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Para ti amiga, compañera... por el honor de haber

caminado en tus pasos y aprendido contigo... y

para las mujeres quienes compartieron su alegría,

luchas y sueños para un mundo mejor.

Mujer

La alegría, la tristeza.
la libertad, el muro,
       las palabras, los gritos
          el amor, la desesperanza

                    los pardos pensamientos
                 los obscuros rincones,
                       te han sido legados
                  desde lejanos tiempos.

       Veo tu valor para
para recuperar tu identidad, tu fuerza para levantarte,
       tu lucha para poseerte a ti misma,
             el esfuerzo por caminar mirando el sol,
                 ya no quieres pedir permiso,
                    quieres vivir.

                 Caminar en tus caminos.
       con tu mano, en la mano que tu elijas.
          juntos, paralelos,
                 no uno, dos

Has dicho no, a los no, no a los no puedo.
       Si, a creer, a soñar, a reír,
             Si a tu cuerpo,
                       a tu poesía,
                       a tu vida.

                       -Rosa Quintanilla
                       (Santiago de Chile, sin fecha)

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ABSTRACT

Andina J. van Isschot
Identity, Gender and Transformative Politics:
Popular Women's Responses to
The Chilean "Transition to Democracy"

February 8th, 1996

In the 1980s, under conditions of economic austerity and authoritarianism popular women's movements in Latin America assumed new proportions. With suppression of the conventional political arena, a political space was opened providing the opportunity for women to emerge as central social actors, stimulating levels of consciousness and collective identity. In attempts to understand the nature of popular women's movements during this period, some studies have focused attention on women's response to economic crisis (economic structural determinants). Other writings, however, have focused attention on processes of collective identity formation. As the thesis suggests, to emphasize one dimension of popular women's struggle is to propose a narrow conceptualization of movement emergence and meaning. During the 1980s, observers of women's movements were optimistic pointing not only to the emergence of collective identities, but how women's movement had contributed to an historic breakdown of the public and private spheres. In the 1990s, however, regional processes of "transition and democratization" have been accompanied by movement decline. The present thesis contributes to current debates on popular women's movements by examining the political responses of popular women in the context of the Chilean "transition to democracy". It does so in view of assessing the impact of conjunctural conditions on continued processes of collective identity formation. In doing so, the thesis shows how the process of Chilean "democratization" is contributing to the continued subordination of popular women by means of a neoliberal state social policy which rather than empowering popular women is causing the reduction of their political space. Collaborating in the subordination of popular women are former supporters of popular women's movement are NGOs, the Church and international development communities. Analysis of an NGO sponsored women's project confirms that conjunctural conditions pose particular obstacles to organizing efforts which are concerned with promoting continued processes of identity formation among popular women, limiting possibilities for resurgence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge those who provided me with both support and guidance throughout the various stages of this thesis. I am especially grateful to my Supervisor Dr. Patricia Connelly, who provided me with structure and clarity when I ceased to see the forest for the trees. I thank you for your insightful comments and dedication to this effort. I am equally grateful to Dr. Henry Veltmeyer for his relentless encouragement and knowledge of Chile; without which I would have been at a loss for translating my experience into a thesis. Finally, I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. James Sacouman, who agreed to read my thesis upon very short notice and Dr. Christiansen-Ruffman for her methodological insights in the initial stages.

Among those friends who provided me with critical moral support when I felt that I simply could not write another word were David, Denise, Emily, Laura, Paula, Sherry, David, Soledad, Luis, Cheryl and Greta. To all of you, thank you for accompanying me throughout the process and standing by me, despite the numerous struggles. Finally, I wish to thank my family for both their understanding and encouragement at different points in time. Special recognition must go to my brother Lucho and sister Isabel for their support.

En Chile, quisiera reconocer las personas que llegaron a ser mi familia ese año, entre ellas Angélica, Nadia, Nancy, Nati, Marielena, Yvonne, e

Ximena y dar mis agradecimientos a dos personas quienes nunca dejaron de inspirarme durante todo este tiempo. Gracias a la "mosquetera" por tu amistad y por tu fuerza...y al Engels quien nunca dejó de desafiarme. Gracias por compartir tu Chile conmigo.

When embarking on this journey I never imagined what would transpire. There are many things I had hoped to include in this thesis which do not appear, among these are numerous thoughts, images and faces. I also recognize that in presenting my experience I made a series of choices. For these choices, and any limitations they present, I assume full responsibility.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

I, as author Carolyn Lehmann (1990) find no adequate translation for two words that are central to my thesis: *pobladora* and *población*. As such, I propose a similar but modified version of her descriptive definition. A *población* is an urban, densely populated neighbourhood, located on the periphery of Santiago Chile, where people live under conditions of "subsistence poverty". "Each población has its character, its name, its history, its pride. It cannot be satisfactorily translated as shantytown, or urban slum" (Lehmann, 1990:1).

A *pobladora* is the woman who lives in the población, who's identity is grounded in the collective history and lives of her community. The word is expressed in the feminine making visible her identity as a woman member of that community. I choose to use these words throughout my thesis with rare exception, although on occasion I make use of "popular women" in referring to *pobladora* women. "Popular women" is term which in my opinion, is the least problematic of translations as it derives from "popular sectors" which refers to entire communities of people who live in the *poblaciones* of Santiago and finds its common usage in the Spanish, *sectores populares*.

Additional Terms

Allegado(s): a person who occupy space in the home of friends or relatives resulting from conditions of poverty and a shortage of adequate housing.

Arpillerista (arpilleristas):

Chilean women who produce *arpilleras*, small wallhangings of patchwork and embroidery (with figures superimposed). Produced in large numbers by during the dictatorship, the *arpillera* became a symbol of political denunciation.

Centro de Madres (CEMA): Mother's Centres

Junta de vecinos: neighbourhood council

Ollas comunes: neighbourhood soup kitchens

INTRODUCTION: POPULAR WOMEN'S STRUGGLES IN LATIN AMERICA

Latin American women have a long history of involvement in social movements, from participation in labour struggles to nationalist, socialist and anarchist movements (Chinchilla,1993:42). Since the turn of the century, women have been active in claiming their rights as women and workers (Serrano,1990; Agosín,1987; Bonder,1989; Feijoó,1989; Chuchryk,1984; Kirkwood,1986; Valdés and Weinstein,1992). In the 1980s, however, under conditions of authoritarianism and economic austerity[1], Latin American women's movements[2] assumed new proportions as suppression of the conventional political arena opened a political space for increasing women's participation (Waylen,1993:576).

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[1]

The 1980s are referred to as the lost decade of development in Latin America. After 1980 there was a marked fall in economic growth characterized by a drop in net capital inflow and increased payments of interest on a burgeoning foreign debt. The economic crisis brought a sharp decline in employment and an increase in levels of informal and tertiary employment. In many countries this period was accompanied by a marked shift of income from labour to capital and its greater concentration. In the case of some countries, real wages declines some 12% to 18% (Aguiar,1987).

[2]

There exist various forms of women's movement throughout Latin America today. Many types of women's organizations developed over decades, some since the 1970s, and others more recently(Aguiar,1987). Yet women's movements in general found greater expression throughout this period. While there was significant overlap in organizing activities pursued by different groups of women, movement was diverse in organizational form and composition. As such one might speak of various "women's movements".

Among the women whose organizing activities attained greater visibility during this period were women of the urban popular sectors[3]. During the 1980s, popular women's neighbourhood organizations proliferated across Latin America producing similar patterns in countries such as Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru (Sternbach et al.,1992:211). Resisting state attempts at depoliticization, studies indicate that popular women's organizations became the vehicle for women's "political learning" and empowerment (Schild,1990), stimulating greater levels of consciousness and identity (Lind,1992; Rodriguez,1994).

These developments in popular women's organizing led to the production of numerous studies concerned with understanding the nature of these struggles. On the one hand, writings emphasized the structural, economic determinants of popular women's movements (Eckstein,1990; Serrano,1990; Beneria and Sen,1994) in view of their response to economic

---

As Elizabeth Jelin (1990) indicates, there is no "precise English formulation" for the Spanish "sectores populares". For the purposes of this thesis the translation "popular sectors" will be used. As Jelin, I prefer to use the term "popular sectors" because of its applicability in the context of Latin American society. To quote Jelin, "Working classes is an inadequate translation because regular employment in waged work is not the norm and unemployment is high...in broad terms the popular sectors in Latin America are synonymous with the urban poor, who are largely disempowered citizens in their own societies. While most have secured the rights and duties of political citizenship (often suspended during periods of military rule), the majority of Latin American people cannot claim to be full members of the economic commun︵y..." (footnote#1,1990:10)

crisis. Other writings focused attention on the political dimensions of women's struggle emphasizing processes of collective identity formation.

During the 1980s, accounts were optimistic about the transformative potential of popular women's struggles. According to observers, what we were witnessing on a regional basis was an historic breakdown of public and private spheres and the constitution of a new collective actor with its own identity (Jelin,1990; Schild,1994; Safa,1995). By the 1990s, however, the optimism of the last decade was being called into question, suggesting a need for renewed study of popular women's movements.

Processes of "transition and democratization" now underway across Latin America have been accompanied by a general decline in women's movements (Schild,1994; Alvarez,1990; Waylen,1993). To date, however, while focusing on the state, political parties, and macroeconomic policies, analyses of Latin American "democratization" have paid little attention to how popular women have responded to these processes of change.

This thesis contributes to debates on popular women's movements in Latin America by examining popular women's struggle in the context of the Chilean "transition to democracy". This struggle is examined in light of critical

debates in feminist social movement and development theory so to assess the impact of the "transition" on continued processes of gender based consciousness and identity formation.

Focusing on the political impact of the Chilean "transition to democracy" on popular women (*pobladoras*) and how these women are responding to the "transition". I ask the following questions:

In the context of the "transition to democracy"...

(1) Is the political space occupied by *pobladoras* being reduced?

(2) If so, how is this occurring?

(3) and how are *pobladoras* responding?

These questions will be addressed through analysis of field work conducted from July 1993 to July 1994 during which I became involved in an NGO sponsored participatory research project.

