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Searching for Empowerment: Chilean Women & the Case of ComunidadMujer

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ABSTRACT

Chile's neoliberal political economy appears to frustrate women's empowerment. The privatisation of social services combines with minimalist social provisioning to make women's social reproduction burdens greater. Cultural expectations linking women's identities to care complicate the stringencies of the neoliberal context. The research carries out a qualitative investigation into the empowerment practices of ComunidadMujer, a prominent feminist organisation with a history of activism on women's equality issues. By comparing their practices with the testimonies of diverse Chilean women sharing their experiences, this research reveals that ComunidadMujer's discourses exemplify, rather than challenge neoliberal logic. An interpretative exploration of the data uncovers women's uncertainty and disempowerment, not due entirely to conditions of socio-economic equality, but also to certain problematic discourses inflecting subjectivity, which disregard social reproduction.

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