar (adjacent to the city of Valparaíso), a factory with a strong JOC presence. The paper also celebrates a recent JOCM president's election as a union leader in the industrial zone of Penco, near Concepción, an area with strong Communist influences. Documentary evidence of JOC union leadership in Santiago factories was not found, however. "Obreros católicos son echados por luchar por justicia social," *La Voz*, March, 25, 1956, 11; "Justo reconocimiento a labor de jocista en directiva del sindicato Fanaloza, en Penco," *La Voz*, June 30, 1957, 12.

<sup>69</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, May 12 interview.

### 5.3 JOC ACTIVISM IN LABOR UNIONS AND FACTORIES

Such ideological debates generally were not occurring at the factory level, where Jocistas were most active. JOC documents expressed a strong concern with keeping politics and politicians outside the union movement, but militants emphasized that within the factories in the 1950s “bread-and-butter” issues, not politics, dominated. There were exceptions, with a few Jocistas, mainly workers in large factories, complaining that Marxists had taken over their unions. But most interviewees agreed that, in the words of one man, “the unions were a protest against the employer for wages, better conditions, not struggles for political control.”<sup>70</sup> Supporting the Jocistas’ recollections, Luis Vitale argues that until the 1960s, “vast sectors of the industrial proletariat... had an ‘economicist’ conception of the union struggle.” Syndicalism was largely reformist, fighting only for salary increases and not broad structural changes.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, in many factories, both large and small, “yellow” or “*apatronado*” unions, where management bought off leaders, impeded advances in labor rights and united activists of all political persuasions in efforts to change their unions’ orientation.

The nature of JOC activism on the shop floor varied widely, reflecting a diversity of workplace situations.<sup>72</sup> Some interviewees, both male and female, recounted involvement in strikes and work stoppages at large, unionized factories, as did a story in *Pastoral Popular* that described the participation of a group of five female Jocistas in a shoe factory strike. According to one of the militants involved, the Jocistas, with the permission of their union’s president,

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<sup>70</sup> Oscar González, interview.

<sup>71</sup> Vitale, *De Alessandri a Frei*, 117, 123.

<sup>72</sup> Although a small number of powerful national federations existed in Chile, the labor movement was relatively fragmented. Blue-collar workers were organized in a large number of small plant unions that were forbidden to form federations with other unions for the purposes of collective bargaining. Angell, *Politics and the Labour Movement*, 6.

worked through the night entertaining the young women on the picket line with games and contests and also distributing the available food. The JOC militant recounted that when the police arrived the next day to forcefully remove them:

[M]y *compañera* began to sing the [JOC] National Song... and they [the police] had to wait. We then prayed the JOC prayer out loud (we had taught it as “the workers’ prayer”). ...Days later, shoe workers from all over Santiago joined together in front of the CUT, despite the cordons of police and patrol cars. We organized the parade to the Constitution Plaza... Of the four that were at the head, three were Christians!!<sup>73</sup>

In factories without unions or with “yellow” ones, Jocistas described their efforts to build unions responsive to workers’ needs, frequently risking their jobs in the process. Rubén Callao recounted that in his metallurgical factory of twelve hundred workers, he and another Jocista ran for the union leadership as “candidates of quality.” Management fired his JOC companion before the election, accusing him of being a Communist. (According to Rubén, the man had a letter from Cardinal Caro attesting that he was not a Communist, but he lost the job nonetheless.) Rubén’s co-workers still elected him, but he too then lost his job. Revealing considerable persistence, at Rubén’s next, non-unionized job, he and other Jocistas presented a petition to management from the workers to form a union, although they soon were fired from that job as well.<sup>74</sup> A JOC employee at a pharmaceutical manufacturer similarly related how he worked together with a fellow Jocista to form a union, achieving election to its first executive committee before being fired.<sup>75</sup> And *La Voz* reported that a JOCF president, along with eight other Catholic workers in a silk factory, lost their jobs because they “raised their voice in defense of

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<sup>73</sup> “Un testigo anónimo de Cristo,” *Pastoral Popular*, no. 24 (July 1955): 16.

<sup>74</sup> Rubén Callao and Julia Valenzuela, interview.

<sup>75</sup> Luis Lizama and Norma Avaloz, interview. According to interviewees, industrial jobs were plentiful in these years, and they easily found new jobs. Their main problem was very low salaries.

workers' rights in a union meeting... The workers asked for a readjustment of their salaries in accordance with the increase in the cost of living."<sup>76</sup>

At other factories, Jocistas decided to organize more surreptitiously, "without showing their faces," as was the case in Hirmas, the huge textile company. Luis Reyes said that the JOC leadership encouraged him to seek employment there in order to help organize against a union that was completely under management control.<sup>77</sup> He recounted that the militants, about ten to twelve in total, quietly developed contacts with non-Jocistas, forming cells in the sections of the mill that had a high percentage of youth, who were less concerned about losing their jobs than the older workers. (The Communists tended to be older and less bold than the Jocistas, according to Luis.) The cells produced materials denouncing abuses, posted them in bathrooms and outside the factory walls, and in his words produced "a ferment" within the mill that helped to break down the pervasive fear of the *patrones* or bosses.<sup>78</sup> In a separate interview, Luisa Torres, also employed at Hirmas, described how she and other female JOC militants worked person-to-person to raise awareness of the need for change. According to Luisa (who remembered a total of around twenty Jocistas in the factory),

There were tons [of Jocistas] who were infiltrating. We called them "infiltrators," because they had to work secretly, so they wouldn't be persecuted by the bosses... You were fired immediately if they found out you were a Jocista... There was no consciousness of the rights of workers, so to have people from the JOC dismantling all this circus the bosses had set up, it was dangerous to them.

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<sup>76</sup> "Obreros católicos son echados," *La Voz*, 11. The article does not specify if any of the other fired Catholic workers were also Jocistas.

<sup>77</sup> Luis Reyes, interview. Three interviewees (one man and two women) mentioned that the JOC leadership encouraged them to work at specific factories in order to help raise workers' consciousness and also to recruit there for the movement. Luis Reyes, interview; Elena Escalona, interviews; Nury Ramos, interview.

<sup>78</sup> Luis Reyes, interview.



Luisa claimed the Jocistas were successful in their efforts to create a workers' union that "wasn't *apatronado*," as evidenced by the fact that it "began to ask for previously unimagined things such as daycare for the workers' children and sick days."<sup>79</sup>

In a few of the largest factories, militants formed JOC base groups.<sup>80</sup> Hirmas, Yarur, and Sumar, all large textile mills in Santiago, as well as the pasta factory Lucetti, had Jocistas who met regularly, focusing the See, Judge and Act method on issues specific to their industry.<sup>81</sup> According to one woman, people with "political tendencies," including Communists, participated in her factory's JOC group because of its labor focus. Furthermore, while the movement's main goal in the factories was to be "leaven in the dough," spurring union activity rather than "conquering" large numbers of youth directly, in the 1950s militants brought groups composed only of workers recruited at a specific factory on vacation trips to El Quisco. For example, a week at the beach house would be set aside just for Hirmas or Lucetti workers.<sup>82</sup> Finally, while most groups had to meet outside the factory walls, there were cases in which management favored the Jocistas, viewing them as a bulwark against the Left without recognizing the movement's own radicalizing potential. Interviewees also mentioned that bosses appreciated the Jocistas' strong work ethic. One woman even said that her boss gave the Jocistas time-off (with salary!) to go to the movement's seminars and workshops.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Luisa Torres, interview.

<sup>80</sup> These groups were more connected with "la Central," JOC's headquarters downtown, than with the parishes.

<sup>81</sup> Juanita Pérez, interview; Luis Torres, interview; Elena Escalona, interview; Hilda Pérez, interview; mimeographed document from Isabela Valenzuela. Jocistas in Valparaíso also mentioned that various industries located there had a JOC group. Catalina Basaure et al., interview.

<sup>82</sup> Gladys Abarca et al., interview; Adriana Hernández, interview; Elena Castillo, interview. Some factory groups also organized Sunday outings for the workers at a specific plant.

<sup>83</sup> Elena Escalona, interview. Another interviewee remembered that for her trip to Uruguay as a JOC delegate, both her bosses and her factory's union, proud that one of their own was chosen to go, helped raise money for her travels. Lidia Bravo, Jan. 25 interview.

Not all JOC activism in the factories was so ambitious in its aims. In large industries with independent unions, the Jocistas tended not to be in leadership positions, in some cases because of a lack of party connections, but mainly a consequence of militants' relatively young age. Some younger Jocistas did participate on the unions' social committees, such as those for well-being (*bienestar*), for the sick, and for celebrations; but, according to the Chilean labor code, workers had to be at least eighteen to join and twenty-one to hold a leadership position in a union.<sup>84</sup> Besides the fact that a majority initially entered the JOC while still in their mid to late teens, many complained that the unions did not pay much heed to young workers, with one man commenting that you had to be over forty to have much voice.<sup>85</sup> For the women, their gender was an additional limitation.<sup>86</sup> With a couple of exceptions, all the interviewed JOC union leaders were male. Furthermore, a significant percentage of the industrial workforce was not unionized at all. A restrictive Chilean labor code limited unionization to firms with more than twenty-five employees, and many Jocistas worked in small factories or workshops that were ineligible for organization.<sup>87</sup>

In factories where unionization was extremely difficult or impossible, Jocistas discussed simply trying to raise awareness of workers' rights. For example, in one small textile factory, a female militant focused on educating about the labor laws that were only arbitrarily followed, such as the requirement for overtime pay after fifty-eight hours of work per week. Despite the resistance of co-workers, who warned her "not to rock the boat," she managed to recruit a small

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<sup>84</sup> Catalina Basaure, et al., interview; Lidia Bravo, Jan. 25 interview; Hilda Pérez, interview.

<sup>85</sup> Father Oscar González, interview, Santiago, May 15, 2002 (Father González is a former Jocista); Catalina Basaure, et al., interview; Gladys Abarca et al., interview; Rubén Callao and Julia Valenzuela, interview; Lidia Bravo, Jan. 25 interview; Monsignor Carlos Camus, interview; Luis Lizama and Norma Avaloz, interview.

<sup>86</sup> See more on attitudes toward women in unions in chapter 3.

<sup>87</sup> Angell, *Politics and the Labour Movement in Chile*, 50. According to Angell, up until the time of Allende's presidency, a majority of workers in Chile's manufacturing sector were employed in firms with nine employees or less, and only about 20 percent of Chile's industrial workers were unionized in 1970.

group to help her.<sup>88</sup> In a second case, female Jocistas working in a non-unionized candy factory, where earnings were based on the number of pieces cooked, realized that whenever production increased, the quotas soon did too, insuring that paychecks remained flat. The small group of militants tried to convince the other workers that it was not in their interest to work as fast as they could because doing so only increased their exploitation.<sup>89</sup> Besides labor issues, Jocistas, both male and female, also focused their energies on positively influencing the factories' moral environment, from the crude language that was prevalent to the excessive amount of drinking that occurred after hours to the illicit sexual activity.<sup>90</sup>

#### **5.4 INCREASING POLITICIZATION OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND JOC'S MARGINALIZATION**

In the end, the window of opportunity for Catholic workers to organize in the factories independent of the political parties was relatively brief, as Blest ultimately proved unsuccessful at keeping the union movement free of political intervention. With periods of semi-legality, the Communist Party (PC) had maintained some political influence through nominally independent front organizations, particularly in the unions, until it finally regained complete legality in 1958.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the Ibáñez government's determined repression of the labor movement (Blest was jailed several times), together with the fact that it already had united around the CUT,

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<sup>88</sup> Luis Lizama and Norma Avaloz, interview.

<sup>89</sup> Catalina Basaure, et al., interview.

<sup>90</sup> See chapter three for more on JOC women's efforts to influence the moral environment and in particular to address the problem of sexual harassment. Men told similar stories of efforts to improve the moral environment. For example, one male interviewee discussed how the young Jocistas in his factory, which had a "yellow" union, worked to cut-off the tasteless jokes and create a "healthier environment" at lunchtime by debating current issues affecting the industry and sometimes even introducing JOC "themes." Rivas, interview.