The study will show that women's grassroots organizing has been shaped by the particular social, economic and political process of Chilean "democratization". This process poses particular obstacles to organizing efforts that are concerned with promoting continued processes of collective identity formation among popular women.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter One I outline my conceptual framework by reviewing critical debates in feminist social movement and development writings. Here I focus on how authors have conceptualized popular women's struggles in Latin America. The review suggests that a suitable approach to the study of popular women's struggle combines economic, structural and identity-centred approaches with analyses of conjuncture.

Chapter Two provides a structural-historical framework for the thesis by looking at popular women's struggle in Chile from 1973-1990. The chapter shows how during the 1980s *pobladoras* came to occupy a wider political space, attaining greater levels of collective consciousness and identity.

Using a gendered political economy approach, Chapter Three provides

context and argument for the thesis by examining the Chilean "transition to

democracy". The Chapter demonstrates how: (1) popular women's organizing

has been shaped by the social, economic and political context of the

"transition" and, (2) how the process of "democratization" poses particular

obstacles to organizing efforts concerned with promoting continued processes

of collective identity formation among *pobladoras*. The chapter is divided into

two parts. Part One looks at the nature of the "transition" to argue that despite

official celebration of democracy and economic prosperity, popular women

have been excluded from the benefits of the "transition"[4]. Part Two examines

state social policy which shapes the current context, and which in turn,

prevents the empowerment of popular women.

Chapter Four outlines the methodology used in undertaking field

research. First, the origins, strengths and limitations of feminist participatory

---

[4]

In addressing the problem the thesis argues that neither democracy nor
economic success accounts for the current Chilean reality. The Chilean
"transition to democracy", involving the return to electoral politics and
civilian government cannot be equated with democracy (Schuurman and
Heer,1992:1). While the civilian government claims that democracy has been
restored to Chile, there persist significant obstacles preventing full,
substantive democratization. Second, the so-called Chilean "economic miracle"
poses a similar contradiction whereby the benefits of macro-economic growth
have not accrued to the majority of Chileans. In effect, despite official
discourse celebrating democracy and economic prosperity, the "transition" is
premised on continuity; on consolidating the military government's political
and economic model to the exclusion of most Chilean children, women and men.

research are presented. Second, the methodology is discussed in light of its application to the present thesis.

Chapter Five illustrates arguments advanced in Chapter Three by presenting the case study of an NGO sponsored women's project. This project carried out in one of the neighbourhoods (*poblaciones*) of Santiago serves to illustrate *pobladora* responses to the "transition". The case study shows how popular women are both conforming to and resisting the new organizing context.

Chapter Six, presents a summary of arguments and conclusions to this thesis. The chapter ends with a brief discussion concerning the implications of the thesis for both theory and practice.

CHAPTER ONE: FEMINIST APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF POPULAR WOMEN'S STRUGGLE

Chapter One is intended to review feminist approaches to the study of popular women's struggles in Latin America. By reviewing feminist writings in both the development and social movement literature, a suitable framework of analysis for the present thesis is then proposed. To this purpose, a primary distinction can be made between (1) approaches in the development literature which privilege economic, structural determinants in women's movements (Beneria and Sen,1980; Eckstein,1989; Serrano,1990)[5] and (2) those frameworks within social movement writings which are identity-centred.[6]

In some respects the distinctions drawn would appear to constitute different emphases, whereby authors have chosen to focus on specific aspects or influences present in women's movements. My aim is to combine elements from both frameworks of analysis in order to present a more

---

[5]

Serrano (1990) focuses on women's responses(conceived of as "survival strategies" to economic crisis) whereby women participate as an extension of their economic (domestic) role in production. Eckstein's approach (1990), albeit more nuanced, provides an example of such approaches which find economic factors determinant.

[6]

These two groups correspond respectively to writings found in the development and social movement literatures.

coherent and holistic approach to analysis. To this end, I will now discuss the

two approaches identified above (presenting their major assumptions,

concepts and working ideas) and then propose a synthesis of approaches

1.   Economic Structural Determinants

The first group of writings seek to establish the connections between

women's participation in grassroots collective organizing in view of their role

in economic development. As such, these works focus primary attention on

women's responses to economic crisis. Women's participation in collective

organizing is theorized by means of establishing the connections between

production and reproduction. Such analyses are important given the failure to

establish such connections in the non-feminist development literature[7].

Furthermore, these are significant in that they make visible women's role in

production, as well as that of social reproduction.

Feminist writings on development led to critical examination of current

development models and how these have affected women. Among these

writings are those studies which have demonstrated the differential impact of

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[7]

As women's activities tend to be located in the informal economy, the
connections between production and reproduction are often overlooked.

neoliberal economic agendas on women. These writings demonstrate how the brunt of economic restructuring has been borne by women whose roles in production and reproduction are dictated by the sexual division of labour. Connections between the nature of women's economic role and women's political engagement are then posited. These links between "material interests and political organization" have been explored by writers such as Lourdes Beneria and Gita Sen in light of global capitalist development[8] (Beneria and Sen, 1987).

These analysts propose a framework for theorizing the relationships between production and reproduction, linking these to gendered processes of dependent capitalist development involving processes of capital accumulation, class formation and gender relations. Using this framework, popular women's organizing cannot be explained without understanding changes in the structure of capital accumulation and how these changes bring about shifts in the sexual division of labour. The recent development of free-trade zones in

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[8]

Another important contribution is made by Maria Mies in her 1988 book, Women:The Last Colony. "Women and subjugated peoples are treated as if they did not belong to society proper, as constituted from (male) wage workers and capitalists. Instead they are treated as if they were means of production or 'natural resources' such as water, air and land. The economic logic behind this colonization is that women (as the 'means of production' for producing people) and land, are goods that can in no way be produced by capital. Control over women and land is, therefore, the foundation of any system based on exploitation"(Mies,1998:5).

many countries of the "Third-World", including the rise of "industrial

homework" performed by women, is illustrative of what these works identify

as "new forms of capitalist patriarchy" (Beneria and Sen,1980:162).

According to these authors, patterns of capitalist accumulation create

differential class interests between women as reflected in the "particular forms

and goals" pursued by different women's movements. This is particularly so in

the case of organizations aimed at subsistence whose members are said to

organize in response to economic conditions of crisis. In this way, the political

alternatives available to women's movements based on class, ethnicity, race,

and gender are theorized in view of their role in larger economic processes.

In the case of Latin America, it is argued that women's economic and political

alternatives are "overdetermined by the international division of labour"

providing few survival opportunities for women "outside the patriarchal family

structure" (Alvarez,1990:26; DAWN,1987).

These writings are essential in accounting for women's economic

responses, which constitute one of the central dimensions of women's

collective organizing. However, they tend to emphasis macrostructural

determinants of women's movements while ignoring the significance of other

dimensions. Women's political role in challenging the bases of subordination

is the concern of a second group of writings. These authors deal more explicitly with what is occurring within these movements with respect to the substance of political consciousness and the development of collective identities. We now turn to discussion of identity-centred frameworks.

2.   Identity-Centred Frameworks

Concerned with the processes of collective identity formation, this second group of writings examines the substance of women's political consciousness by pointing to their articulation of gender interests. As Safa and others argue, popular women may organize in view of traditionally ascribed gender roles as wife or mother and may be motivated in defense of those roles (Safa, 1995:234; Alvarez,1990). Unlike class based movements, these women's movements[9] tend not to centre on the social relations of

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[9]

The nature of popular women's struggles, as outlined thus far, has stimulated internal debate among observers of popular movements. Debates internal to writings on popular women's struggle question whether, in fact, women's collective activities constitute "women's movements". Corcoran-Nantes takes issue with Safa (1990) and others who describe urban social movements as women's social movements "because this would fail to acknowledge the participation of men... but also the affects of gender within and between these movements and institutional politics" (Corcoran-Nantes,1990:154). Corcoran-Nantes is correct in arguing that women's struggles at the grassroots are not rooted in movements "created specifically 'for' women" (Corcoran-Nantes,1990:154). Furthermore, women's collective activities cannot be understood without looking to the political-institutional context. Nevertheless, women express concerns that arise from their gendered experience in the world. The same author contends that the overwhelming presence of women in urban popular movements reflects the non-representation of their "socioeconomic experience in other forms of political organization" (Corcoran-Nantes,1990:137). Given that women's socioeconomic experience is

production but, largely on issues of consumption and reproduction

(Alvarez,1990; Safa:1995) for which women focus demands on the state.[10]

Arising from what Kaplan has referred to as a "women's

consciousness" (Kaplan, 1981 in Chinchilla,1995:247), studies argue that

popular women organize in pursuit of "practical gender interests"

(Molyneux,1986) based on women's experience "within the existing gendered

division of labour"(Molyneux,1985; Chinchilla,1995:246). A women's

consciousness stands in contrast to a feminist consciousness, which is said

to lead to the articulation of "strategic interests". "Strategic interests", in turn,

depart from an analysis of women's subordination and proposes

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gendered, then would not this experience find organizational expression.

It is necessary to name some urban-based movements as women's movements. The act of naming represents one means by which these movements can at once be wrested from obscurity and their obscurity explained in view of their gender composition. Certainly popular movements involve men. The intention here is not to skirt analysis of significant gender power relations as noted above both within and between organizations. Gender relations impact and structure even women's autonomous efforts at organization."Gender differences are crucial in understanding why and how women and men organize and participate in urban struggle. Women and men perform different roles, have distinct needs, social responsibilities, expectations, and power, and are socialized in different ways" (Rodriguez,1994:34).

10

Safa(1995) challenges Marxist theory by arguing that women's participation in social movement is based primarily on gender and not on class."The bulk of poor women who participate in these movements are conscious of both class and gender exploitation but tend to legitimize their concerns over issues such as human rights or the cost of living primarily in terms of their roles as wives and mothers rather than as members of a subordinated class." As a consequence, she notes, women's primary arena of confrontation has not been with capital but with the state, which in Latin America has assumed a "major role in social reproduction" as provider of health care, education, housing, transportation, etcetera....

transformative solutions based on this analysis (Molyneux,1986).

These writings emphasis the context and local nature of popular women's struggles in neighbourhoods where women not only establish and negotiate relationships with social movements, but political parties, NGOs, the Church and state institutions. These relationships inform our understanding of women's political consciousness in view of their political exclusion.

