



The Center for Iberian & Latin American Studies, UCSD

Invisible entrepreneurs: women in business during the 1870s-1900s in Chile

Thursday, January 31, 2013 • 3-4:30 PM

Deutz Room in the Copley International Conference Center, Institute of the Americas Complex, UCSD

The relationship between the level of economic development and female involvement in economic activity during and after the industrial revolution has been theorized and empirically studied in several countries. Earlier research suggested that the participation of women in the labor force followed a U-shaped pattern, and several explanations of this phenomenon had been proposed. This pattern however has been challenged recently for industrialized countries by works relying on alternative, non-census data sources, indicating that female participation in economic activity in the past was systematically underestimated by census data.

This work studies the relative validity of the U-shape hypothesis regarding the involvement of women in economic activity in a developing early industrial economy, Chile between the 1870s and the 1900s, by examining alternative non-census official sources: the national trademark registration system and Santiago's business license registry. The study follows a recent trend in research that provides a contradictory portrayal regarding the evolution of female economic activity compared to the popular U-shape hypothesis of female participation rates throughout different stages of economic and industrial development, according to census data. The analysis reveals a 19th century economy in Chile where women engaged dynamically and increasingly in business activity in many mainstream economic sectors as well as in elite niches. The data analyzed suggests a degree of invisibility of female's economic activity in Census data during this period.



Bernardita Escobar Andrae received her BA in Economics at the University of Chile, and her PhD and MPhil from the University of Cambridge. She is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Economics and Business of the University Diego Portales. Her research draws on the history and implications of the Industrial property system in Chile, gender economics, and business history. She has received research grants and awards from the Ford Foundation, King's College Cambridge, Cambridge Overseas Trust, and other bodies. In her professional career, she has been an advisor to the Chilean Minister of Economic Affairs for delegations negotiating several international Treaties on Intellectual Property Rights and Trade. She was also the Head of the Chilean Industrial Property Office between 2006-2008. She is currently a Visiting Scholar in CILAS, UCSD.

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