<sup>91</sup> Furci, *Chilean Communist Party*, 60-61.

spurred the Marxist parties to reconcile and create the Popular Action Front (Frente de Acción Popular- FRAP) in 1956. The reunified Left, with the Communists the major player, quickly began reasserting its firm control over the labor movement.<sup>92</sup> By 1959, *La Voz* was printing articles decrying a Communist take-over of the CUT. One article asserted, “Communist dictatorship is what exists in these moments within the CUT... the leadership is composed exclusively of Marxists who are looking to predominate throughout the working class.”<sup>93</sup> By 1961, Blest, amid sharp policy disagreements with the Communists, was forced to resign as Secretary-General.<sup>94</sup>

At the same time that the Left was reestablishing its dominant position, the Falange, which in 1957 became the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), began to focus more aggressively on building political support in the union movement. Rubén Callao related that as a leader of his factory’s union he attended the 1957 Congress of the Metallurgical Federation, where Falangists, learning he was a Jocista, approached him. “They told me, ‘We are trying to gather together everyone of Christian inspiration to participate in the Congress,’ because the Socialists and Communists and the Radicals were all there. So I participated in the Congress together with the Christians.”<sup>95</sup> Another JOC factory worker talked about being invited to a course focused on developing union (and población) leaders that was financed by DESAL, a Jesuit educational and research institute with close ties to the PDC.<sup>96</sup> Other Jocistas mentioned that lawyers from the

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<sup>92</sup> Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy*, 118-119; Echeverría, *Antihistoria de un luchador*, 198-233.

<sup>93</sup> “La clase obrera: Gran ausente en Congreso Nacional de la CUT” *La Voz*, Dec 20, 1959, 11; “Partidista fué congreso de la juventud organizado por la CUT,” *La Voz*, February 15, 1959, 11.

<sup>94</sup> Echeverría, *Antihistoria de un luchador*, 242-246. Deeply influenced by the Cuban Revolution, Blest actually had moved to the left of the Communist Party by this point.

<sup>95</sup> Rubén Callao and Julia Valenzuela, interview. According to Callao, the Christians at the Congress had the second largest majority after the Communists, followed by the Socialists.

<sup>96</sup> Domingo Marilaf and Eliana Poblaza, interview

PDC began helping Jocistas with the union training courses held in the movement's headquarters.<sup>97</sup>

In the early 1960s, as the Christian Democratic Party's influence in the labor movement increased, along with competition between the PDC and the Marxist parties, JOC union leaders at all level found it increasingly difficult to maintain their political independence.<sup>98</sup> Rubén explained, "Now in the federation everyone told me, 'This one is DC,' so even without me being in the party I was being thrown there; the only alternative was to join the DC."<sup>99</sup> Another man, discussing his and another JOC leaders' unsuccessful efforts to participate as Jocistas in a CUT youth congress, complained, "...everything that had to do with the Church had the smell of the Christian Democrats, and you couldn't go around to all the world explaining that you weren't a Christian Democrat."<sup>100</sup> A third Jocista, active only at the base, emphasized that he and many of his fellow militants ultimately joined the party because, in the increasingly politicized environment, the DC gave them support and helped prevent them from "feeling lost (*desubicados*)... just floating in the air (*estar muy en el aire*.)"<sup>101</sup>

With the labor movement becoming ever more politicized through the 1960s, the percentage of Jocistas involved in syndicalism dropped significantly.<sup>102</sup> Of thirteen interviewees

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<sup>97</sup> Rubén Callao and Julia Valenzuela, interview.

<sup>98</sup> According to Angell, the Christian Democrats' main strength lay in the public-sector and rural unions, but there were few major confederations or unions that did not have some Christian Democratic presence on their executive committees. (A 1962 survey found that 23% of a sample of union presidents claimed to support the PDC.) The party also established strongholds in a few modern and large industrial establishments. Faúndez mentioned that Christian Democrats also focused on organizing workers in the building sector, which like agriculture traditionally had been on the fringes of the labor movement. Angell, *Politics and the Labour Movement*, 185-186; Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy*, 152.

<sup>99</sup> Rubén Callao and Julia Valenzuela, interview.

<sup>100</sup> Fernando Alarcón, interview.

<sup>101</sup> Humberto Mora and Julia Vita, March 18 interview. For reasons of time, and also because they eventually aged out of the movement, most Jocistas gradually stopped participating in the Catholic movement as they became more involved in union and political activities.

<sup>102</sup> The presidential campaign of 1964 produced a sharp polarization of forces between the Marxists and the Christian Democrats that did not abate after the election.

who joined the Santiago JOC in the 1960s, only 25 percent were active in unions, compared to roughly half of twenty-eight people interviewed who entered the movement in the late 1940s and 1950s.<sup>103</sup> Besides the increased politicization, however, these statistics reflect a decreased number of factory workers in the JOC. While in the 1950s most participants worked, in the 1960s more high school students of both sexes started entering the movement. (Their family background, however, continued to be working-class.) This change was partly a result of educational reforms that increased the number of required years of study from six to eight. At the same time, less work was available in the factories, especially for women in the textile industry. Historian Peter Winn wrote that in the mid-1950s, the Yarur textile mill began gradually phasing out female workers, who previously had made up about 60 percent of the mill's blue-collar work-force, because of legislation passed granting them equal pay for equal work plus six months maternity leave.<sup>104</sup> One can assume that such a shift occurred throughout the industry.

Not surprisingly, stories about groups of JOC militants taking the lead in efforts to organize workers on the factory floor do not surface for the 1960s and early 70s, either in the interviews or the documents. A lengthy article in *La Voz* about a 1962 strike at Yarur, where the Jocistas had a significant presence in the 1950s, indicated that by early in the decade the Communists were once again dominating unionization efforts, pushing Catholics into the background, at least in the textile industry. The article quoted a JOC advisor as saying that the Communists “had acted with more agility and quickness” than the Christians against the company's “yellow” union. According to the priest, “The Christians haven't found echo in

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<sup>103</sup> These statistics exclude the group interviews, in which not every participant answered whether or not she/he was involved in unions.

<sup>104</sup> Winn, *Weavers of Revolution*, 44. Previously, women were paid thirty percent less than men.

Yarur; generally they appear acting from the outside, when they should be involved within the organizations.”<sup>105</sup> Winn’s seminal book about the Yarur workers, *Weavers of Revolution*, confirms that a group of Communist activists, with support from the CUT, spearheaded the campaign to replace the company’s union.<sup>106</sup>

Yet the JOC presence on the factory floor cannot be completely discounted, even if less widespread and visible than in the previous decade. The previously quoted advisor, in talking about the action against the management-controlled union, was quick to add, “at any rate, you have to differentiate: the current movement isn’t Communist; the leaders are the Communists. The Christians still will support the movement, because it is just and deserves our support.” Confirming the priest’s words, the article went on to describe in great detail a mimeographed circular released by a group of Christian workers. (*La Voz* did not specify whether or not Jocistas were in the group but did mention that the reporter obtained a copy of the circular in the Catholic Action office.) Entitled “A Worker is Not a Puppet in the Hands of the Bosses,” it accused Yarur’s management of inhibiting the free organization of its workers and ignoring their rights. The circular concluded with the assertion, “A Christian is a man who not only prays for a new world but fights with the rest to construct it.”<sup>107</sup> (Amador Yarur, the owner of the mill,

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<sup>105</sup> Leonardo Cáceres C., “Color del sindicato provoca huelga en Yarur,” *La Voz*, July 29, 1962, 16. In interviews and documents, the terms “Catholic” and “Christian” are used interchangeably. The Protestant presence among Chile’s working-class still was minimal in this period.

<sup>106</sup> Winn, *Weavers of Revolution*, 48.

<sup>107</sup> Cáceres, “Color del sindicato,” *La Voz*. A little over a month later, the front page of *La Voz* printed a photograph of Cardinal Silva Henríquez marching arm in arm (a man on one side and a woman on the other) with the Yarur strikers. *La Voz* reported that the Cardinal visited the collective soup kitchen (*olla común*) that the workers had organized to support themselves during the strike, which seems to confirm that the strike had strong Catholic support.

categorically dismissed the circular as simply a Communist machination to win over Catholic workers.)<sup>108</sup>

As in the earlier generation of militants, those individual Jocistas who continued to play active roles in their unions through the era of intense politicization leading up to the 1973 coup credited the Catholic workers' movement for their firm commitment to syndicalism. This included those militants who later joined political parties, whether the PDC or MAPU.<sup>109</sup> For women, who entered what was not only a tumultuous but also very masculine environment, their JOC experience was especially crucial. For example, Matilde Pastén, elected to serve on her union's directorate in early 1973, was the only female candidate. She explained:

If I hadn't been in the JOC, I don't think I would have been there [in the directorate], because it was a lot more comfortable to observe from the outside... and like the rest of the women not get involved. A lot of political fighting took place in the unions. There were a lot of fights between the political parties... But I wanted to be a union leader because I saw that the union had a lot of problems [such as] the unfair distribution of milk; I felt it was my obligation.<sup>110</sup>

María Mataluna, who during the Allende government became a union leader in the Hirmas textile mill, even serving as an *interventor* or administrator after its seizure and socialization, similarly credited the JOC for her union involvement.<sup>111</sup> "In the JOC I learned responsibility and how to work as part of a team...I learned organization and communication as a leader." Most

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<sup>108</sup> Cáceres, "Color del sindicato," *La Voz*. For more on the 1962 Yarur strike, see Winn, *Weaver of Revolution*, 47-42. However, Winn dismisses as minimal the Catholic influence on Chilean workers, especially males, and devotes only two sentences to the issue. Winn, *Weavers of Revolution*, 85.

<sup>109</sup> By the early 1970s, the party affiliation of JOC union activists generally was split between the DC and MAPU, with a few exceptions. A splinter group from the PDC that supported Allende's Popular Unity coalition formed MAPU (discussed in more detail later in the chapter) in the late 1960s.

<sup>110</sup> Matilde Pastén, interview, Santiago, May 16, 2002.

<sup>111</sup> The Allende government also appointed former JOC militant Rubén Callao, who went from the PDC to MAPU, as an *interventor* in his factory after he participated in its seizure. Rubén Callao and Julia Valenzuela, interview.



importantly, she emphasized, “I learned to have faith in myself and not be afraid of criticism.”<sup>112</sup> As Chilean social historian Mario Garcés pointed out, when the Workers Collective (CC.TT.) in 2001 was looking for a woman to honor who had both union experience and was a victim of Pinochet’s repression, it was no coincidence that they chose a former Jocista, María Galindo.<sup>113</sup>

## 5.5 THE JOC IN A CHANGING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

The growing strength in the early 1960s of the centrist Christian Democrats and the Marxist Left dramatically altered the JOC’s position within not only the unions and factories but also the poblaciones. Through mid-century, the presence of political parties in the slum areas had been relatively small. The Left focused its attention on the (male-dominated) labor movement, even though *pobladores* and factory workers frequently were one and the same.<sup>114</sup> Meanwhile, neither the Right nor the Center, which the Radical Party dominated until the PDC’s emergence, ever attempted to establish a popular base.<sup>115</sup>

It was the PDC that first fully realized the political potential of organizing among women and the urban poor (as well as peasants), sectors recently enfranchised by a series of electoral reforms.<sup>116</sup> Unlike in most Western European countries, Chile’s lack of a significant Christian

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<sup>112</sup> María Mataluna, interview. Luis Reyes mentioned that Mataluna also served as an *interventor* in Hirmas. (She did not work at the factory in the 1950s, when the Jocistas organized against the “yellow” union.)

<sup>113</sup> Informal conversation with Mario Garcés, Santiago, March 7, 2001; Colectivos de Trabajadores, CC.TT, flyer advertising the CC.TT.’s second summer school, held “in memory of Maria Galindo Ramirez,” January 17-20, 2001.