Popular women's experience with political movements and parties (particularly their experience with the New Left) is cited by authors as having shaped their consciousness as women (Sternbach et al.,1992). At the neighbourhood level, women encounter a series of constraints which prevent equal participation in decision-making processes. While women may be well-represented in the membership of popular organizations or parties, leadership positions are often assigned to men (Cañadell,1993). As Rodríguez points out, when analysing the experience of popular women, gender as a social construction "accounts for differential forms of participation" (Rodriguez,1994:34).

At the level of the state, the nature of popular women's political exclusion is differentiated from other groups of women. While it is true that

women "as a group" have been treated as secondary to the political process,

popular women hold a differential relationship with political parties and the

State based on class (Schild,1990:26). In Schild's study of Chile (1990), she

found that while middle-class women have often held an "auxiliary role" in

"implementing state and party policy", popular women have "consistently been

marginalized and confined to a client role" (Schild,1990:26). In this manner

the literature establishes popular women's struggles as distinct from other

women's movements such as feminist movements (Sternbach et al.,1992;

Schild,1990; Cañadell,1993).

Although most popular women's struggles are not explicitly aimed at

challenging women's subordination, still writings suggest that feminism has

been an inherent part of women's organizing experience in popular

neighbourhoods. This is the case where collective organization has

encouraged consciousness-raising activities involving reflection about

individual and collective life experiences. These activities, often supported by

the Church and non-governmental organizations (NGOS), have also led to

increased contact and collaboration with middle-class feminists (Lind,1992;

Schild,1990). In addition to levels of politicization resulting from participation

in political movements and parties, this sharing of collective experience

among women has reinforced a consciousness of class, race and gender

exploitation on the part of popular women leaders[11]. In this manner, although popular women have mobilized in view of traditional gender identity, at the same time, their collective struggle has provided the means to begin challenging traditional gender relations. This challenge is made evident in discussions of women's empowerment which have contributed to processes of collective identity formation.

Studies note the importance of neighbourhood organizing in engendering processes of individual and collective empowerment (Schild, 1990; Valdés and Weinstein,1989; Alvarez,1990; Safa,1995; Lind,1992). These processes of empowerment have not only led women to challenge traditional gender relations but, has contributed to processes of collective identity formation. According to accounts of popular women's struggles, organizations represent spaces where women, whom are normally excluded from the political process, begin to experience themselves as political agents (Jelin,1990:191). For women, part of becoming political agents means questioning traditional gender relations and seeking to establish new identities. As Jelin indicates,

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[11]

A number of writers point to emergence of popular feminist organizations as evidence of this consciousness throughout the region (Chinchilla,1995; Fischer,1994; Chuchryk,1989).

when collective practices embody questions about who they are, what
their rights are, and what fields of action are appropriately theirs these
are a central aspect of learning to become political agents...developing
a sense of political efficacy necessarily means questioning limiting
gender relations and forging alternative identities (Jelin in
Schild,1994:64).

During the 1980s, these observations led some authors to argue that

popular women's organizing experience has led to the emergence of a new

collective actor. Are we, as Elizabeth Jelin and others suggest, "witnessing (in

the field of popular movements and women) an historical process of the

constitution of a new collective subject, with its own identity" (Jelin,1990:6;

Safa,1995; Schild,1994)?

Additional insight concerning popular women's movements and the

substance of their political identity can be gathered by looking at conjunctural

analyses which examine the relationship between structure and identity

formation. The manner of women's inclusion in the public sphere of politics at

particular historical junctures suggest that state constructions of femininity

(and masculinity) play a significant role in the construction of popular

women's movements.

When reviewing the history of popular women's struggle, authors

indicate that in the 1980s, women were among the first to protest and

denounce repressive economic and political conditions throughout the region.

In examining the context of women's struggles, the gender specific

contradictions posed by these patriarchal, capitalist authoritarian regimes are

revealed. Under such regimes, it has been argued that in fact women were

better placed to organize collectively.

Studies (Chuchryk,1984; Serrano,1990; Valenzuela,1986; Tabak,1982;

Alvarez,1990) examining the nature of women's participation under

authoritarian-capitalist regimes[12] have demonstrated how these regimes

sought to depoliticize popular women by making deliberate use of traditional

gender ideology in the name of "national security".[13] Paradoxically, they

argue, it was this attempt to relegate women to the private domestic sphere

(or traditional exclusion from the male sphere of politics) which enabled

women to organize and protest in increasing numbers. On the one hand, the

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[12]

Patricia Chuchryk (1989) noted in relation to the Chilean dictatorship,"The authoritarian-capitalist model is based on values often referred to as Catholic traditionalism, that is, a firm belief in religion, family, private property and the nation. Thus any attack on traditional values such as private property are seen as attacks on Christian values and the Chilean family and nation. The Doctrine of National Security...reinforces this ideological project" (Chuchryk,1989:156).

[13]

Valenzuela (1987) argued that the Chilean authoritarian state represents the quintessential expression of patriarchy.

conjuncture was felt to have created the "political space"[14] for women to emerge as social actors. On the other hand, it was deemed to have brought about changes in political consciousness. Both these observations point to the nature of women's inclusion in the public and private spheres[15].

Women's participation in these movements meant they were thrust into the public domain. As such, collective action can be seen as a result of a breakdown in the traditional Latin American division between the public and the private spheres (Safa,1995:227; Jelin,1990). Analysts suggest that such a breakdown resulted in a politicization of the private sphere whereby

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Here I am making use of the notion in social movement writings of "political opportunity structure"(Klandermans et al., in Foweraker,1995:19) which is composed of state institutions and "national political traditions". The political opportunity structure is said to condition the "emergence, strategy and likelihood of success of social movements". In using this concept, however, I do not mean to propose a rigid dichotomy between state and social movements. Ribeiro questioned the tendency of drawing sharp distinctions between movements and the state. As is suggested, politics constitute integrative, dialectical processes involving conflict and negotiation."The political process-political struggle or "politics" tout court- is the conflict between those two camps, the result of which is conceived of not as a synthesis which transforms both but as the dilution of one through the intervention of the other(either social movement is absorbed-engolfado) by the institutional system and disappears in it or, on the contrary- and this is the desired outcome-the institutional system is destroyed by the movement" (da Silva and Ribeiro in Assie,1994:89).

15

Carole Pateman argues that women's incorporation into the civil order is different than men. Women occupy the private sphere but, women "have never been completely excluded from participation in the institutions of the public world-but women have been incorporated into public life in a different manner than men. Women's bodies symbolize everything opposed to political order, and yet the long and often bitterly contested process through which women have been included as citizens has been structured around women's bodily (sexual) difference from men" (Pateman,1989:4).

women redefined rather than rejected their domestic roles and therefore extended struggle against the state into the home and community...as such the family became a contradictory institution for women, serving as both a source of subordination and legitimacy in the public sphere (Jelin,1990).

As women of the popular sectors began to "establish a space of their own", a collective identity was being constructed (Caldeira,1990). Historical memory, as recounted in recent testimonial literature, suggests that women came to perceive of themselves as a collective movement[16]. Jelin suggests that a new political identity has emerged which contrasts to that of "traditional housewife and that of the man in politics". By means of organizing experience, women have acquired what Jelin and others have referred to as a "gender-specific culture of citizenship" (Schild,1994). As Helen Safa explains, women have been active in the construction of a new collective gender identity based on women's public rights to citizenship, an identity which will resist attempts to reestablish the old order of gendered power relations.

It seems as if as a result of their participation in social movements, women are building a new collective gender identity, based not just on their private responsibilities as wives and mothers but on their public rights as citizens. Such changes are the best guarantee that these women will resist any attempt

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[16]

Here I make reference to testimonial literature of women's experience in urban based organizing and movement.

to reestablish the old order and will continue to press for their rights. They imply a redefinition of women's identity away from a purely domestic image as guardians of the private sphere into more active participants in the public arena struggling to gain greater legitimacy (Safa,1995:236).

As women have demanded their incorporation into the state with rights as full citizens and resisted representation of their interests by male counterparts, women themselves have been contributing to the breakdown of public and private spheres in Latin America (Safa,1995:228)[17].

3.   Towards a Synthesis

Following discussion of central points in the two categories of feminist literature a brief summary and synthesis of approaches is now advanced. What emerges is a framework of analysis that find its application in the present thesis.

17

"...women in Latin America are not just defending the private domain of the family against increasing state and market intervention. They are also demanding incorporation into the state, so that their rights as citizens will be fully recognized. In this sense, these movements are not only symptomatic of the breakdown between the public and the private spheres but are themselves furthering this process. Women are demanding to be recognized as full participants in the public world and no longer want to have their interests represented solely by men, as male heads of households, barrio leaders, or politicians or union officials" (Safa,1995:228).

We can draw important elements from both categories of feminist writings discussed (i.e. economic structural and identity-centred analyses). First, feminist writings which focus on economic structural determinants alert us to a significant dimension of women's struggle at the grassroots. We cannot begin to understand the meaning of their collective demands nor appreciate the nature of women's movements without identifying the gender-specific, structural obstacles posed by neoliberal agendas. To do so, would be to overlook women's daily efforts to ensure survival and well-being of both the household and community, the value of which is often overlooked in mainstream economic analyses (Lind,1992:136). The strength in these writings therefore lies in their theorizing of productive and reproductive work and in situating women's experience within the context of dependent capitalist development. However, these writings are weak in establishing the links between material interest and political activity.

To focus exclusively on economic, structural determinants of movements is to provide a narrow conceptualization of struggle.[15] In doing so, we learn more about the impact of certain structural conditions, and

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[15]

T. Minh ha Trinh (1992) argues that Western conceptualizations of "poor women" have often stereotyped popular women's struggles as being primarily linked to their economic roles. Such stereotyping is often the unintended consequence of writings which have limited their focus to discussion of women's responses to economic crisis while cultural, social or political dimensions of collective organizing remain largely invisible.

women's reaction to these conditions and relatively less concerning the

proactive, strategic, political nature of women's movements. In the end, such

approaches invariably rely on a very narrow definition of politics, which

underestimates the significance of popular practices involving strategy,

negotiation and resistance[19] in daily life. For organized popular women, such

definitions run the risk of depoliticizing their activities and underestimating

their potential for bringing about transformation. As Morgen reminds us,

analyses demand a wider conceptualization of women's struggle.