<sup>114</sup> Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 420. Garcés draws upon the first-hand reports and investigative theses of university students in social work and architecture from the 1950s and 60s to show that a high percentage of factory workers, albeit those at the lower pay levels, were *pobladores*. This research on the JOC also indicates that many factory workers lived in the slums, even if not the most marginalized *callampas*. (See chapter 1.)

<sup>115</sup> Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 235; Espinoza, *Para una historia de los pobres*, 295.

<sup>116</sup> The enfranchisement of women in 1949, along with voting reforms in 1958 and 1962, had tripled the national electorate in a period of twelve years. The largest increase in the size of the electorate took place between 1961 and

trade union movement meant that the Christian Democrats could not depend on Catholic labor organizations as a base of electoral support.<sup>117</sup> Thus, instead of focusing on workplace demands (salary increases and better working conditions), the PDC addressed urban problems (lack of water, electricity, etc. as well as access to schools and healthcare), primarily at the neighborhood level.<sup>118</sup> After winning the presidency in 1964 with overwhelming support from new voters, the party created a vast network of grassroots organizations, such as neighborhood councils (*juntas de vecinos*) and mothers' centers (*centros de madres*), which stood against the traditional working-class organizations-- the unions.<sup>119</sup> By 1969, the Christian Democratic government had sponsored the establishment of 20,000 territorial groups (including 3,000 neighborhood councils and 6,000 mothers' centers) through its Popular Promotion program, which provided encouragement, training, and material support.<sup>120</sup>

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1964, a consequence of a change in the electoral laws making registration compulsory. While in 1952 only 46 percent of those eligible to vote actually had registered, by 1964 this figure had risen to 90 percent, with women, slum dwellers, and agricultural workers making up most of the newly registered. Furthermore, this substantial increase in the rate of electoral registrations was accompanied by a marked and sustained increase in the rate of electoral participation. Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy*, 122-123.

<sup>117</sup> Smith, *Church and Politics in Chile*, 96 n. 17.

<sup>118</sup> The "theory of marginality" (*teoría de la marginalidad*) undergirded the PDC's efforts to integrate the urban poor into society's social fabric. Elaborated in the early 1960s by Santiago's Center for the Socio-Economic Development of Latin America (DESAL), which had many links to the Catholic Church, this theory employed a functionalist perspective combining social Catholicism and developmentalism to explain and suggest solutions to the explosive growth of "belts of poverty" around Latin America's major cities. Garcés mentions that the theory of marginality was the Catholic response to Marxism's focus on the working class and economic structures. Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 14-15; Alfredo Riquelme Segovia, *Trabajadores y pobladores en el discurso de la prensa sectorial popular: Chile, 1958-1973* (Santiago: CENCA Comunicaciones, 1986), 10-15.

<sup>119</sup> Michael Fleet, *Rise and Fall of Chilean Christian Democracy*, 70; Clarisa Hardy, *Estrategias organizadas de subsistencia: Los sectores populares frente a sus necesidades en Chile*, Documento de Trabajo no. 41 (Santiago: Programa de Economía del Trabajo, Academia de Humanismo Cristiano, 1985), 4-5; Riquelme Segovia, *Trabajadores y pobladores*, 15; Espinoza, *Para una historia de los pobres*, 295; Loveman, *Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, 284; Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy*, 136.

<sup>120</sup> Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy*, 152; Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 346-347; Riquelme Segovia, *Trabajadores y pobladores*, 15. Garcés emphasizes that Popular Promotion built upon the urban poor's own organizational traditions, from the renters' leagues of the 1920s to the committees "of those without homes" of the 1950s, as well as the many informal neighborhood councils already in existence. Mothers' centers also played an active role in the communitarian life of the poblaciones throughout the 1950s. Many of the centers had the support of institutions connected to the Catholic Church; under the PDC, their numbers expanded exponentially. Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 318, 338-340, 346-347.

Paralleling the PDC's inroads in the urban slums, the Communist Party also was establishing new links with *pobladores*. However, while recognizing a need to pay greater attention to the poblaciones, the Communists were slower to identify the urban poor, particularly "politically immature" women, youth, and workers recently arrived from the countryside, as an important sector among which to organize. Instead, the party linked the demands of *pobladores* to the general demands of the working-class and the CUT.<sup>121</sup> At the same time, on a practical level the Communists moved to support the committees "of those without homes" (*comités de los sin casa*), representing people living in the poorest *callampas*. The PC played a leadership role in a dramatic illegal land seizure in 1957, which led to the formation of the staunchly Communist población La Victoria.<sup>122</sup> According to Garcés, the PC's participation in this and subsequent *tomas* provided the party with a valuable learning experience, allowing it to better understand the role that base groups of *pobladores* could play in the working-class struggle.<sup>123</sup> After its bitter 1964 election loss to the Christian Democrats, the Communists (as well as the less organized Socialists), accustomed to occupying a hegemonic position among working-class

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<sup>121</sup> Espinoza, *Para una historia de los pobres*, 267-270; Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 420. Internal party debates reveal that as early as 1957, the Communist Party was cognizant that the profound transformations in Chilean cities since the Popular Front period required a shift in its political strategy. (Little information exists on changes in vision or strategy within the Socialist Party.) Political scientist Cathy Lisa Schneider argues, based on secondary sources, that the repression against the Communists convinced party leaders that they could not maintain support among the poor only by winning economic concessions at the workplace. Meanwhile, Faúndez points out that the rapid growth of the electorate altered the ratio between registered voters and unionized workers. As the size of the electorate tripled between 1952 and 1964, the number of unionized workers remained steady. This drop in the percentage of the electorate belonging to unions translated into less political influence for the Marxist parties through their control of the labor movement. Espinoza, *Para una historia de los pobres*, 267-270; Cathy Lisa Schneider, *Shantytown Protest in Pinochet's Chile* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 38; Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy in Chile*, 126.

<sup>122</sup> This first major land seizure or *toma de terreno* was followed in 1961 by another in Santa Adriana, also under Communist leadership. For more on land seizures in the 1960s and their connections to the PC, see Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 244-245

<sup>123</sup> Garcés, *Tomando su sitio*, 238-239.

voters, began to focus their efforts on establishing a foothold in the grass roots organizations forming under the auspices of the new government.<sup>124</sup>

By the second half of the 1960s, two clearly defined political poles had taken shape in the poblaciones, with both sides promoting change and social justice. Young people were an integral part of this competitive political scene. While in the previous decade they had considered politics as “something for older people,” and the parties in turn were not much interested in them, both the center and the left now actively recruited young people through their youth departments, which helped organize sports clubs, theater groups, and other forms of recreation and entertainment. Although Eduardo Frei’s charismatic campaign attracted a large swath of the youth vote in the 1964 election, it was the Communist Youth (referred to as the *Jota*, for its abbreviation J.J.C.C.) that more deeply and systematically penetrated the working-class. Similar to the JOC, the Jota combined teenage social life with education (in this case political rather than religious) and personal development. Moreover, although like the JOC the number of actual militants in the Communist (and much smaller Socialist) Youth was never massive, their influence extended well beyond their core group. According to Winn, “Every member had the obligation ‘to orient’ a ‘mass front’—a student organization or sports club-- making the Jota at once a training ground and a proving ground.”<sup>125</sup>

In a space of just a few years, as what Chilean scholars have denominated the “poblacional movement” blossomed, the JOC ceased to be one of the largest social organizations in working-class neighborhoods. Partly in response to the shifting political and social terrain, the Catholic movement’s orientation changed. Interviews with national JOC leaders revealed that

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<sup>124</sup> Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy*, 126, 153; Espinoza, *Para una historia de los pobres*, 295.

<sup>125</sup> Winn, *Weavers of Revolution*, 85-86. Interviewees frequently made reference to the Communist Youth when talking about their poblaciones, but the Christian Democratic youth branch received barely a mention.

around 1960, in the words of Clotilde Silva, “A big discussion between advisors and leaders began at national conferences about whether it was more important to have a JOC made up of militants committed to a methodology... or to have many young people just passing through.”<sup>126</sup> After several years of sometimes bitter debate within the Chilean JOC, which paralleled debates occurring within the movement at the international level, national leaders who wanted to continue with a mass JOC gradually were marginalized.<sup>127</sup> Recruitment became less of a priority, and the JOC ceased to concern itself with filling stadiums, parading through the streets, or conducting large-scale campaigns, visibly spreading “*Jocismo*” throughout the working-class. Also, base groups stopped organizing classes, day trips, and entertainment in the poblaciones as a way to promote their message and attract newcomers.<sup>128</sup>

Rather than seeking to be a mass movement, a *JOC de masa* mobilizing vast numbers of youth directly, the leadership now focused on building a movement of leaders, a *JOC de dirigentes*. Much along the lines of the PC, the JOC’s overriding purpose after about 1965 was to develop committed, capable leaders who could penetrate and subtly orient the burgeoning

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<sup>126</sup> Clotilde Silva, interview. The JOC as a mass movement followed the Belgian model developed by founder José Cardijn, while the model for a smaller JOC composed only of militants came from France. Supporters of the latter model argued that Jesus chose only twelve disciples, and this small, committed band then sowed the seeds of a tremendous ferment among the masses. Father Alfonso Baeza, interview, Santiago, October 31, 2000; Monsignor Carlos Camus, interview; Monsignor Sergio Contreras, interview, Valparaíso, April 10, 2003.

<sup>127</sup> For example, Domingo Marilaf, who supported “a JOC for all working-class youth,” lost his 1965 bid for a national leadership position to a Jocista who wanted a smaller, more committed movement. Domingo believes that he lost because the national advisor at the time, Father Sergio Contreras, favored his opponent’s position. Regional JOC advisor Carlos Camus also supported the change. He wrote in 1966, “... The Chilean JOC went abruptly from being a mass JOC to a JOC of militants. The change was disconcerting for many.... However, it was a step that had to be taken so as not to be left at the margins of the working-class movement.” At the international level, Cardijn vociferously defended his original vision of a mass movement, according to Contreras, who heard Cardijn speak at a 1965 JOC conference in Bangkok. Domingo Marilaf and Eliana Poblaza, interview; Carlos Camus, “La JOC, los grupos culturales y el equipo apostólico,” *Pastoral Popular* no. 92 (March-April 1966): 58-59; Monsignor Sergio Contreras, interview.

<sup>128</sup> However, this shift in strategy was not uniform throughout Chile. In contrast to Santiago, a few cities, including Concepción and Punta Arenas, continued to attract large numbers of youth through the late 1960s. The reasons for this difference are not clear, especially since Concepción was a highly politicized city with strong leftist influences, but the orientation of the local movement’s advisors seems to have played a major role. Patricio Pino, interview; Father Pierre Dubois, interview, Clotilde Silva, interview.

neighborhood groups (as well as unions) according to their Catholic principles. The JOC method of see, act, judge continued to be the foundation for base meetings, supplemented by workshops and retreats. However, the movement now shed many of its “sympathizers,” those who had attended mainly for social reasons or who lacked the qualities necessary for effective leadership.

As the JOC became in most neighborhoods an “elite” movement with a tiny base, its militants enthusiastically involved themselves in cultural centers, sports clubs, neighborhood councils, cooperatives, and other organizations where a young person might be influential.<sup>129</sup> They joined these groups, whether under Christian Democratic, Communist, or Socialist influences, with the same *mística* with which they previously organized JOC activities. A man who entered the movement in 1964, explained that “with this *mística* that you got from the JOC, you felt capable of incorporating yourself in the social organizations, especially neighborhood ones... and trying to improve the organization and better conditions in the *barrio*... It was about committing yourself, outside the movement... transforming, bettering, enriching the environment.”<sup>130</sup> According to a former JOCM president, “We received the message that we should insert ourselves in the popular base, in everything that had to do with change.... We were like the leavening in the popular organizations.”<sup>131</sup> “It needed to be an active, not a passive, participation,” explained a JOCF national leader.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> The movement itself now employed the term “elite” in describing its militants. For example, the *Boletín de Asesores*, a magazine for JOC advisors, wrote in 1966, “The JOC’s purpose is to operate among working-class youth and form or educate an authentically militant elite.” “Experiencias: Una jornada de iniciación,” *Boletín de Asesores JOC/MOAC*, no. 3 (January-February 1966): 43.

<sup>130</sup> Fernando Alarcón, interview.

<sup>131</sup> Moises Leighton and Johnny Carrasco, interview.

<sup>132</sup> Nury Ramos, interview.

## 5.6 JOC LEADERSHIP IN YOUTH CENTERS

The range of Jocistas' activities in the poblaciones of the 1960s was varied, and in many ways paralleled the type of social service projects they had organized in the previous decade. For example, militants mentioned working with neighborhood councils to plant trees in their barren población or to clean a garbage-filled canal. Other Jocistas formed a library in a sports club and put together activities for younger children. And they continued spearheading efforts to establish savings and housing cooperatives. However, since the militants generally were too young to hold leadership positions in adult organizations, JOC activism was concentrated on the youth centers, referred to as *centros juveniles*, *grupos juveniles*, or *centros culturales*.<sup>133</sup> Jocistas dominated many centers' leadership, with movement militants frequently serving as president, secretary, and treasurer.<sup>134</sup>

Youth centers first emerged in significant numbers in the early 1960s. The Communist Youth organized many, while a few were under Socialist influence. (In one case, a Jocista was the treasurer of a center where the majority of the youth were Socialist.)<sup>135</sup> Others were connected to neighborhood councils.<sup>136</sup> However, a large number depended on the local parish. In the densely populated poblaciones, the church frequently was the only free space available, and when Jocistas sought to form a center, they naturally turned to a priest to assist them. Sometimes, the priest himself initiated the effort, enlisting the Jocistas' help. Moreover, just as

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<sup>133</sup> After having left the JOC, many militants later did serve as presidents in their neighborhood councils etc.

<sup>134</sup> JOC activists and advisors from the 1960s in the poblaciones of La Legua, José María Caro, San Gregorio, El Pinar, Renca, La Dávila, and La Victoria, as well as in the city of Valparaíso, all said that their *barrios* had youth centers dominated by Jocistas. Rafael Silva, interview, Santiago, January 19, 2001; Patricio Pino, interview; Fernando Alarcón, interview; Juan Rodríguez, interview; Father Jorge Murillo, interview; Rosa Morales, interview; Victoria Plaza, March 19 interview; Julia Carbonelli, interview; Father Renato Giavio, interview, Santiago, April 24, 2003; Pedro Castex, interview; Catalina Basaure et al., interview.

<sup>135</sup> "Como empezó la JOC en mi parroquia," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 89 (September-October 1965): 22.

<sup>136</sup> The neighborhood councils also had their own political influences.

for the JOC, it was easier to receive parents' permission for their daughters to participate when meeting in the parish.<sup>137</sup>

In contrast to the JOC, the youth centers were never officially part of the Church. The Jocistas emphasized that religion generally was kept studiously separate, except when targeting select participants for recruitment into the Catholic movement.<sup>138</sup> The parish priest, who by the 1960s was often the JOC advisor, might serve as an advisor to the center as well, but his role was more peripheral than with the Young Workers groups.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, in contrast to the Catholic movement's concern with individual spiritual and social formation, the centers' goal simply was to provide recreation and help build social solidarity in the poblaciones. As former JOC advisor Monsignor Camus commented, "The centers were a youth service without the JOC's apostolic spirit."<sup>140</sup>

The JOC-led youth centers attracted large numbers, similar to the Catholic workers movement in its heyday, with an estimated fifty to seventy participants per center. Some of the largest poblaciones, such as La Legua and José María Caro, had up to six different centers, one for each sector. (Besides the parish church, in "La Caro" the youth gathered in the community-

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<sup>137</sup> Catalina Basure, et al., interview; Pedro Castex, interview; Rafael Silva, interview; Carlos Camus, "La JOC, los grupos culturales y el equipo apostólico," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 92 (March-April 1966): 59. A slightly condensed version of this article also appeared in *Boletín de Asesores*, no. 4 (April-May 1966): 4-8. JOC advisor Carlos Camus wrote that a priest provides the youth center with "his prestige so that parents give authorization to the young women who want to join the group." Parents also considered these centers a safe haven for young men, one free of the drinking and delinquency of the streets.

<sup>138</sup> According to Monsignor Camus, "These groups generally are open to all youth, Catholic or not. Sometimes this religious neutrality got away from them, and they became anticlerical, but it was a passing reaction, like that of an adolescent who seeks to liberate himself from paternalism, and little by little they have found an equilibrium." Carlos Camus, "La JOC, los grupos culturales y el equipo apostólico," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 92 (March-April 1966): 59.

<sup>139</sup> Some parishes gave more support than others, depending on the parish priest.

<sup>140</sup> Monsignor Carlos Camus, interview.



built fire station and whatever other space could be located.)<sup>141</sup> In many ways, these youth centers reflected what Camus called “a nostalgia for the JOC.”<sup>142</sup> However, because of Santiago’s changing geography, particularly its rapid expansion to the north in the 1960s, they did not emerge only in areas that previously had strong JOC groups.<sup>143</sup> In either case, much like the early JOC, the centers frequently served as social and cultural hubs for the entire *barrio*, organizing large celebrations for holidays such as May 1 and Christmas Day, along with day and overnight trips, including to the beach.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, with the 1960s a boom period for popular culture, best symbolized by the emergence in Chile of the New Song movement, the centers focused particular attention on fomenting cultural activities including theater and folkloric music, as well as participating in literacy training and other educational endeavors. The centers also offered activities like dancing, ping-pong, and, later in the decade, sometimes a television, which was a rarity in working-class homes.

Considering the relatively weak links that the Christian Democrats established with working-class youth, the JOC-led youth centers arguably provided the party with a critical counterpoint to the *Jota*’s youth activities. More research on the actual connection between the centers and the PDC is needed, but several interviewees indicated that their centers received some state support and guidance through Popular Promotion and other government agencies,

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<sup>141</sup> Patricio Pino, interview; Rafael Silva, interview; Victoria Plaza, Nov. 17 interview; Padre Renato Giavio, interview; Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, March 18 interview; Father Jorge Murillo, interview. These two poblaciones also had a large Communist presence.

<sup>142</sup> Monsignor Carlos Camus, interview.

<sup>143</sup> For example, the población of Renca, which had a massive JOC-led youth center, did not yet exist in the 1950s.

<sup>144</sup> Although a loose federation of youth centers existed, with regional conferences for leaders, the centers lacked the JOC’s overarching structure; centers’ events were organized on a neighborhood-to-neighborhood basis only. For example, a particular center or perhaps the parish itself would rent the JOC house in El Quisco (or a facility at a different beach) for a week.

providing a level of resources unavailable to the JOC at its numeric peak.<sup>145</sup> For example, a Jocista described at some length how governmental officials helped his center acquire materials and building space for activities ranging from movie night to a sexual education course.<sup>146</sup> Another center utilized government resources for a workshop it organized on the new law providing legal status to the neighborhood councils.<sup>147</sup> However, politics, like religion, was carefully kept outside the centers. While the neighborhood youth understood the parish-based centers to have some Church association, the centers do not seem to have been linked to the Christian Democrats in the way that a *Jota* meeting place would have been linked with the Communists.<sup>148</sup>

## 5.7 THE JOC, THE INSTITUTE OF POPULAR EDUCATION, AND POPULAR PROMOTION

Interconnections between the JOC and the Christian Democratic government are clearer in the case of the Institute of Popular Education (CIEP.) The priest who initiated the JOC in Chile, Father Rafael Larraín, formed the Institute in 1954 to expand the JOC's mission of working-class promotion and uplift beyond just youth.<sup>149</sup> Larraín largely staffed the

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<sup>145</sup> Monsignor Camus wrote of the youth centers, "The government and many institutions support these groups, because there they learn authentic democracy and effectively carry out human promotion (*se realiza una eficaz promoción humana.*)" Unfortunately, Camus provided few details as to what this government and institutional support entailed. ; Carlos Camus, "La JOC, los grupos culturales y el equipo apostólico," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 92 (March-April 1966): 59.

<sup>146</sup> Patricio Pino, interview.

<sup>147</sup> This law was a keystone of Christian Democratic legislative initiatives.

<sup>148</sup> One woman even said that her JOC-led center had Communist participation. Gladys Rojas, interview.

<sup>149</sup> According to *La Voz*, the original funding for the Institute, in its earliest years called the Foundation for Popular Education, came from UNESCO and the Chilean government's Ministry of Education. However, JOC leaders, including Gustavo Canehuante, the Institute's long-serving president (1954-1970), remember receiving most of the

organization with former militants, and Jocistas composed a majority of the Institute's full-time personnel for most of its existence, even after it formally separated from the Church and became an independent, completely secular corporation in 1960.<sup>150</sup> Throughout the 1950s, the Institute focused largely on offering (non-religious) classes in the poblaciones. Many of the classes, building upon what the JOC already did on a smaller scale in those years, were brief, three-month courses on technical subjects such as shirt-making, hair styling, embroidery, mechanics, carpentry, first-aid, etc. The Institute also was deeply involved in literacy training, which before 1964 was a sporadic, mainly private endeavor in Chile.<sup>151</sup>

Foreshadowing the popular education method of "consciousness-raising" ("*concientización*") that Popular Promotion would adopt, the Institute sought to overcome the paternalistic bent of previous educational work aimed at the popular classes by hiring only working-class teachers and providing them with pedagogical training. "The purpose," *La Voz* wrote of the Institute, "is that the worker himself becomes an educator in his environment."<sup>152</sup> The Institute also strived to build respect for working-class culture and values, as well as for the

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organization's money from Catholic organizations abroad, particularly from a Christian Democratic foundation in Germany. Support for specific educational projects also came from the International Development Fund and the Organization of American States, according to Canehuante and María Eugenia Gálvez, another JOC/CIEP leader. Gustavo Canehuante, interview; María Eugenia Gálvez, interview; "Maestras para el pueblo forja Instituto de Educación Popular," *La Voz*, July 28, 1957, 5; "La JOC educa," *La Voz*, April 8, 1956, 4; "Jocistas de ocho países se reunieron en Congreso Sudamericano de Santiago," *La Voz*, October 12, 1956, 9.

<sup>150</sup> Gustavo Canehuante, interview. Of the thirty-nine militants interviewed who entered the movement in Santiago before 1965, sixteen worked for the Institute after leaving the JOC. (Those people who entered the movement after 1965 never worked for the Institute, which went into decline during the Allende years and then closed with the 1973 coup.) As one man commented, "Going to CIEP from the JOC was the norm.... your JOC formation prepared you for CIEP work." Another woman remarked, "It was like the continuation [of the JOC], it absorbed the people leaving... especially the leaders." Almost all of the Jocistas working for the institute were paid employees, although the interviewees emphasized that the salary was barely enough on which to live. Only a couple of the interviewed militants were involved in the institute as volunteers. Fernando Alarcón, interview; Nury Ramos, interview.

<sup>151</sup> Gustavo Canehuante, interview; Rosa Morales, interview; Marta Olivares, interview; Manuel Guerrero, interview; "Maestras para el pueblo forja Instituto de Educación Popular," *La Voz*, July 28, 1957, 5; Thomas G. Sanders, *Catholic Innovation in a Changing Latin America*, Sondeos no. 41 (Mexico: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1969), 4/52. Some of these courses were held in the JOC's national headquarters in downtown Santiago.

<sup>152</sup> "La JOC educa," *La Voz*, April 8, 1956, 4.

individual, and to enable people to develop a critical awareness and understanding of their world, again similar to the philosophy behind “consciousness-raising.” According to interviewees, with so many former Jocistas serving as teachers, this teaching approach inevitably drew upon the related see, judge, and act method.<sup>153</sup> A fifteen-day intensive course offered in 1958 exemplified how the Institute aimed to be more than just a basic educational service. The course, on “working-class culture,” included training in how to develop cultural activities in neighborhoods and workplaces; study of economic and social problems in Chile; analysis of the problems of the working class and a search for solutions; and public speaking, among a variety of other subjects.<sup>154</sup>

By the early 1960s, the Institute of Popular Education, now referred to as CIEP, was divided into two clearly defined and well-funded sections.<sup>155</sup> The first, focused on “fundamental education,” continued the Institute’s original educational work, which overlapped both philosophically and functionally with the Christian Democratic government’s educational programs. In particular, CIEP became integrally linked with the state’s literacy campaign. Paulo Freire, the Brazilian philosopher and educator who had developed the method of “*concientización*,” fled to Chile after the Brazilian military coup of 1964, and the following year the Frei administration officially adopted his method of literacy training for all of its educational programs.<sup>156</sup> Freire also helped prepare Institute educators, according to interviewees.<sup>157</sup> In

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<sup>153</sup> Adriana Hernández, interview; Juanita Pérez, interview; Marta Olivares, interview; “Maestras para el pueblo forja Instituto de Educación Popular,” *La Voz*, July 28, 1957, 5.