> Community organization is often seen in terms of its local character
> and women's collective action is viewed as an extension of the family
> rather than, for example, class concerns. I argue that both these
> conceptualizations are narrow and obscure the ways that the political
> economy of capitalism engenders and shapes resistance outside the
> workplace...taking women and community organization seriously
> involves challenging the presumed theoretical primacy of social
> relations of production (over the social relations of reproduction and
> consumption) and of class (over gender, race, and ethnicity)
> (Morgen,1988:97).

Identity-centred writings compliment economic structural analyses by

exploring the wider, political dimensions of struggle. As Arturo Escobar

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[19]

The concept of resistance used here, on the one hand, departs from James
Scotts' work (1985,1991) on "everyday forms of resistance" to include actions
which avoid direct confrontation with authority (or elites) and which may
not make explicit their challenge to power relations nor bring about
transformation. On the other hand, resistance here is also meant to include
those acts of defiance in daily life which are inherently transformative and
lead to the introduction of new values, actions, political aims and forms of
cooperation.

contends, "social movements must be seen equally and inseparably as

struggles over meanings as well as material conditions, that is, as cultural

struggles" (Escobar,1992:69). In the case of women's struggles, a focus on

processes of collective identity formation reveals that social movements are

as much about assuring basic living conditions and services ("consumption

and reproduction") as they are about constructing the bases for political

alternatives. Insofar as the development of collective consciousness provides

an axis for movement, women's struggle for identity is central to any political

strategy.

> The emergence of grassroots women's organizations in Latin
> America is linked to issues of human rights, democracy,
> citizenship, living conditions, provision of urban services, and so
> on, but above all poor women through their organizations, are
> gaining experience in constructing collective identities and
> changing everyday power relations and broad politics in that they
> question power both within the household and outside it
> (Rodriguez,1994:34).

Identity-centred writings point to the substance of women's political

consciousness and processes of collective identity formation. These works

suggest that, indeed, the context of popular women's daily life, and nature of

organizing experience, warrant careful consideration. As these writings

indicate, however, understanding the nature of popular women's movements

requires both microlevel and macrolevel observations.

With regard to local level analyses, four points will be made toward establishing a suitable framework of analysis[20]. First, a wider conceptualization of women's participation is needed. A useful point of departure for microlevel analyses is that of Caroline Moser who distinguishes between three types of women's work. According to Moser (1987), women at the neighbourhood level are engaged in production, reproduction and community management. Each type of work constitutes overlapping spheres of activity in daily life whereby participation in one may limit the time or extent of involvement in another, or alternatively, may require that a woman engage in various activities simultaneously. If women's demands revolve around consumption and reproduction as suggested (Alvarez,1990), then the nature of political organization cannot be understood without examination of women's "triple burden". In this manner, Moser provides a useful starting point for understanding the gender and class specific obstacles women face when they engage in social movements.

Second, Moser's conceptualization should be expanded to note the

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These four observations point to the necessity of combining structural and identity-centred frameworks.

non-economic motivations for women's collective organization. It should be noted that mutual support networks of women do operate throughout neighbourhoods; networks which constitute a distinct sociocultural sphere. Not only are women's daily lives intertwined through interconnected household economies, but women share an experience of the world deriving from the responsibilities and roles they are assigned. In this manner, friendships developed among women represent a source of emotional support and opportunity for social validation of such an experience. These networks have led to the constitution of groups for economic subsistence, while others have led to collective protest and development of social movements[21] (Blondet in Jelin,1990).

Third, the concept of "daily life" encountered in feminist writings is critical to developing an overall picture of women's participation in struggle. Exploring the everyday life worlds of women, one encounters the complex inner workings of movements for change where power relations within and across households, organizations and engender conflict and negotiation. In

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[21]

The level of women's autonomous organizing in urban popular neighbourhoods has not received much attention in the literature. Lind in her 1992 study of Ecuador, found that (in so-called "democracy") many women had opted for autonomous organization (Lind,1992:134). Lind's observation is interesting from two perspectives. First, it suggests that autonomous organization occurs independent of whether opportunities for open collective political activity exist. More importantly, it suggests that over time women have come see themselves as a collective actor.

Lind's (1992) study of Ecuador, she notes how popular women's

organizations provide the means for struggle against gendered power

relations. Women are not only challenging institutional forms[22] of

"engendered power", but those in the everyday sphere, "embodied in male

and female subjects" (Lind,1992:135). While it is often assumed that women

do not have a "strategic" agenda beyond meeting their economic needs, she

argues that, in fact, through the collectivization of their reproductive work,

women have become more "politicized about gender issues and subjectivity"

(Lind,1992:137).

A fourth observation, leads us to link microlevel to macrostructural

analyses. To the extent that popular women's struggles occur in a local

political- institutional context, these are invariably influenced by relationships

to agents such as NGOs, the Church and the State. As noted, popular

women's organizing is shaped by the nature of women's exclusion from

institutionalized politics, but is not immune from influence and regulation by

institutional bodies, political parties and the State[23]. The question then raised

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Lind(1992) argues that these institutional forms of gendered power are
"inherent in traditional class-based political institutions and in the
dominant Western practice of development" (Lind,1992:135).

23

As Kaplan observes (1981),"the fate and political direction of woman's
movements (movements based on female consciousness) are highly influenced by
the larger political context, such that their fate may be determined by the

is the relationship between structure and the formation of women's collective consciousness.

Conjunctural observations show how certain regime types contribute to the construction of particular notions of masculinity and femininity, demonstrating in turn, how these constructions shape popular women's consciousness. At the same time, however, these macrostructural analyses also remind us that at any given conjuncture, women's relationship to the political-institutional realm may or may not play a determinant role in shaping these processes. As these studies indicate, at certain conjunctures state attempts to impose certain gender regimes may be more or less successful as women resist this imposition. Chuchryk's (1984) study of the development of feminism in the midst of the Chilean dictatorship provides us with an example of how some women resisted the imposition of a particular gender regime while Crummett's (1977) study of this period provides an example of how other women were successfully coopted (Crummett,1977). Radcliffe reminds us that no matter how successful these state projects may appear, they often remain incomplete.

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ability of right or left-wing parties to incorporate their protests into national agendas" (Kaplan in Chinchilla,1993).

> The state attempts to impose certain masculinities and
> femininities, but its projects remain incomplete. Civil societal
> groups resist the State's imposition and attempt to promote and
> consolidate their own gendered identities. The expression of
> non-state masculinities and femininities arises from civil society
> wherein facets of individual and group identity are expressed
> through gender (in practice and discourses). These gendered
> identities provide a basis for contesting state conceptualizations
> of gender regimes (Radcliffe,1993:202).

The issues and concepts raised by this literature suggest the need for

a new framework able to account for the specificity of popular women's

struggles. Such a framework would combine economic, structural and feminist

identity-centred frameworks with analyses of conjuncture. Such a synthesis is

proposed below.

4.   Framework of Analysis

The nature of popular women's movements requires that we bring

analyses of gender to our understanding of local level politics while

recognizing the importance of macrostructural processes of change. It is in

establishing the connection between micro and macro-level analyses that we

begin to unravel the complexity of popular women's participation in social

movements. Our starting point must be observations of women's experience

in daily life from which we can begin to draw insight regarding larger

structural processes. The importance and complexity of establishing

connections between daily life and larger political processes is expressed in

the following statement:

> If we study the meaning of political practice in daily life, the
> construction of identities and discourses, we do not do it
> assuming that these are determinant- or necessary- of practices
> at the institutional level. Neither do we assume the autonomy of
> democracy in relation to people's quotidian practices. The
> relationship between one and the other are complex, mediated.
> Our intention is to point to a *field of construction of democracy*
> that, in the fi.st place, is important in itself, that of the social
> relations of daily life...we believe that *daily life* and *social*
> *movements are privileged spaces in which to study these*
> *processes of mediation,* since social movements are situated, at
> least in theory, in the intermediate space between individualized,
> familiar, habitual, micro-climatic daily life, and socio-political
> processes writ large, of the State and the institutions, solemn
> and superior (Jelin,1987b:11).

As Alvarez and Alves argue, there is a "dialectical relationship between

State policies and the mobilization of society" (Alvarez, 1990:41). Both State

and agents located outside the community shape local level politics,

influencing forms of collective organization, while these organizations in turn,

create certain pressures against institutionalized power. At the same time,

however, neither analyses of state and civil society, nor women's experience

alone are determinant of either women's potential for collective movement or

that of engendering processes of social change.

As Neuma Aguiar suggests, on the one hand, "direct ties between economic crisis and the presence of women in the political process cannot be established". On the other hand, "neither can we draw any linear conclusions regarding the potential of civil society", including women's movements, for creating the "social crisis" capable of challenging the underlying "institutions and value systems" (ideology) which sustain the subordination of women (Aguiar,1987).

Following Sonia Alvarez, I propose an historical-structural framework which "combines macrostructural explanations with micropolitical or conjunctural analyses". Central to this conceptual framework is concern with establishing how structural factors serve to shape popular women's organizing at particular historical junctures. As Alvarez notes, this framework provides us with a better means of understanding how and under what conditions women articulate gender interests.

> If class, race, or dependency are constitutive of strategic and practical gender interests, as my data suggests, they do not determine how such interests are ideologically framed or politically advanced. Here the competing class and gender ideologies and discursive practices prevailing at specific historical conjunctures have been shown to be the key to how gender-based claims are couched and to whether, when, where and how they are channelled into the political system (Alvarez,1990:265).

Only analyses which address specific historical-structural conditions (i.e. the political-institutional context) as well as women's experience in collective organizing (including their participation in political parties and social movements) can begin to speculate regarding the potential for women's movement. What will be undertaken here is an examination of how political and economic contexts serve to inform processes of collective identity formation and women's opportunities for social movement.

The thesis examines the struggle of popular women in Chile and their political responses to the "transition to democracy". In the following chapters an historical-structural framework is combined with conjunctural analysis of the recent Chilean "transition to democracy" to show how at certain conjunctures processes of collective identity formation are given the opportunity to flourish, while at other points, political and economic conditions create obstacles to collective identity formation. The thesis demonstrates how the process of Chilean "democratization" is impeding the possibilities for increasing the gender bases of collective identity formation among pobladoras. In the case study to follow, the political responses of pobladoras are examined in view of the obstacles posed by the "transition".