<sup>154</sup> “Porteños en seminario santiaguino,” *La Voz*, August 10, 1958, 9; “Capacitación social jóvenes obreros,” *La Voz*, June 1, 1958, 9; “Estudio intensivo en 15 días,” *La Voz*, May 18, 1958, 9.

<sup>155</sup> In 1960, when the foundation legally separated from the Church, it officially changed its name from the Institute of Popular Education to the Corporation Institute of Popular Education (*Corporación Instituto de Educación Popular-- CIEP*.) Funding continued to come from a combination of domestic and international sources, with the Ministry of Education providing greater support after Frei assumed the presidency. Gustavo Canehuante, interview; María Eugenia Gálvez, interview.

<sup>156</sup> Sanders, *Catholic Innovation*, 4/39, 4/52.

addition to literacy, CIEP supplemented governmental efforts in secondary education. For example, in the población Jose María Caro, which had a night school for adults but no daytime high school, it established two technical schools, which complemented CIEP's network of Basic and Community Education Centers in the same población.<sup>158</sup> The organization also provided high school equivalency classes (which enabled various Jocistas to receive their diplomas.)<sup>159</sup>

The Institute's other section focused on "social formation" and is where most Jocistas in the 1960s focused their CIEP work. This division of the organization in many ways helped lay the base on which Popular Promotion built, and it later reinforced the governmental program of popular mobilization, although always maintaining its independence from the state.<sup>160</sup> The Jocistas, drawing on their leadership experience in the Catholic movement, with some supplemental training from the Institute, described how they were actively involved in constructing neighborhood councils, mothers' centers, and to a lesser extent (since in CIEP they focused more on adults) youth and cultural centers. According to Hilda Pérez, a former JOC national leader who worked with CIEP for five years, "We helped to create community

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<sup>157</sup> Juanita Pérez, interview; María Mataluna, interview. CIEP's work did not directly include the political component of Freire's methodology, although in many cases the Institute's long-term (and unintended) impact was to increase participants' political consciousness

<sup>158</sup> Gárces, *Tomando su sitio*, 192. According to Canehuante, funding for these schools came from international sources. Gustavo Canehuante, interview.

<sup>159</sup> Adriana Hernández, interview; Fernando Alarcón, interview; Marta Olivares, interview.

<sup>160</sup> CIEP had no connection with DESAL, the "research and development" foundation under the auspices of the Jesuit Centro Bellarmino in Santiago. In the early 1960s, DESAL sponsored a network of organizations among the urban poor called Popular Promotion, which according to Smith acted as "laboratories" for the socioeconomic programs proposed in the PDC's 1964 platform and later incorporated into the Christian Democratic government. Smith wrote about the tight connections between the Jesuit foundation's leaders and the party. DESAL received large grants from Western European governments, private foundations, Christian Democratic parties, and the United States' Central Intelligence Agency. In great contrast to CIEP, DESAL played a central role in the anti-Marxist offensive coordinated by the party, the Church, and U.S. agencies dedicated to ensuring Allende did not win the 1964 election. These connections are explored in great detail in Mutchler, *Church as a Political Factor*, but little information exists about DESAL's real impact on the ground. Jocistas were aware of DESAL's existence but had little contact with its programs. Canehuante did mention that Roger Vekemans, the Jesuit priest who directed DESAL, and Rafael Larráin, the founder of the Institute, had sharp disagreements. Gustavo Canehuante, interview; Smith, 114; Loveman, 277-278.

organizations where there weren't any, and where there were, we supported them, advising them, reinforcing them... always in the popular sector.”<sup>161</sup>

Hilda, who first began working with mothers' centers before the period of Popular Promotion, described her deep involvement in the groups:

I remember how we went house to house, finding out where the mothers' centers met.

We attended their meetings, presenting ourselves as CIEP representatives, explaining that the CIEP was about popular education, and telling them about our services, all free. [The women] accepted us, so we would keep attending their meetings, advising them, helping them to organize for example elections.... We would orient and train them so that they could fulfill their role as president, secretary, or treasurer, so that they could form a well-constituted directorate.... We held classes on administration, how to run meetings, how to record the minutes, how to develop work plans... We achieved the formation of a union of Mothers' Centers. ... There might be five, ten, twenty mothers' centers in different sectors. We helped them first to organize the centers within a sector, and then we would get all the sectors together to form a Communal Union of Mothers' Centers.<sup>162</sup>

Juanita Pérez, revealing a mix of influences from JOC and Freire, emphasized that her work with mothers' centers involved “*concientizando* people, making them conscious of their value as human beings.”<sup>163</sup> Juanita Alvarado, at the time a young mother with no previous JOC connections, recalled that her involvement with CIEP through the centers “opened my eyes, because they gave us a lot of training... all about the rights of people, everything.”<sup>164</sup> Gustavo Canehuante, a former Jocista and long-time director of the Institute, made clear how

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<sup>161</sup> Hilda Pérez, interview

<sup>162</sup> Hilda Pérez, interview.

<sup>163</sup> Juanita Pérez, interview.

<sup>164</sup> Juanita Alvarado, interview, Santiago, August 24, 2000.

revolutionary the efforts of Hilda, Alicia, and other CIEP *asesoras* to change the character of the mothers' centers were. He explained that before CIEP, "They were run by the *madrinas* [literally, godmothers]. The *madrinas* were people from the upper class, who visited once a week bringing packages... for each of the mothers, packages of things, of food. We changed all that, and the mothers' centers no longer had *madrinas*- they had presidents." He then added, "The PDC took advantage of what CIEP had done."<sup>165</sup>

Even after the Christian Democratic influence over the mothers' centers grew exponentially (and later in the decade that of the Communist Party as well), CIEP continued to place itself at the forefront of organizing efforts. Clotilde (Coty) Silva, also a former JOCF president, reported about a workshop that CIEP organized in 1969 for leaders of mothers' centers from throughout Santiago. The workshop, focused on "the liberation of the working-class woman (*la mujer popular*)," was quite progressive for its time (especially considering that in these years second-wave feminism still had little influence in Chile) and suggests that the conservative, traditional image of the mothers' centers under Frei and Allende that exists in the literature needs to be reexamined.<sup>166</sup> For example, the organizers asked, "What impedes liberation?" with answers such as "family traditions that always subject women to a limited life," and "the social structures that do not permit all people's fulfillment; social laws that do not favor women." The workshop also discussed how a woman:

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<sup>165</sup> Gustavo Canehuante, interview.

<sup>166</sup> Since most scholars have been interested mainly in the mothers' centers role in the resistance to Pinochet and the emergence of the women's movement in the early 1980s, relatively little has been written about the centers in the period before 1973. See, for example, Edda Gaviola, Lorella Lopresti, and Claudia Rojas, "Chile centros de madres: La mujer popular en movimiento?" in *Nuestra memoria, nuestro futuro* (Santiago: Isis, 1988), 79-88; Patricia M. Chuchryk, "Feminist Anti-Authoritarian Politics: The Role of Women's Organizations in the Chilean Transition to Democracy," in *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Feminism and the Transition to Democracy*, ed. Jane S. Jaquette (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989): 149-184; Catherine M. Boyle, "Touching the Air: the Cultural Force of Women in Chile," in *'Viva': Women and Popular Protest in Latin America*, eds. Sarah A. Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood (New York: Routledge, 1993), 156-172.

Has to liberate herself from exploitation ... In sexual life, when he uses and abuses her, without respecting her, converting matrimony into slavery instead of mutual growth... From the slavery to which the husband and children can subject the woman when all the work is left to her... From industry, which considers her cheap labor... pays her less and fires her easily....

Reflecting workshop organizers' JOC background, the participants concluded, "A woman is a person, that is to say, she is SOMEONE... The woman is a person with the same mission as the man."<sup>167</sup>

In other areas beside the mothers' centers, CIEP continued to be an active presence in community organizing under the Christian Democratic government. CIEP advisors helped neighborhood councils confront legal issues that emerged after the Frei administration passed a law granting the councils legal status.<sup>168</sup> The *asesores* trained the councils' elected heads in leadership and administration, even organizing semester-long courses to develop community leaders. In the mid-60s, CIEP also created a Coordinating Union of Youth Organizations (UCOJ), bringing together leaders of youth centers. (The UCOJ elected a Jocista as its first president.)<sup>169</sup>

Of those Jocistas interviewed, none left CIEP to work directly for Popular Promotion, reflecting a genuine separation between the two organizations. However, four interviewees never in the Institute did work for the government's social program. Nury Ramos, a former JOC leader who served as an *asesora* in Popular Promotion's Department of Art and Culture,

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<sup>167</sup> Coty Silva, "La liberación de la mujer," *Pastoral Popular*, no. 113 (September-October 1969): 17-23. In interviews, female Jocistas discussed at length how the Catholic movement helped them to view themselves "as persons." See chapter three.

<sup>168</sup> The *Ley de Juntas de Vecinoss* was approved in 1968.

<sup>169</sup> Patricio Pino, interview; Hilda Pérez interview; Gustavo Canehuante, interview.



assisting in the development of artistic groups in the poblaciones, described a role much like that of her fellow Jocistas in CIEP, providing training in administration, development, etc. Working in Popular Promotion, she ran into many of her old *compañeros* from the Catholic movement; her boss was also a former Jocista.<sup>170</sup> Another movement militant who entered Popular Promotion explained that Jocistas were placed in charge of key departments within the program because of the organizing and other experiences they brought with them from the Catholic movement.<sup>171</sup>

Whether part of CIEP or Popular Promotion, JOC militants emphasized that they had no political affiliation with the PDC and advised groups dominated not only by Christian Democrats but also Communists and Socialists. For example, CIEP had a presence in La Victoria, a población with a strong PC influence and where Juanita Pérez said that the mothers' centers she advised were "on the Left."<sup>172</sup> Nury Ramos was aware that at the highest levels of Popular Promotion, the program was viewed as a bulwark against Communist inroads, but that lower-level workers such as herself did not share the political concern. Indicating that social commitment, not politics, indeed drove their work, several Jocistas, including Nury, moved seamlessly from CIEP and Popular Promotion to Allende's Social Development program, which essentially was a continuation of Popular Promotion.<sup>173</sup>

Although JOC's community activists formed no formal links with the PDC, everyone interviewed who was old enough to vote in 1964 voted for the Christian Democratic candidate. According to the Jocistas, supporting the PDC was at the time considered the only option for a

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<sup>170</sup> Nury Ramos, interview.

<sup>171</sup> Luis Lizama and Norma Avaloz, interview.

<sup>172</sup> Juanita Pérez, interview.

<sup>173</sup> After 1970, CIEP went into decline for reasons that are not completely clear but seem connected to political divisions among its leadership.