CHAPTER TWO: POBLADORA STRUGGLE (1973-1990)

Introduction

In this chapter, the focus will be on the participation of *pobladoras* or women of the popular sectors in Chile, who came together in the thousands to protest injustice following the coup of 1973. To provide context for discussion of pobladora struggle the chapter begins with a description of the period 1973-1980 during which time the Chilean dictatorship established its political and economic programme. In a second part, *pobladora* movement and its development throughout the period 1973-1990 is examined more closely to demonstrate: (1) how *pobladoras* came to occupy a wider political space and, (2) that *pobladoras'* organizing experience throughout the dictatorship, led to greater levels of gender based collective consciousness and identity.

1. The Political Economy of Pinochetismo: 1973-1980

Introduction

Any account of popular women's struggle would be incomplete without

noting the very real cultural, political, economic, social and psychological devastation wrought by the Chilean military dictatorship. For more than 16 years, Chilean people lived under one of the most repressive of military regimes ever seen in Latin America. Described by many as a "reign of terror", Chilean history after 1973 is marked by images of "concentration camps, torture[24], disappearances, and executions" (Chuchryk,1989:151). Among the first to oppose the authoritarian regime were thousands of men and women from the many *poblaciones* of the nation's capital, Santiago.

Following the violent overthrow of Salvador Allende's socialist government in 1973, vested interests in national and transnational capital, as well as the military itself, converged (Cañadell,1993) to entrench an "authoritarian-capitalist regime" (Chuchryk,1989). The new authoritarian government embarked on a programme aimed at "bringing about a profound transformation of Chilean society" (Petras et al.,1993:17).

Transformation was marked by profound economic restructuring and suppression of political opposition. In the economic sphere, "a monetarist economic model" was implemented, which according to various observers,

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[24]

Repression and torture on the part of the Chilean regime assumed gender specific forms as documented by authors such as Ximena Bunster-Burotto(1986).

"effectively crippled the Chilean economy" (Chuchryk,1989:151). In the political sphere, opposition was stifled through state-sponsored terrorism and repression (Cañadell,1993).

In the economic sphere the military regime instituted a neoliberal programme of structural adjustment. The central aspects of this economic programme included the following: (1) an opening of the Chilean economy to global capital through the removal of barriers, as well as the reorientation of "capitalist production toward the world market and export agriculture" and ,(2) a push toward large-scale privatization of the means of production and drastic cuts in state expenditure (Petras et al.,1993:17). Among other developments, this period saw the privatization of publicly owned enterprises, including energy, communications, mining and steel industries as well as the reconcentration of private landholdings[25] (Cañadell,1993:47).

While this neoliberal model of capital accumulation engendered increased rates of growth in GNP, statistics served to mask a very different reality. Far from an "economic miracle", the model gave rise to increased

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[25]

According to Cañadell (1993) under Pinochet the reconcentration of landholdings, once appropriated by the Popular Unity government, resulted in landlessness for small proprietors and peasants.

concentration of wealth in the hands of capital and new levels of poverty.[26]

Analyses of this period attribute the high incidence of poverty to Pinochet's

programme of economic development.

> Analysis of economic and social developments under the
> Pinochet regime supports this proposition: poverty is the real
> product of capitalist development. Despite Pinochet's apparent
> preoccupation with extreme poverty and with government
> programs targeting indigent households, virtually all independent
> surveys have found that the military regime's economic policies
> dramatically increased the incidence and depth of poverty
> (Petras et al.,1993:35).

As the gap between the "haves and have nots widened"(Waylen,

1992:305; Oppenheim,1995:154), the result was particular hardship borne by

the *popular sectors* of Chilean society. During this period, income distribution

was concentrated in the top 10% of society while real wages dropped

dramatically. According to some indicators, by 1975 real wages reflected a

mere 62% of their value when compared to 1970 levels

(Oppenheim,1995:154). While in 1969 approximately 28% of Santiago

residents lived in poverty, by 1976 that figure had increased to 57%

(Schneider,1993:30).

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[26]

"By conservative estimates, t.ıe first phase of the military regime saw a 25 percent increase in the relative number of poor households and a 39 percent increase in the percentage of households whose members were desperately poor, unable to meet even their basic needs" (Petras et al.,1993:35).

Poverty was only exacerbated by the military's approach to social

policy. The early years of the Chilean dictatorship are marked by significant

neoliberal reforms to labour[27], social security, housing, health and education.

State social spending dropped dramatically as the military government's

decentralization of social policy moved toward the "ultimate goal of complete

privatization" (Oppenheim,1995:157). According to one author, "by 1979,

government expenditure on social services, in real terms, was 10 percent

below 1969 levels", access to education, health and housing[28] most affected

by the regime's strategy of privatization (Chuchryk,1989:152;

Cañadell,1993:47). In effect, the state assumed a "subsidiary and passive

role", consisting essentially of "provider of goods and services"

(Valdés,1989:72), while the responsibility for social welfare was transferred to

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[27]

The military introduced a Labour Code in 1979 which severely debilitated the labour movement by limiting its ability to organize and strike. National unions or local associations were prohibited while the right to strike was circumscribed to 60 days after which workers would be fired. As Oppenheim (1995) argues the code was designed to fragment the labour movement and prevent the association of unions with political parties. The military's intention to undermine the labour movement was evident in acts of severe repression used to suppress union leaders who sought to challenge the authoritarian regime.

[28]

Included in the military's reform of social policy were a series of changes in urban planning. The most notable of these was the Plan Regulador of 1979 which led to the re-drawing of municipal boundaries in Santiago. This Plan, which included the forced relocation of pobladores served to compliment the military's political strategy of increased social control. The strategy served to move greater numbers of Santiago's poor to the city's periphery. While some of the displaced were provided with housing, a great number joined the ranks of the allegados, people forced to live with friends or relatives.

those who were increasingly unable to meet even the most basic of needs.

The economic situation for the vast majority of popular sector households deteriorated, as seen not only in the reduction of real incomes, but increased unemployment and significant growth of the informal sector (Pollack, 1990:11; Raczynski and Serrano,1992:16). This deterioration in economic conditions had gender and class specific effects as women's participation in both the formal and informal economies increased. With high levels of male unemployment, there was a marked rise in the number of women engaged in economic activity to "palliate the income effects within their families" (Pollack,1990:9; Alarcón,1990:16). In 1976, women composed 27.6% of the workforce, while by 1985 numbers grew to 34.6% (Schneider,1993:31). Most *pobladoras*, however, found themselves entering the informal sector, or low wage sectors of the economy. When women found work at all, it was usually in domestic service, although it must be noted that many also participated in low-paid government make-work initiatives[29] (Valdés,1989:73). It is said that during this period, producing widespread hunger became *the* primary means of oppression.

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[29]

These work programmes included the Minimum Employment Program (PEM) and Public Works Program for Heads of Household (POHJ) (see Oppenheim, 1993 and Schneider,1995)

A programme of such economic austerity would not be implemented, however, without some mechanism to contain popular discontent. Adopting such a programme required certain social conditions which the military regime sought to create. As corollary to its economic agenda, a political strategy involving state-sponsored terrorism and repression[30] was then instituted to squelch all opposition.

The military's political programme was achieved primarily through suppression of trade unions and political parties, which were both effectively banned and dismantled (Chuchryk,1989; Petras,1993; Cañadell,1993; Schild,1990; Schneider,1992). During this time anyone suspected of labour organizing was threatened with torture or death. Political parties associated with the labour movement were destroyed or forced underground. Repression combined with the military's economic policies led to a marked reduction and fragmentation of the industrial workers' base[31]. As Schneider indicates, by

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[30]

As Schneider(1992) indicates, the containment of social discontent was achieved by means of widespread repression which touched every segment of Chilean society."In the months following the coup, over 100,000 civilians were detained, and most of them were brutally tortured.Thousands were summarily executed or simply 'disappeared'. Every feature of Chilean society came under attack - congress, political parties, labour unions, neighbourhood organizations, even local parishes"(Schneider, 1992:260).

[31]

In response to unemployment rates, the military introduced the "Minimum Employment Plan" or *Programa de empleo mínimo* in 1977 (Sher.an,1991). This plan (accompanied by the introduction of a similar plan five years later- the *Programa ocupacional para jefes de hogar*) contributed to the fragmentation of

1981 the percentage of unionized workers in the textile, mining and construction sectors had declined from 41% in 1972 to a mere 10% (Schneider,1995:129).

Considered a threat to stability, another target of repression was the so-called "poor", particularly the politically organized in popular sector neighbourhoods (poblaciones). To control political activity, the regime ensured that pre-existing avenues for collective opposition were eliminated. A primary means of controlling opposition was through municipal reform (muncipalización) whereby institutionalized channels of popular participation were removed. During this period, municipal reform, involving transfer of power to the local level, ensured the monitoring of poblaciones. In part, this monitoring was achieved through replacement of elected representatives of government-run organizations with regime supporters, as in the case of neighbourhood councils (juntas de vecinos) and "mothers' centres" (centros de madres).

By the early 1980s, reorientation of state functions in support of neoliberal dictates was exacerbated by region wide economic crisis.

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potential popular opposition by discriminating against those pobladores who were considered to be politically active. According to one author, even pobladora members of soup kitchens were among those who were refused even this minimum level of economic assistance (Schneider,1995:93).

Combined with recession, the military's economic model gave rise to the

highest rates of unemployment ever experienced in Chile, and a decline of

GNP of 20% (Petras and Cañadell, 1993:221). "Between 1974 and 1984,

unemployment rates tripled in comparison with the 1960s." By 1982,

according to some indicators, unemployment had reached 31%, the rate

being as high as 80% in many of the popular sector neighbourhoods

(Valenzuela,1988:111).

Not only did the economic crisis serve to devastate the popular sectors

of Chilean society, but it signalled crisis in Pinochet's economic programme.

As the value of the Chilean currency dropped, consumption plummeted and

unemployment continued to soar; the military government moved to avoid

financial collapse. The Chilean economy, however, was showing real signs of

devastation, as these observers attest.

> Having grossly overborrowed, caught by exceedingly high and
> rising interest rates in an economy that was highly exposed and
> vulnerable to outside forces at a time when copper prices were
> plummeting, overseas markets were receding, and sources of
> new capital had evaporated, the Chilean economy in 1982 and
> 1983 was devastated like no other in the region, with a fall of
> 16.7 percent in production, an official unemployment rate that
> climbed to 26 percent, a proliferation of bankruptcies of
> enterprises and financial institutions, with the country's biggest
> economic groups on the brink of financial collapse, saved only
> by a massive bail-out by the state (Petras et al.,1994:29).