Catholic with social consciousness, because the Communist and Socialist parties were viewed as anti-clerical. Moreover, the movement shared the party's social vision, grounded in the social encyclicals and based on the idea of a "third way," neither capitalist nor socialist.<sup>174</sup> As one man said, "Christian Democracy was in tune with our beliefs."<sup>175</sup> Many Jocistas described genuine excitement about Frei's candidacy. Groups of Jocistas participated in his famous March of the Young Fatherland that attracted thousands of youth from throughout Chile. Others helped pass out PDC flyers and attended political rallies. When asked about the 1964 campaign, a woman answered,

I supported it; I shouted; I was almost asphyxiated out on the Alameda [main avenue in the downtown] such was the excitement... the belief that Frei would be our answer... Frei for us was like a revolution, about creating a system different from what we had before... We [Jocistas] were completely involved in the campaign. Although I never was part of the party, I worked for the PDC... I went to speeches, I marched.... and I helped Frei win the presidency.<sup>176</sup>

Despite this youthful fervor surrounding Frei's candidacy, surprisingly few of the Jocistas interviewed, including those not involved in CIEP or Popular Promotion, were actually PDC members. Of the fifty-four people to whom the question was posed, only five answered that they had joined the party.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, those few Jocistas who became PDC members did so more for utilitarian than ideological reasons. One JOC militant and community leader commented

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<sup>174</sup> The PDC referred to this third way as "the non-capitalist road to development." The JOC and the party also shared the idea of class "uplift" (*superación*) through education and personal development.

<sup>175</sup> Fernando Alarcón, interview.

<sup>176</sup> María Eugenia Gálvez, interview.

<sup>177</sup> In the group interviews, it was not possible to ask about the political background of every person present. Of those who entered the party, three were union activists. Two lived in the *población* San Gregorio, reportedly a stronghold of the PDC. (In Chile, to join a party signifies that one is deeply committed politically. Unlike in the U.S., the Chilean election system, with no primary process, does not encourage party membership only for voting purposes.)

that, while he agreed with the party's philosophy, he joined mainly to access resources for his población's neighborhood council and youth centers.<sup>178</sup> JOC labor activists joined in order to successfully compete in a highly politicized union environment, as mentioned previously.

Helping to clarify why so few became party militants, Jocistas emphasized that politics remained strictly separate from both the Catholic movement and the CIEP. One leader explained, as she colorfully put it, that the JOC "had a way of neutering politics. We never talked about the importance that parties have as an instrument for changing society."<sup>179</sup> Others said that if Jocistas joined a political party, they kept it to themselves, because it was viewed as a strictly personal decision.<sup>180</sup> The lack of a political connection between movement militants and the PDC beyond the 1964 election, despite the ideological affinity, perhaps also represented a failure on the part of the party to identify itself with the JOC's working-class mystique. One Jocista from a neighborhood with an especially strong JOC group remembered that PDC leaders were viewed as well-off outsiders, who showed up in suits and ties, while Communist leaders wore overalls and jeans.<sup>181</sup> Furthermore, the Christian Democratic Party never distinguished itself from the Marxist Left in the way it reached out to women workers. Rather than addressing women *as* workers, the PDC framed its policies and rhetoric only in terms of traditional notions of motherhood, which its emphasis on mothers' centers epitomized.<sup>182</sup> Such rhetoric would not have resonated very strongly with the female JOC militants.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Patricio Pino, interview.

<sup>179</sup> Adriana Hernández, interview.

<sup>180</sup> Rosa Olivares, interview; Catalina Basure et al., interview.

<sup>181</sup> Rafael Silva, interview.

<sup>182</sup> Tinsman's *Partners in Conflict* has an excellent discussion of the ideology of gender mutalism that underlay the Christian Democrats' social programs.

<sup>183</sup> Reflecting female militants' lack of a deep identification with traditional notions of women's roles, former Jocistas advised but very few ever actually joined mothers' centers, even as adults. (See chapter three for more on gender issues within the JOC.) More research into why the party never incorporated many Jocistas is needed and

The failure of the Christian Democrats to integrate JOC militants into its party apparatus arguably reflected the PDC's larger inability to build political networks in the *poblaciones* that might have allowed it to compete more successfully over the long term with the Marxist Left. Except for San Gregorio, most poblaciones that had a strong JOC presence through the 1960s, such as La Legua and José María Caro, remained or became strongly identified with the political Left.<sup>184</sup> On the other hand, the PDC did serve as an entry point into politics for many Jocistas, although not ultimately to the party's advantage. Even if not actually becoming members of the Christian Democratic Party, Frei's electoral campaign represented the first time JOC militants had taken to the streets for strictly political reasons. As one man commented, "Before, having political ideas while participating in the Church was viewed negatively, the two things were supposed to be separate. But with the PDC, we discovered that politics was just about thinking about things on another level. The PDC broke this barrier that Jocistas could not participate in politics."<sup>185</sup>

## 5.8 THE JOC'S POLITICIZATION AND DECLINE

Chile experienced unprecedented social and political mobilization under Christian Democratic leadership. However, as the economic situation continued to worsen and uncontrollable inflation once again reared its head, the recently organized groups turned into a

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could provide a deeper understanding of the changes in social and political consciousness occurring in the poblaciones in the 1960s, particularly among women.

<sup>184</sup> I have made this rough determination based solely on my limited interview base. Cathy Lisa Schneider's *Shantytown Protest in Pinochet's Chile* identifies poblaciones that historically had a strong Leftist, especially Communist, identity. However, besides San Gregorio, which poblaciones had a strong Christian Democratic presence is unclear. The question remains whether a strong JOC presence had any influence on voting patterns in particular neighborhoods for the 1964 and perhaps even the 1970 elections.

<sup>185</sup> Humberto Mora and Graciela Vita, interview.

double-edged sword for the administration. During the second half of its term of office, growing militancy in the labor movement, especially among the newly unionized, accompanied by an exponential increase in land seizures and squatters' settlements by the urban poor, reflected the spiraling popular discontent with the government. The Communists and Socialists, taking advantage of the deteriorating situation, were able to make major gains among the Christian Democratic base, particularly *pobladores*, working-class women, and agricultural workers. Furthermore, during this same period, the PDC experienced increasing divisions, with a steady radicalization of left-wing groups within the party. This situation culminated in 1969 with a group of Catholic intellectuals breaking away from the PDC to form MAPU (Unitary Popular Action Movement.) Later in the year, MAPU joined the Popular Unity coalition, composed of the Communist, Socialist, Radical, Social Democratic, and Independent Popular Action parties, which chose Salvador Allende as its candidate for the 1970 election. At the same time, the government's failure to effectively maintain law and order led to a political revival of the Right.<sup>186</sup>

The JOC between 1965 and 1970 mirrored the increasing politicization and radicalization of Chilean society. Like so many of the Christian Democrats' young, working-class supporters, Jocistas quickly grew disillusioned with the party in which it had placed so much hope for real change. Furthermore, in a movement focused on analyzing reality, the political environment provoked serious questioning of Catholic political identity, leading militants to search outside the Church for answers. National JOC leader Sonia Bravo explained, "A new stage began [in the JOC], and we started to talk directly about politics, to talk about the political parties in Chile... Before it was thought that the only party in which a Christian could participate was Christian

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<sup>186</sup> Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy*, 151-154; Smith, *Church and Politics in Chile*, 127-128.

Democracy... Now people began to say, no, there are other parties that perhaps better represent the interests of workers, and we could participate in them.”<sup>187</sup> According to Julia Carbonelli, “It got to the point where society was so polarized and politicized that the Jocistas felt that the JOC no longer was enough... We wanted to be part of something bigger.”<sup>188</sup> The answer for many Jocistas was to affiliate with MAPU. Eleven interviewees, almost all of whom had entered the movement during its second decade, joined this new, relatively tiny party, a great contrast to the small number who had entered the PDC.<sup>189</sup>

The JOC’s political evolution also reflected the dramatic changes occurring within the Catholic Church in this period. The Second Vatican Council had promoted a new understanding of the relationship between the Church and the world, including a greater commitment to social action and a more participatory role for laymen in the process of evangelization. In many ways the Council simply affirmed what the workers’ movement already had been doing for almost two decades. As a result, its decisions scarcely registered within the JOC. Post-Vatican II developments in Latin America, particularly the early stirrings of liberation theology, with its class paradigm and critique of “developmentalism,” reverberated more strongly.<sup>190</sup> The Cuban Revolution, which had a notable Christian presence in its early years; the example of the revolutionary priest Camilo Torres, killed as a guerrilla fighter in Colombia; and the heavy

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<sup>187</sup> Sonia Bravo, interview.

<sup>188</sup> Julia Carbonelli, interview.

<sup>189</sup> The older generation of Jocistas tended to be less politically inclined, although still socially active in their poblaciones, and many were sharply critical of the younger Jocistas’ political activism. Only two of the interviewed Jocistas who entered MAPU were not in either the JOC movement or associated with CIEP/Popular Promotion at the time they entered the party. These two men, both active in unions, also were the only interviewees who had belonged previously to the PDC.

<sup>190</sup> One JOC leader, aptly reflecting the sentiments of many of his fellow Jocistas when asked about Vatican II, responded, “It was just a conference off in Rome.” However, the Council’s impact on middle-class students in Catholic Action was vastly different, according to Mario Garcés, who had been involved in the JEC (Young Catholic Students) in the mid to late 1960s. Mario said that Vatican II “set them on a new road of commitment with the people (*el pueblo*)... We felt like ‘children of the Council.’” Mario Garcés, Antonio, and Maruja, interview, Santiago, March 7, 2001 [last names omitted by request.]

persecution and “martyrdom” of Jocistas under a recently installed military dictatorship in Brazil also were radicalizing influences on many Jocistas, as well as their advisors. Finally, a direct contact with mass poverty through their work in the poblaciones deeply marked the advisors, who were almost all from middle- and upper-class backgrounds.<sup>191</sup> A number of them formed part of a group of progressive clerics and laymen that emerged late in the decade, intent on internal Church reform and pushing the institutional Church toward direct political action.

In 1968, a thirteen-hour seizure of the Cathedral of Santiago, intended to denounce the Church’s inadequacies in addressing social injustice, was the first major expression of this group of Catholic Leftists.<sup>192</sup> Julia Carbonelli recounted that while her advisor was inside, she and a group of around thirty Jocistas from all parts of Santiago were outside, showing their support amidst angry and screaming conservative groups.<sup>193</sup> From this event emerged the Young Church (*Iglesia Joven*) movement, which argued for greater democratization within the Church, proclaimed support for the Popular Unity coalition, and began to forge a synthesis between Catholicism and Marxism. This movement culminated in the formation of Christians for Socialism in 1971.<sup>194</sup> However, while JOC militants were aware of and supported these developments, their participation remained marginal, at least in Santiago.<sup>195</sup> Not only did the

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<sup>191</sup> The JOC advisors were at the forefront of a wave of Chilean and foreign priests who began to enter the poblaciones in the first years of the Frei government and who, because of their experiences there, grew increasingly critical of the “developmentalist” Church. Michael Dodson, “The Christian Left in Latin American Politics,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 21, no.1 (February 1979): 54-55.

<sup>192</sup> Dodson, “Christian Left,” 56-58; Smith, *Church and Politics in Chile*, 140; Patricio Dooner, *El gobierno de Frei: 1964-1970* (Santiago, Instituto Chileno de Estudio Humanísticos, n.d.), 70-72.

<sup>193</sup> Julia Carbonelli, interview. One of the conservative groups that Julia named is *Fiducia*, Society for the Defense of the Family. Pato Pino told a similar story of participation in the Cathedral’s take-over. Both Jocistas relate that a group of militants in a meeting at the central JOC office in downtown Santiago spontaneously went over to support the people inside the Cathedral. Patricio Pino, interview.

<sup>194</sup> Dodson, “Christian Left,” 56-58; Dooner, “El gobierno de Frei,” 70-72. Clotario Blest, the former CUT president, was involved in the Young Church and also helped found Christians for Socialism. Some early members of the Young Church also were founding members of MAPU. Victoria Plaza, March 19 interview.

<sup>195</sup> Only one interviewee said that she participated in Christians for Socialism. Her connection with the group was through her political party, MIR, and not the JOC. However, according to Garcés, in the southern city of

Catholic Left groups represent a largely elite mix of clerics and middle- and upper-class intellectuals, but as part of a movement that always looked outward, Jocistas were more concerned about secular politics than internal Church debates and theological discussions.

Even if not directly involved, a pronounced change in the JOC's discourse during this period makes clear that the movement was in dialogue with the Catholic Left.<sup>196</sup> A new vision of faith was intricately linked to the JOC militants' commitment to radical social change. As early as 1967, at a national council meeting, the JOC leadership proposed dedicating the movement to "Christian liberation," and by 1970 "Christ the Liberator" ("*Cristo Libertador*") had replaced "Christ the Worker" ("*Cristo Obrero*") as the JOC's Savior.<sup>197</sup> In terms of the movement's apostolic mission, a specific emphasis on transforming social structures replaced the previously more general call for social justice and "Christianizing" society. A 1971 document from a regional JOC seminar celebrating the movement's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary proclaimed:

The Church's mission is a liberating mission... For this, Christ chose his apostles... and gave them the mission of carrying his liberating salvation to all men... The JOC's mission is the same as that of the Church, but specifically among working-class youth... Without structural change we will not have a new Chile nor a new Continent... [The JOC] leads youth to transform themselves in Christ and with the Evangelical spirit to transform society's structures.<sup>198</sup>

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Concepción the Christians for Socialism's social base was broader, and included many more Jocistas. A Belgian priest involved in CpS in Concepción confirmed Garcés view. Victoria Plaza, March 19 interview; Mario Garcés, et al., interview.

<sup>196</sup> MAPU, having been formed by some early leaders of the Young Church, could be considered part of the Catholic Left, but as a political party, secular concerns dominated its agenda.

<sup>197</sup> Aliaga, *Itinerario histórico*, 140.

<sup>198</sup> *Construyamos con Cristo una sociedad nueva*, Talca, 1971, 10 [mimeographed conclusions from the seminar]. Patricio Pino, Personal Collection, Santiago.



Finally, while from its earliest years the JOC had referred to itself as “revolutionary,” the significance of this term shifted radically by the early 1970s. For example, a JOCF newsletter from 1949 had proclaimed, “The JOC is a revolution,” but it is clear from the surrounding text that the reference is strictly spiritual, not social or political.<sup>199</sup> In contrast, the 1971 document asserts, “Christ... is an example of struggle, revolution, and justice,” with a social implication clearly implied.<sup>200</sup> Juan Rodríguez, active in the movement from 1967 to 1973, explained, “Jesus Christ inspired us...knowing Christ as a great revolutionary... as a man seeking permanent social change.”<sup>201</sup>

By the time of Salvador Allende’s dramatic victory in Chile’s 1970 presidential race (making Allende the first democratically elected socialist president in Latin America), the JOC movement had broken from its reformist past and become a resolutely anti-capitalist movement. Soon after the election, the national JOC leadership released a circular declaring, “This event constitutes a great hope and a great responsibility for ALL workers and their organizations: Through active collaboration and vigilance, let us make real a more just society that permits the complete liberation of those oppressed by the inhuman and antichristian society that is capitalism.”<sup>202</sup> As various interviewees pointed out, the slogan that now came to define the JOC was “young worker, without you there is no socialism.”<sup>203</sup> Furthermore, without actually embracing Marxism, the JOC became firmly committed to “class struggle” (“*lucha de clases*”), rather than the previously denominated “workers’ struggle” (“*lucha obrera*”), and that same year

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<sup>199</sup> *Boletín de la Juventud Obrera Católica Femenina*, June 1949, 2 (mimeo).

<sup>200</sup> *Construyamos con Cristo*, 7.

<sup>201</sup> Juan Rodríguez, interview.

<sup>202</sup> Equipo Nacional JOC, “La JOC,” *Boletín de Asesores JOC/MOAC*, no.20-21 (February-March 1971): 5. The circular itself is dated September, 1970.

<sup>203</sup> The original phrase in Spanish is “jóven cristiano, sin ti no hay socialismo.”

leaders at a national council meeting spoke repeatedly about the need for the movement “to raise class consciousness.”<sup>204</sup>

A large majority of the JOC base agreed with the movement’s new political direction. Leading up to Allende’s election, Juan Rodríguez estimated that “ninety-nine percent of JOC militants participated in the campaign. And those that didn’t [were] Christian Democrats, but favoring Tomic [the candidate of the PDC’s progressive wing], who came together with the UP at its defining moment.”<sup>205</sup> The interviews appear to back up Juan’s assertion, since most of the Jocistas from the 1960’s generation affirmed unequivocally that they supported Allende, with only one person expressing preference for Tomic. (How much of this support for the UP involved active participation in the campaign is unclear.) Furthermore, unlike in the first half of decade, the movement no longer frowned upon “double militancy,” in other words participating in the JOC and a political party simultaneously.<sup>206</sup> Besides MAPU, a significant contingent of Jocistas aligned themselves with the extreme Left party MIR (Institutional Revolutionary Movement<sup>207</sup>), while a smaller number entered the IC (Christian Left party), which split from MAPU.<sup>208</sup> According to interviewees, their advisors, too, were either on the Left or supportive of the PDC’s progressive wing, with two JOC priests identified as *Miristas*.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> *Segunda reunión equipo ampliado JOC chilena*, Santiago, November 21-22, 1970 (mimeo), Pato Pino, Personal Collection.

<sup>205</sup> Juan Rodríguez, interview. He is referring to Tomic’s support for the UP after Allende failed to win a majority of votes. This support allowed Allende to become president.

<sup>206</sup> As alluded to previously, time constraints did not always make double militancy a realistic proposition, especially considering that most Jocistas had full-time jobs. As a result, as militants grew more involved politically, their JOC participation tended to decrease, although usually they maintained at least a loose affiliation with the Catholic movement.

<sup>207</sup> The MIR was to the left of Chile’s Socialist and Communist parties. This party believed that a socialist revolution could be achieved only through armed insurrection, although before the coup most of its programs on the local level were social and not military in orientation.

<sup>208</sup> One Jocista from the 1950s generation, after having already left the JOC movement but still involved in the Church, joined the Communist party. Three interviewees, all from the 1960s generation, joined the MIR, and two joined the IC. All of the *Miristas* said that others from their JOC base group entered the party with them. Scholars have tended to overlook the Christian presence in the MIR, a party which itself has received only slight attention.

Soon after the election, serious divisions began to arise within the JOC leadership over how best to support “the democratic road to socialism.” One faction, which included the JOC president, wanted the movement to collaborate directly with the new UP government.<sup>210</sup> It also argued that the JOC should replace the see, judge, act method with Marxist analysis. Another faction felt strongly that the JOC should respect its apolitical tradition and leave the issue of political commitment to individual discretion. This group also rejected adopting a Marxist line. Advisors, too, were divided, with the Belgian and French priests, who later joined the Christians for Socialism movement, taking a more radical position than that of the Chilean national advisor.<sup>211</sup> In the end, the JOC president’s radical proposal won the vote at a national council meeting, but bitter feelings inevitably resulted, and the JOC as a movement was left irreparably divided.<sup>212</sup> Some JOC dioceses, especially in Santiago, refused to accept the national JOC’s decision and separated from the larger movement.<sup>213</sup>

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Interviewees associated with the party, as well as the historian Mario Garcés, argue that Jocistas made up a significant portion of the MIR’s working-class base in Santiago and especially in Concepción, where the party was founded. Several interviewees accused the MIR of having “infiltrated” the JOC movement, although the *Miristas* strongly deny this claim, saying they joined on their own accord. Jocistas also apparently had an important presence in the IC’s base, with one man remembering militants from this party going to JOC meetings to recruit. Mario Garcés, et al., interview; Victoria Plaza, November 17 and March 19 interviews; Manuel Vergara, interview; Rafael Silva, interview; Juan Rodríguez, interview; Father Pierre Dubois, interview; Julia Carbonelli, interview; Father Jorge Murillo, interview.

<sup>209</sup> One of these priests was interviewed, but he denied that he ever had any political affiliation, although two women from his parish claim they brought him into the MIR. Because the military government severely persecuted the MIR, interviewees were reluctant to talk about their associations with this party, and they commonly asked that the tape recorder be turned off if they did. This reluctance, plus the fact that many of the Jocistas who joined the party were forced into exile (with a few “disappeared,”), means that the *Miristas*’ numbers probably are underrepresented in this research’s sample base.

<sup>210</sup> By 1970, JOCF and JOCM had merged, and there now only was one president for the entire movement.

<sup>211</sup> With the severe clerical shortage the Chilean and other Latin American Churches faced after mid-century, a growing number of European and some North American clergy arrived to the region. Because of their JOC background in France and Belgium (where the movement was founded), many of the clergy from these two countries became JOC advisors in the 1960s.

<sup>212</sup> No exact date for the national council where this dispute came to a head could be found. Interviewees place it sometime in 1970 or 1971.

<sup>213</sup> Father Jorge Murillo, interview; Patricio Pino, interview; Pedro Moraga, interview; Juan Rodríguez, interview; Father Pierre Dubois, interview; Luis Contreras, interview. Several male interviewees noted that gender, not just geography, divided the movement, at least in Santiago, where supposedly the women tended to support the Christian Democratic line more than the men. However, no female interviewee was able to confirm or dispute this assertion,

The conflicts within the movement reflected political divisions tearing apart the institutional Church as a whole. While ostensibly remaining politically neutral, the Chilean hierarchy's preference for Christian Democracy and distaste for the Popular Unity coalition were general knowledge, and those clerics and lay leaders who adopted a more radical position frequently clashed with the Church leadership.<sup>214</sup> Needless to say, the hierarchy did not approve of the JOC's increasing politicization and radicalization, and its support for the movement rapidly evaporated. A number of interviewees recounted a specific incident in 1968 as a turning point in the downward spiral in relations between the JOC leadership and the hierarchy. That year, national leaders had invited Rodrigo Ambrosio, founder of MAPU, to speak about revolution at a JOC congress, with their advisors' support. Cardinal Silva unexpectedly attended and, quite upset about the talk, found himself in an angry argument with the Jocistas.<sup>215</sup>

However, even before this incident, and long before Allende's election, the Church had already been gradually withdrawing its support for reasons that had little to do with national politics or even the JOC specifically. After the Second Vatican Council, the institution's priorities had shifted from Catholic Action to local, parish-based reform. Pastoral innovations, such as the creation of Bible study circles, forerunners to the Christian base communities, overshadowed the apostolic movements' role in increasing lay participation within the Church. With these new initiatives, the hierarchy could no longer afford to devote precious resources to Catholic Action, especially since the Church faced an ever-worsening clerical shortage. The number of priests assigned specifically to the JOC decreased throughout the 1960s, forcing militants to depend on the parish priests, who did not always have the time or the inclination to

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and several male interviewees from Santiago, although not Christian Democrats, said that they too opposed the movement's embrace of Marxism.

<sup>214</sup> A not insignificant right-wing faction also existed within both the institution's leadership and its base.

<sup>215</sup> Clotilde Silva, interview; Catalina Basaure et al., interview; Sonia Bravo, interview.

support the workers' movement.<sup>216</sup> The Church also slowly eliminated funding for the small stipends that had been paid to national and regional JOC leaders, which meant they could no longer dedicate themselves full-time to the movement.

The combination of political divisions and loss of institutional support, together with attrition due to competing political commitments and a lack of attention to formation at the base, sent the JOC into sharp decline. According to Father Osvaldo Martínez, national advisor in the early 1970s, between 1970 and 1973 the movement decreased by almost half.<sup>217</sup> Despite this scenario, a few large poblaciones in Santiago managed to maintain a strong JOC presence right up until the coup, most notably José María Caro and La Legua in the city's south, and La Renca to the north.<sup>218</sup> In fact, according to Father Jorge Murillo, a JOC leader in Renca in the 1970s, approximately two hundred youth arrived for his group's last gathering in the twilight days of the Allende government.<sup>219</sup> Not surprisingly, Jocistas in all three poblaciones had the continuing support of a parish priest willing to serve as advisor (or who assigned an assistant to do so), at the same time that the militants remained focused on building a base through parish-based youth centers.<sup>220</sup>

The 1973 coup d'état dealt the remaining JOC groups in Chile a fatal blow because of the severe persecution unleashed against the Left, both secular and Catholic. Many Jocistas were

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<sup>216</sup>As early as 1958, a national JOC advisor was complaining in letters to the auxiliary bishop of Santiago that the movement's independent advisors were being assigned to new clerical duties without being replaced. This situation was forcing the JOC to depend more on parish priests who could not adequately support the movement due to either a lack of time or of inclination. The national advisor also complained about a lack of adequate funding. By the end of the 1960s, a growing number of clerics, many frustrated with the slow pace of Church reform, began leaving the priesthood, oftentimes to marry. This group included a number of popular JOC advisors, placing further strain on the movement. Fernando Ariztía to Monsignor Emilio Tagle, Santiago, May 27, 1958; May 31, 1958; and August 6, 1958, AAS, AC, 1955-1961, Leg. 132, no.2. Also, Hugo Mesa and Fernando Ariztía to Monsignor Emilio Tagle, Santiago, June 5, 1958, AAS, AC, 1955-1961, Leg. 132, no. 2.