By 1983, this economic crisis had become a political crisis[32] as even traditional supporters of Pinochet started to call for a "Popular Front" capable of rescuing the country from economic ruin. Pinochet, responding to the crisis, among other things, dismissed his entire Cabinet (Schneider,1995:155). Pinochet's actions, however, could neither avert the economic nor political crisis which by now had assumed greater proportions. As suggested by one observer, these crises combined to create the conditions for a popular response.

> In Chile, the 1983 economic crisis acted as a signalling event.
> The crisis led many to arrive at similar assessments of declining state capacity, and in doing so, triggered widespread protest action (Schneider,1995:156).[33]

The crisis of 1983 set the stage for cycles of protest and mass popular mobilization against the military regime. Among those who assumed a central

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[32]

Until now the military government had been successful in institutionalizing its regime. The military's project was buoyed by economic boom while Pinochet took steps to further entrench his political power by introducing a new Constitution in 1980. This success was short-lived, indicate authors (Schneider, 1995; Oppenheim,1993), as the economic crisis brought about a fundamental questioning of the military's programme.

[33]

Schneider argues that the 1974 economic crisis did not lead to widespread protest because, unlike the period 1981-1983, it did not serve to weaken the military government. "The key point to understand about the shock plan (instituted by the military following the coup) is that, unlike the equally severe recession of 1981-1983, the 1975-1976 recession was desired: it was a conscious policy of the government" (Volk,1983 in Schneider,1995:94).

role in what became a broad anti-dictatorial struggle were *pobladoras*. We now turn to a closer examination of their struggle.

2. Pobladora Responses

2.1 Survival and Defensive Strategies (1973-1980)

We can trace the increased political activity of pobladoras to the early years of the dictatorship, when prompted by economic and political crisis, there emerged a series of new[34] *pobladora* organizations in the neighbourhoods of Santiago (Serrano,1990:11)[35]. Among these new organizations were a series of "popular economic organizations" or OEPs (*organizaciones económicas populares*) created in response to a deterioration in economic conditions. These OEPs were primarily subsistence organizations including, soup kitchens (*ollas comunes*), buying committees (*comprando*

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[34]

According to Schild (1990) the origins of *pobladora* organizations can be traced to the 1960 and 1970s. In the early 1980s, however, these organizations flourished.

[35]

Women also turned to neighbourhood support networks. As Serrano (1990)notes, women's networks contrast to those of men which lend support to the search for employment and include friends, former co-workers, and relatives. In contrast, women's networks are characterized by neighbours who help in the day to day domestic tasks of reproduction. See Claudia Serrano (1990) for more detail on forms of mutual cooperation in the Chilean *población*.

juntos) and productive workshops (*organizaciones productivas-laborales*)[36].
At the same time, political repression had spurred the creation of
organizations aimed at defending those victimized by violence. These last
organizations included health groups to care for the wounded after brutal
clashes with the military (Schuurman and Heer,1992:49), and human rights
groups[37] in support of political prisoners and families of the disappeared
(Schuurman and Heer,1992:82).

Although these *pobladora* organizations made their appearance in the
early years of the dictatorship, they really multiplied during the period of mass
mobilization of the early 1980s. This period, which was marked by escalating
levels of public protest and mobilization, provided the context for *pobladoras'*
emergence in greater numbers and for processes of collective consciousness
and identity to flourish.

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[36]

As Waylen (1992) indicates, by June 1985 there were 1,125 OEPs recorded in
the metropolitan area of Santiago alone.

[37]

The first human rights organizations, including the *Agrupación de prisioneros
detenidos-desaparecidos* and the *Agrupación de prisioneros políticos*, were
founded immediately following the coup in 1973. Both these organizations had
high levels of female participation and leadership (Schuurman and
Heer,1992:82)

2.2 Public Protest and the Making of Political Identities (1981-1983)

The period 1981-1983 is marked by labour protest[38] and squatters

movements[39], resulting in large demonstrations and direct clashes with the

military. As Chileans brought increased pressure to bear on the regime, in the

poblaciones of Santiago, this period also coincided with a veritable

proliferation of women's organizations and the increased visibility of

pobladoras as social actors[40].

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[38]

As Schneider indicates, *pobladores* provided critical support to national
strikes called by the Copper Workers' Union (CTC) during mass protests of
1983- 86 (Schneider,1995).

[39]

The struggle for adequate housing in Santiago dates from 1946, when men and
women began organizing collective land invasions, or "tomas de terreno".
Although land takeovers began in the pre-coup period (1946), there were a
number of significant movements during the dictatorship. Land takeovers,
during the dictatorship were prompted by the military government's intention
to eradicate existing poblaciones or move existing communities off of land
with high market value. Between 1979 and 1984, 25 977 poblador families were
relocated following introduction of the military's "New Economic Programme"
(Valdés,1989:43).

[40]

Salman (1994) argues that an explanation in terms of risks (of being targeted
for repression) is inadequate in accounting for low levels of male
participation. This is evident in that "what few men" were involved in
organizations tended to perform functions at higher and more visible ranks of
the organization. Salman writes, "inheriting very specific traditions for
defending their interests, what the male pobladores mainly missed was... the
opportunity, the openness, the right to strive for what... they considered
right as well as the work and income to escape from their poblador position.
Lacking this opportunity, most male pobladores opted for an individual
struggle for improvement, no matter how improbable its success"
(Salman,1994:16) may have been .

There were notable changes in the scale and scope of *pobladora*

organizing activities. While initially intended as a temporary measure to meet

conditions of economic crisis, between November 1982 and March 1984 the

number of subsistence organizations (OEPs) rose from 494 to 706. The

number of OEPs continued to grow until by 1986 there were 1400 with

approximately 50 000 women participants (Rodo and Hevia,1991:16)[41].

The human rights organizations created by women, initially non-

confrontational in orientation, turned the focus of organizational activity[42] to

protest and denunciation[43] (Waylen,1992:304). This protest assumed various

forms from the public demonstration to the symbolic denunciation of the

arpillera[44].

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[41]

By 1984, subsistence organizations had approximately 120,000 members, 80% of which were women (Hardy,1984).
According to Oxhorn (1994), by 1987 some 220 000 people or 16 percent of all *pobladores* (men and women) belonged to popular organizations (Oxhorn,1994:57).

[42]

These non-confrontational activities consisted in locating missing relatives or arranging for visits to relatives in detention.

[43]

As Schuurman and Heer (1992) note, human rights organizations cut across class divisions. However, most participants were "middle" or "working class women" with little previous organizing experience (Schuurman & Heer,1992:82; Cañadell,1993:53). This lack of experience is said to account for the initial non-confrontational orientation of such groups.

[44]

As Marjorie Agosín writes, "using remnants of fabric... these women subverted the conventional order by means of embroidery that denounced authoritarianism" (Agosín,1994:12). See Glossary for definition of *arpillera*.

Escalating levels of repression were accompanied by the development of a wider anti-dictatorial struggle. In their struggle, political activity against the regime had both men and women *pobladores* collaborating with political party militants (particularly on the Left), as well as progressive elements in the Church. In this collaboration, *pobladoras* assumed a central role.

At a time when it was particularly dangerous for their male counterparts, *pobladoras* assumed central roles in support of squatters movements and underground political party activity. As Cañadell (1993) indicates, *pobladoras* played a decisive role in all stages of squatters movements from direct confrontation with authorities, to leadership in community organization. In the case of political parties severely curtailed by repression (i.e. disappearance, exile or death of activists), underground political activities were maintained through the efforts of *pobladoras* still at liberty (Waylen,1993:577).

Invoking traditional images of motherhood, *pobladoras* advanced in their struggle against authoritarianism. Often acting from their gender-ascribed roles as mothers, women used their image of "weak and nonthreatening" to take their demands to the streets, even when it was dangerous to do so. Women were not immune to repression, however, and soon found themselves

among those targeted by the regime.

In the context of the wider anti-dictatorial struggle, while many more women collaborated with members of labour and political parties, the context for *pobladora* struggle was the neighbourhood. Here at the local level, the Church played a decisive role in support of women's organizing. With the curtailment of conventional political activity, there were few means of support until the Church (and some NGOs[45]) stepped in to support popular forms of mobilization[46]. During this period we see the Church assume an anti-dictatorial stance as it moves in to place human rights organizations under their protection[47] (Schneider,1993; Petras et al.,1994).

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[45]

We note during this period, the parallel growth of national non-governmental organizations which began providing support to grassroots activity. According to Schuurman and Heer (1992), the proliferation of NGOs after the coup is related both to economic and political crisis. Where social and political actors found themselves isolated from one another, a number of NGOs "began to function as articulation channels between social movements and foreign donors" (Schuurman & Heer,1992: 46).

[46]

In the beginning, perhaps the most significant supporter of popular struggle was the Church. As Cathy Schneider indicates, with the elimination of trade unions and political parties, the Catholic Church was the "only national institution capable of defying the regime, through its gradual absorption into the struggle for human rights" (Schneider,1992:260).

[47]

During this time, the *Comité para la Paz en Chile* was established, becoming what is known to this day as the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*. Apart from providing protection for activists, at this time the *Comité* began a large scale food programme directed at children through the *comedores infantiles* (Schuurman and Heer,1992:93).

During this period the Church's support of *pobladora* struggle not only

provided protection but, created a context for processes of collective identity

formation to take place. These processes were shaped by increased contact

and collaboration with feminist groups. Veronica Schild (1990) documents the

important role of the Church during this period in the creation of what she

refers to as a "symbolic network" (Schild,1990:37). Distinct from the material

aid network, the "symbolic network" composed of professional women

working for NGOs and the Church provided structured spaces for processes

of *pobladora* politicization contributing to increased levels of collective

consciousness and identity formation.

As Teresa Valdés and Julieta Kirkwood confirm in their writings, during

this period the struggle for human rights and women's rights came together in

what has been referred to as the re-emergence of Chilean feminism. As

Tabak and Chuchryk note, for many women military repression engendered a

profound questioning of authoritarianism, not merely as a collective, but a

personal experience.

> By joining their voices in opposition to the dictatorship, an historically
> specific phenomenon, (women) find themselves struggling to be heard
> as equal partners in that opposition, fighting an ideology which
> transcends military rule. It is a contradiction that has provided the
> context in which feminism has emerged in Chile (Chuchryk,1989:163).

Although many *pobladoras* rejected the label "feminist", considerable links between feminists and popular women were forged during this time through organizing activities at local and metropolitan levels. Collaboration between these two groups was encouraged through the establishment of women's NGOs. While these NGOs were mainly staffed by middle-class professionals later they did incorporate some *pobladora* activists. Initially established to support women's survival strategies, these women's NGOs "also engaged in popular education activities which bore directly on the emergence of poor and working-class women's organizing" (Schild,1994:4). As Cañadell, notes it was during this time that we note a change in *pobladora* consciousness evident in the nature of their political responses. Over time, she argues, from what began as a defensive response on the part of women, there emerged an anti-dictatorial and anti-patriarchal politics.

> The brutality of the institutional repression, the serious deterioration in living conditions for the great majority of the population, and the regime's often authoritarian and violent discourse (and action) have been the most important factor in eliciting women's organized response. Although this response was at first only defensive, with the passage of time and the raising of consciousness it has tended to crystallize into a clearly antidictatorial and antipatriarchal stance (Cañadell,1994:49).

The anti-authoritarian politics of women's movements (*pobladoras* and feminists) stimulated the creation of a significant institutional framework for women's organizing activities[48]. In spite of a repressive political context, a number of feminist organizations, including research centres and NGOs were born in the midst of authoritarianism. The majority of these were nongovernmental organizations[49] composed of middle-class women (usually professionals) with a "clear gender perspective"[50](Cañadell,1993:54). Other organizations created at this time were more directly linked with political parties[51]. Finally, although few in number, *pobladora* organizations concerned with issues of gender equality[52] made an appearance[53].

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[48]

In the wake of the U.N. Decade for Women, the international context was also right for the proliferation of women's organizations and support of feminist NGOs at this time.

[49]

Some of these NGOs include *La Morada*, *DOMUS*, *Centro de Estudios de la Mujer*, *Fem-Press*, etcetera...

[50]

These "feminist groups...emphasize the need for women to create a politics based on their own needs, rather than incorporating themselves into organizations which were created for other purposes and in which women's needs and demands historically ignored" (Chuchryk,1989:163).

[51]

As Chuchryk indicates, these latter organizations tended to be more "integrationist" such that they "have a traditional political focus and emphasize integrating women into existing political organizations and projects" (Chuchryk, 1989:163).

[52]

Rodo and Hevia (1991) argue that out of experience in subsistence organizations groups which called themselves "organizaciones de mujeres" developed during this time responding to needs arising from members condition as women. These organizations included *Las Domitilas*, *Tierra Nueva*, and *MOMUPO*.

One of the first feminist organizations to be established was the

Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer (CEM), a research centre formed in 1977.

Following CEM, a number of women's organizations and centres emerged in

the early 1980s. Among the more notable was the Committee for the Defense

of Women's Rights (*Comité de Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer-*

CODEM), the Women of Chile (*Mujeres de Chile-* MUDECHI) and the

Movement of *Pobladoras* (*Movimiento de Mujeres Pobladoras-*MOMUPO).

Important umbrella organizations such as MEMCH83 and *Mujeres por la Vida*

began coordinating women's protest and opposition. These last two

organizations brought together "political and social women's groups, including

MOMUPO and MUDECHI" (Schuurman and Heer,1992:88).

2.3 Coalition Building and Public Action (1983-1986)

By 1983 joint political action across women's movements had found its

expression in the struggle for democracy. Despite potential divisions, unity

was nevertheless achieved as was evident in examples of public political

action during this period. In December 1983, an estimated 10,000 women

demonstrated united opposition to the regime at the Caupolicán Theatre.

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[53]

The number of women participating in organizations such as *Las Domitilas,
Tierra Nueva* and MOMOPU represented a relative minority as compared to those
women engaged in other forms of organizing (Rodo and Hevia,1991:17).

Here, *Mujeres por la Vida* addressed the women assembled with slogans of "
'Hoy y No Mañana' (Today and not Tomorrow), *'Por La Vida'*(For Life) and
'Libertad Tiene Nombre de Mujer' (Woman is the Name of Liberty)"
(Schuurman and Heer,1992:88). What bound these groups together was a
conviction that true democracy could not be achieved without the
democratization of daily life.

Regime and Gender Ideology: Attempts at Depoliticization

While women organized in opposition to the Pinochet regime, however,
vigorous attempts to control this movement were made. The military
government sought to suppress women's collective organizing by "launching a
2-pronged attack against the political consciousness of women" (Schuurman
& Heer,1992:88): first, by rescinding women's legal rights and then, by
attempted ideological indoctrination.

One means of constraining women's public role was to eliminate
various labour and civil rights. As Patricia Chuchryk indicates, following the
government's "market oriented approach", we see a rescinding "of all
protective (labour) legislation for women". A new law makes possible firing of
pregnant women while laws governing working hours do not extend to the

realm of domestic service[54].

A second means of curtailing women's political activities was through ideological indoctrination. So to induce political passivity on the part of women, this programme of indoctrination was carried out by means of institutionalized channels of female participation and a bombardment of official discourse. The propaganda campaign at the heart of this political strategy was in keeping with the regime's "authoritarian-capitalist model". Patricia Chuchryk explains how this model was and is intimately connected with patriarchal gender ideology,

> The authoritarian-capitalist model is based on values often referred to as Catholic traditionalism, that is, a firm belief in religion, family, private property, and nation. Thus any attack on traditional capitalist values such as private property are seen as attacks on Christian values and the Chilean family and nation (Chuchryk,1989:156).

Invoking particular constructions of femininity and womanhood became the ideological tool of subordination. As Bunster-Burotto indicates, "the 'truly patriotic mother' was subordinate to the pater familias and above all to the

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[54]

As discussed in part one, another means of placing constraints on women's action was through cuts to social spending. Privatization of education and inaccessibility of daycare through increased costs and reduction of spaces places only added to women's numerous responsibilities (Chuchryk,1989:153; Fischer,1994:179).

pater patrias, an ideology not unlike that of the Third Reich" (Ibid,1992:96).

Therefore, we see that the "idea of femininity and security" was used "to

legitimate military values" (Schuurman and Heer,1992:96). Equally important,

according to Teresa Valdés, is that in exalting "their 'spiritual' values over and

above their daily needs, women were removed from the male public sphere".

As such, this author contends, female political participation could be

discouraged and women excluded from decision making (Valdés,1989:76).

The only legitimate place for woman to participate became the government

controlled *Centros de Madres*, where most women were passive recipients of

government resources and coercive propaganda.

Institutionalized Participation

As noted above, one of the regime's central mechanisms for

depoliticization of women after 1973 were the *Centros de Madres* (CEMAS).

The first CEMAS or "mothers centres" were created in the 1950s. Established

under the Frei administration, CEMAS provided spaces for women to meet

and develop skills commensurate with their traditional domestic roles

(Serrano, 1990:116). After the coup, however, the CEMAS were used by the

regime as a political tool of indoctrination in military patriarchal ideology. As

Marjorie Agosin wrote in 1987,

> CEMA Chile is directed by Pinochet's wife, Lucia Hiriarte de Pinochet, and under her leadership all the stereotypes of women's place in society are heavily reinforced, with obsessive interest being placed on women's duty to serve the Fatherland and the Father of the country, who is, of course, Pinochet (Agosín,1987:55).

To carry out the regime's political agenda, a vertical organizational structure was established through which government directives were channelled to women volunteers at the "National Department of Women's Affairs". Women volunteers also staffed the CEMAS, where they administered funds for women in the *poblaciones*. By enlisting these volunteers, the regime could thus retain support from those middle and upper middle class women whom had demonstrated their opposition to Allende[55] (Agosín,1987:55).

The organizational structure only served to reinforce existing class divisions among women. Skills and training workshops were organized by volunteers and free legal and medical services offered to attract *pobladoras* (Fisher, 1994:179). As Bunster-Burotto notes, the CEMAS were designed to "serve the poor but not be from the poor" (Bunster-Burotto,1988:489). According to accounts of this period, by 1984 CEMA-Chile had 230 000

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[55]

See Maria de los Angeles Crummett (1977) "Poder Femenino: The Mobilization of Women Against Socialism in Chile" for discussion of organized female opposition to Allende.

members (Rodo and Hevia,1991:16).

The military government's strategy, although powerful, had uneven impacts. On the one hand, the CEMAS did tend to reinforce sex-typed behaviours and encourage political passivity. According to Lechner and Levy, this is evident in so far as the CEMAS did not present members with any "new models of womanhood" (Lechner and Levy,1984 in Valdés, 1989:125). A study conducted by Verónica Schild makes a related point. As Schild observed, "many women in the neighbourhood are struggling over questions of who they are and who they are to become...the dominant discourse of correct motherhood has militated against these women constituting themselves as political agents" (Schild,1990:294).

Having said this, however, neither the ideological campaign nor attempted depoliticization was entirely effective. As authors indicate, pobladoras joined the CEMAS with a view to receiving both "material and symbolic gratification", and not due to any political or ideological espousal of the regime itself. For pobladoras, they argue, this was a defensive strategy born of their economic and social exclusion (Lechner and Levy,1984 in Valdés,1989:125). Although the dominant discourse on femininity sought to encourage women's political quiescence, there were unintended

consequences. As Fisher and others assert, "it was precisely in the name of defending the family and children that women began taking on a more public role in the life of the *poblaciones*[56]" (Fisher,1994:178).

Gendered Political Conditions

We have seen that first and foremost, the movement of *pobladoras* constituted a response to both political and economic reality; the result of economic crisis and violent, political repression. In the absence of active political parties and trade unions, however, new organizations created in the 1970s became the vehicle for increased levels of *pobladora* participation. With the period of mass mobilization in the 1980s, *pobladoras* came to occupy a wider political space attaining greater levels of collective consciousness and identity.