<sup>217</sup> Father Osvaldo Martínez, interview, Santiago, April 29, 2003.

<sup>218</sup> Father Jorge Murillo, interview; Patricio Pino, interview; Pedro Moraga, interview.

<sup>219</sup> Father Jorge Murillo, interview.

<sup>220</sup> In the case of La Caro, the parish priest himself had been a JOC militant before entering seminary.

detained and tortured. A few were “disappeared.” Others had to flee the country. Despite the repression, the JOC managed to gradually reorganize among a new generation of youth, even holding a national council meeting in 1977. However, it would never again come close to its pre-coup numbers.<sup>221</sup> The JOC had played an important role in pioneering changes that Vatican II ratified, including liturgical reform, greater role for the laity and especially for women within the church, and most importantly engagement in social issues. However, by the 1970s the Christian base communities had eclipsed the JOC (and the other specialized Catholic Action groups that the workers’ movement spawned) as centers of pastoral innovation and promotion of a Church “in the world.”

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<sup>221</sup> “JOC cree en el joven obrero,” *Solidaridad*, (second fortnight of November, 1981), .

## 6.0 CHAPTER SIX - CONCLUSION

Less than a month after the 1973 military coup, Chile's military police imprisoned and tortured Rubén Callao, former JOCM president, union leader, and member of the Marxist political party MAPU.<sup>1</sup> Despite his fear and trauma, Ruben continued his labor activism after his release. Elected president of the MOAC, he organized a mass in 1974 to celebrate the Day of the Worker (May 1) in Santiago's cathedral.<sup>2</sup> During the event, the police descended on the cathedral, but the participants inside had Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez's unyielding support and were able to carry on with the service. In the months that followed, Rubén and other union activists, including a significant number of former Jocistas, continued meeting regularly on Church property, eventually helping to organize the Vicariate of the Worker Ministry (*Vicaría de Pastoral Obrera*) under ecclesiastical auspices. With the country's once-powerful labor movement decimated by the dictatorship's heavy repression, this Vicariate provided a refuge for Rubén and his companions to begin rebuilding union networks.<sup>3</sup>

During the socialist government of Salvador Allende, Jocista Victoria Plaza was active in the extreme Left party MIR. Soon after the coup, the military detained and interrogated her. A few years later, the arrest and torture of a MIR friend forced her into hiding for a brief period. Despite the ever-present fear, Victoria returned to her *población* and became a local activist, participating in a human rights committee and a neighborhood "commando" that played an

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<sup>1</sup> Before entering MAPU, Rubén participated in the Christian Democratic Party.

<sup>2</sup>MOAC refers to the Catholic Action Workers' Movement, formed in Chile in the early 1960s. The movement never had broad participation but its leaders played a crucial role in labor organizing during the dictatorship.

<sup>3</sup> Rubén Callao, interview; Drogus and Stewart-Gambino, *Activist Faith*, 64-65; Fernández Fernández, *La "Iglesia" que resistió a Pinochet*, 95.

active role in the 1983 protests against the dictatorship. Throughout this period, a Christian base community at her local parish provided Victoria a relatively safe haven in which to connect with neighbors and nurture her social and political commitments. Under the influence of Victoria and another former Jocista, the base community adopted the JOC's see, judge, and act method, which melded seamlessly with Liberation Theology's emerging practice of "consciousness-raising."<sup>4</sup>

Former JOCF president and Communist party member Juanita Pérez escaped police detention by going into exile with the aid of nuns, but she returned to Chile after only a few years in Europe. Once back, Juanita organized a sewing workshop to enable the wives of political prisoners and the unemployed to earn income.<sup>5</sup> For the participants' own protection, the parish priest provided a church space in which to meet. As the women sewed, Juanita prompted conversations about "subversive" topics such as human rights, the dignity of women, and injustices in the country. She also became a leader in a parish base community, introducing the new group to the JOC's method of analysis, and was involved in street protests against the dictatorship.<sup>6</sup>

Many young, committed, working-class Catholics who came of age in the two decades preceding the coup followed this path from the JOC into Leftist secular politics and then back into the Church fold.<sup>7</sup> After 1973, former JOC militants brought their mixture of religious,

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<sup>4</sup> Victoria Plaza, November 17 interview; Lowy, *El legado de mujeres*, 85. Many interviewees explained that the JOC method and the idea of "consciousness-raising," frequently associated with base communities of this era, were in their view one and the same. (Unlike in Brazil and elsewhere, in Chile grassroots Christian communities were not referred to as ecclesial base communities (CEBs), a term commonly used here only for traditional, sacramental groups. Church groups such as Victoria's were referred to simply as base communities or popular Christian communities. Drogus and Stewart-Gambino, *Activist Faith*, 40-41.)

<sup>5</sup> In addition to political repression, the neo-liberal economic policies of the military regime resulted in severe economic conditions for the working-class. Three years after the coup, poverty levels in Santiago reached 57 percent, and in some poor neighborhoods, as high as 80 percent. Schneider, *Shantytown Protest*, 92; Chuchryk, "From Dictatorship to Democracy," 67.

<sup>6</sup> Juanita Pérez, interview. Lowy, *El legado de mujeres*, 54.

<sup>7</sup> Middle-class Catholics involved in Catholic Action groups and related Church-sponsored programs in the 1950s and 60s followed a similar trajectory.



social, and political experiences to the Church-based Workers' Pastoral, COPACHI, Vicariate of Solidarity, and Christian base communities.<sup>8</sup> They also played leadership roles in the new *poblador* and popular women's groups that emerged, frequently under Church auspices, when the military repressed more formal channels of political and social participation. Furthermore, these militants served as a bridge at the grass-roots level between the Catholic community and the secular Left when the latter turned to the Church as a refuge and an alternative to political parties and unions.<sup>9</sup>

The JOC legacy of bringing the Church closer to the working class also arguably increased ecclesiastical leaders' willingness to shelter a diversity of popular groups. A significant number of former JOC advisors from the late 1940s and 1950s had climbed the rungs of leadership within the Church by the time of the coup. With their depth of experience ministering to young workers, these clerics helped to push the Chilean National Bishops' Conference in a more progressive direction.<sup>10</sup> Many other advisors served as vicars and parish priests in the poblaciones, providing critical, direct support to the Christian base communities and other local Church organizations that formed the backbone of resistance to the dictatorship.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Cardinal Silva Henríquez created COPACHI (Committee of Cooperation for Peace in Chile) and later the Vicariate of Solidarity to coordinate the human rights work and social services of the local parishes. See Lowden, "The Ecumenical Committee for Peace," 189-203; Smith, "The Catholic Church and Politics in Chile," 328- 332; Fleet and Smith, *The Catholic Church and Democracy*, 61- 68; Schneider, *Shantytown Protest in Pinochet's Chile*, 116-118; Loveman, "Military Dictatorship and Political Opposition," 6-7.

<sup>9</sup> Established personal connections between Catholics and secular Leftists were especially important in view of the harsh repression and fear of government infiltration, which made informal friendship networks the primary mode of recruitment to the Church organizations. See Lowden, "The Ecumenical Committee for Peace," 193.

<sup>10</sup> Former JOC advisors who served as bishops during the period of dictatorship include Monsignors Carlos Camus, Fernando Ariztía, Sergio Contreras, Carlos González, and Bernardino Piñera. Several former advisors from other branches of Catholic Action also were part of the Chilean Bishop Conference's progressive faction.

<sup>11</sup> Not only the JOC advisors, but an entire generation of diocesan priests had been exposed to the problems of Chile's working class and poor in the country's major seminary in Santiago, where early clerical JOC leaders served as rectors and teachers and frequently encouraged seminarians to participate in JOC activities. Many of the foreign clergy who arrived to Chile in significant numbers in the 1960s (usually as part of religious orders) also played an important role in the resistance to the dictatorship. After the 1973 coup, a number of these clerics were detained and forced to leave the country (and in at least one known case, assassinated.)

Not only did Jocistas and their advisors play an active role in building new grass-roots organizations, but the JOC itself foreshadowed the role that the interconnected Church, neighborhood, and women's groups (the so-called "new social movements") would play under the military regime.<sup>12</sup> In raising social and political consciousness and mobilizing a mass base outside the party system, as well as inducing a nascent gender consciousness, the JOC loosely paralleled the grass-roots organizations of the 1970s and 80s. Furthermore, both the JOC and the new social movements reached their peak during years of governmental repression, albeit on vastly different scales, that limited previous forms of mobilization.<sup>13</sup> Finally, for both periods the return of open democratic politics led to a significant decline in influence, as the political parties absorbed and eclipsed these less traditional social actors.

Yet while in some ways anticipating the new social movements, the JOC clearly reflected a unique historical moment that differentiated it from later experiences of mobilization. The Catholic movement developed deep neighborhood roots, but it was part of a national structure under hierarchical control and lacked the autonomy and decentralized character of the new social groups. Even the Christian base communities depended on the local parish, a reflection of ecclesiastical efforts following Vatican II to decentralize the Church structure. The JOC's strong identity as a workers' movement and the direct involvement of a significant number of its militants in union activism also grounded the Catholic movement in its era. The JOC emerged during the import-substitution phase of Chile's economic development, a period in which jobs in industry and elsewhere were fairly plentiful (even if poorly paid.) Pinochet's neo-liberal reforms

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<sup>12</sup>Academics in the 1980s began using the term "new social movements" to refer to these groups because they lacked ties to more traditional (male-dominated) Leftist political parties and industrial workers unions and hence seemed to represent a novel form of grass-roots mobilization. Environmentalist, ethnic, and other grass-roots movements also were included in this category of new social movements, which is not specific to Chile.

<sup>13</sup>However, in great contrast to many of the post-coup groups, the JOC was never an oppositional movement nor had to be concerned about the security of its participants.

eliminated many of these jobs and caused extraordinarily high levels of unemployment.<sup>14</sup> Reflecting this shift, the new social groups in the poblaciones identified more as urban poor (*pobres*) than as workers (*obreros*), and they had a different set of social and economic concerns.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the JOC emerged at a moment in which Chile's feminist movement was moribund following the vitality of its suffragist years. In contrast, during the 1980s nascent middle-class feminist organizations established alliances with lower-class women's groups, helping to shape their incipient gender consciousness into a deeper questioning of patriarchal structures.

Perhaps what most differentiated the JOC from the later social movements, including the Christian base communities, was its character as a youth movement marked strongly by the idealism and enthusiasm of men and women on the brink of adulthood. These young workers grew up in impoverished circumstances and entered the labor market as adolescents, some even earlier. Yet JOC militants believed fervently that a better and more just society, reflective of their Christian values, could be built. The spiritual mystique of the JOC movement drove its militants' tremendous dedication and commitment to community and labor activism, and later to politics; with Christ the Worker as their guide, they actively promoted greater dignity and rights for male and female workers of all backgrounds. The fear and disillusionment that permeated much of the Chilean working class following the coup still lay in their future.

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<sup>14</sup> However, even before the coup women in particular were being phased out of the industrial workforce.

<sup>15</sup> Many of these new social groups were subsistence-oriented organizations, such as collective kitchens (*ollas communes*), shopping collectives (*comprando juntas*), and sewing workshops (*talleres de costura*). The JOC never focused on meeting basic survival needs but rather on issues such as minimum-wage laws.

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