The military sought to suppress women's movement by rescinding civil and labour rights (Fisher,1994:179). They embarked on a campaign of

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[56]

Authors (Schuurman and Heer, 1992; Walker,1990) argue that even subsistence organizations such as the soup kitchens (*ollas comunes*) presented an ideological challenge. "The existence of the ollas were living proof of the failure of an economic policy based on the principle of the free-market to which the Pinochetistas adhered...Any form of collective behaviour was considered subversive and harshly repressed - the *ollas* were thus an ideological challenge"(Schuurman and Heer,1992:38).

ideological indoctrination emphasizing "the proper role of women" as

"defenders of the family", guardians of "the faith" and protectors of "morality"

(Fisher,1994:17). Institutionalized mechanisms of depoliticization, such as the

CEMAS, were employed to encourage women's political passivity and

maintain class divisions.

Attempts to direct women's participation, however did not undermine

what became a large opposition of women by the mid 1980s. In fact, quite

paradoxically, military patriarchal ideology had served to open a political

space for women's participation. Women acted in accordance with gender-

ascribed roles as mothers and wives so as to fulfil increased responsibilities

in the household. Similarly, they acted to protest human rights violations

suffered by family members. To a great extent, it was the traditional

association of "the political" to that of male collective activity which, on the

one hand, made men more vulnerable to repression, but on the other, made

women's emergence as a social actor more possible.

> The conventional political arena,... inhabited by political parties
> and trade unions, has generally been seen as a men's sphere. It
> was the repression of this sphere by the military during the
> dictatorship, which created the 'political space' which allowed
> women's activities to achieve a high profile outside of it
> (Waylen,1993:3).

The opening of such a space meant many more women gained organizational experience during the dictatorship. While collective organizing was largely illegal, women still came together, pooling communal resources and creating important support networks with the Church and NGOs. This experience in local organizing provided the conditions for stimulating processes of collective consciousness and identity formation.

Studies of this period suggest that processes of identity formation are connected to larger processes of change. As Serrano argues, the economic and political crisis under authoritarian rule engendered a further break with the traditional public/private dichotomy.

> The configuration of roles, 'men as providers, women as housewives', is being shaken at its very roots. The consequence of an apparently endless crisis is that the distinction between public and private, productive and reproductive spheres with regard to women in the popular sectors has in reality become blurred and practically nonexistent (Serrano, 1990:121).

Popular women's organizing, particularly the collective efforts around subsistence needs, reflects such a "blurring" of this public/private dichotomy as women's private role of provider/nurturer was politicized in the public sphere of collective organization.

Economic factors are also said to have played a role in shaping women's consciousness. According to some authors, the period of authoritarian rule served to challenge gender relations by inducing a kind of gender "role reversal" (Chuchryk,1989:154). As Claudia Serrano notes, as men's role as income provider was curtailed by economic crisis, the "burden of group reproduction fell on women and on the domestic sphere"[57](Serrano,1990:114). The temporary or permanent loss of spouse or companion due to the latter's detainment, death or disappearance also contributed to this gender role reversal as the number of female headed households began rising.

To understand how women's financial burden increased, however, we must look more closely at the economic model. The impact of the economic crisis on women is illustrative of gender and class specific contradictions produced by the neoliberal economic agenda. As Alarcón contends in the case of Chile, regime discourse on femininity during this period served to contradict their economic programme.

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[57]

The responsibility for "group reproduction" or for the well-being of family members was heightened in the case of female headed households where spouse or companion was lost due to political repression.

> There exists a contradiction between regime discourse which emphasizes the role of women as 'housewives' and the neoliberal economic policy which foments/encourages her emergence from the household to assume work in the public sphere (Alarcón,1990:16).

Although much has been said about the importance of women's emergence from the private sphere as if somehow it is the precondition for her emancipation, we must be cautious in interpreting the last statement. Women's participation in the public economic sphere under conditions we have already discussed may not bring an improvement in either her position, or condition. There is no indication that even if women assume new roles in the public sphere their position is necessarily improved.[58] According to Schild, not only does this require a shift in the sexual division of labour but, a change in subjectivity. The impact of organizing experience on the individual and collective consciousness of *pobladoras* must therefore be examined more closely.

In the case of the *pobladoras*, organizing experience has often brought about a questioning of their gendered identity. Authors argue that even when

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[58]

"...the fact of being 'thrust' into new roles, for example, as heads of households, or main income earners, does not mean automatically that gender divisions of labour in other areas such as the home are altered...in some cases this happens, in others it does not." Such a change depends on the success of her "redefinition of the sexual division of labour at home" through struggle and "fundamental changes in subjectivity..." (Schild, 1990:169).

organizational objectives were economic in nature, women were provided with

a space for "political organizing","self-education" and "empowerment"[59]

(Raczynski and Serrano,1992:14). Among other benefits, women began to

see themselves differently; their participation as members and leaders of

community-based organizations having led to an increased sense of self-

worth. Equally important, participation in neighbourhood organizations has

been instrumental in fostering women's political agency through "gender

specific forms of political learning"[60] (Schild,1990:295). As noted above, by

participating in a "symbolic network" with other women, greater numbers of

pobladoras began "challenging" established feminine identities[61]. As Schild

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Undoubtedly, participation in such organizations has provided women with an opportunity to break with their traditional isolation and thereby to partake in processes of significant personal and political learning. As Raczynski and Serrano(1992) indicate, however, participation has had positive and negative impacts, the latter consisting in an increased workload. "It is not clear what is outcome for women. Neither is it clear what the real significance of women collective action is for the community" (Raczynski and Serrano,1992:14).

60

"Political learning involves not only learning new ways of making sense which are 'empowering' but also living differently...as the study suggests, this is always a partial and seemingly contradictory process. 'Liberation', therefore, conceived in the conventional terms of consciousness raising is a powerful myth which is, in fact, always beyond reach" (Schild,1990:295).

61

Chuchryk distinguishes between groups with "feminist intentions" (largely the feminist organizations) and "feminist consequences" (in reference to popular organization). With respect to these distinctions she comments,"...regardless of the objectives around which women mobilize, the activity of working together and sharing often results in the development of an awareness of their disadvantaged situation as women in Chilean society. Contrary to the prevailing conventional wisdom, women who must struggle daily to feed their children are also concerned with their sexuality, reproduction and the limitations imposed on them by machismo (Footnote #95 Chuchryk,1989:183).

argues, political learning has meant the development of alternative
femininities which support women's emergence as political actors.

> By acquiring new social meanings or discourses -- for example,
> new versions of womanhood -- with which to make sense of their
> lives, these women forge new selves, including political selves
> (Schild,1990:295).

An opportunity for developing a collective consciousness among
pobladoras was therefore created. The experience of collective organizing
has led women to challenge and redefine relationships both in the community
and in the household. Moreover it has provided the means to demand full
rights to citizenship, as Waylen indicates:

> These movements played an important role in the opposition to
> dictatorship and have been seen as evidence that many women,
> not simply those identifying themselves as feminists, were
> redefining their domestic roles and demanding full rights as
> citizens from the state (Waylen,1990:3).

As the "democratization" process began after 1987, this collective
consciousness became evident as all groups of women put forward their

demands. Moreover, as women, they received recognition as having played distinct roles within a wider opposition movement.

> The active participation of women in the struggle against the dictatorship has been an important element of pressure on the regime and has achieved the recognition of women as social actors by the other actors in the social and political spheres (Cañadell,1993:53).

Pobladoras may have received recognition, but whether their demands would be heard was another matter altogether. The difficulty came in reopening the political sphere. Here women's political concerns took a back seat.

2.4 "Strategy and Reflection"[62] (1987-1990)

After 1987, women's organizing activities centred on the upcoming plebiscite and a hopeful "transition to democracy". Important efforts on the part of popular and feminist organizations were made to advance their interests. Among these efforts included a *'No Me Olvides'* ("Do not forget me") campaign on the part of *Mujeres Por La Vida*, and the formation of the *Coordinadora de Organizaciones Sociales de Mujeres* (Coordinating Body of

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[62]

The title of this subheading was taken directly from the periodization proposed by Schuurman and Heer (1992).

Pobladora Organizations) in November of 1988. That same year the

Coordinadora launched a successful campaign entitled '*Soy Mujer...Tengo*

Derechos' ("I Am Woman...I Have Rights"). The importance of this campaign

was its articulation of difficulties faced by *pobladoras*. As the country moved

towards a "transition to democracy", however, these issues were being lost.

The campaign's focus upon the day to day problems of women in popular

neighbourhoods, "stood in sharp contrast to the issues with which political

parties were concerned" (Schuurman and Heer,1992:93).

Despite important efforts, the struggle did not bring an equal share of

power to women, let alone *pobladoras*. Unfortunately, the achievement of

equal status in mixed gender politics remained elusive. Clearly as the country

moved towards "politics as usual" women's interests would remain secondary.

With "the increasing influence of political parties, social movements, including

women's organizations, were relegated to the background" (Schuurman &

Heer, 1992:93). These were the first challenges to be faced by *pobladoras* as

the "transition" approached in 1990. In the immediate years to follow, they

would face many more. In the next chapter we examine the nature of the

Chilean "transition to democracy" to show how conjunctural political and

economic conditions pose particular obstacles for increasing the gender

bases of *pobladora* collective identity.

CHAPTER THREE: POBLADORA STRUGGLE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE "TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY" (1990-1994)

Chapter Three examines the Chilean "transition to democracy" (1990-1994) and its impact on *pobladoras* to reveal the very "undemocratic" nature of the "transition". It will show that women's grassroots organizing; (1) has been shaped by the particular social, economic and political context characteristic of the Chilean process of "democratization", and (2) how the process of "democratization" poses particular obstacles to popular women's organizing efforts that are concerned with promoting continued processes of collective consciousness and identity formation among *pobladoras*.

The chapter is divided in two parts which are intended to provide context and argument for points made in the case study presented in Chapter Five. Part One argues that despite official celebration of democracy and economic prosperity, *pobladoras* have been excluded from the benefits of the "transition to democracy". Part Two examines state social policy that shapes the current context and which, in turn, prevents the empowerment of *pobladoras*.

Part One: The Chilean "Transition to Democracy"

Introduction

Since the "transition to democracy" officially began in 1990, Chile has promoted itself both at home and abroad as a democratic and economically prosperous nation. While democracy and economic prosperity is celebrated in official discourse, however, how different segments of Chilean society have fared during this period remains subject of debate. The Chilean government is proud of announcing the reduction of poverty, unemployment and inflation but, this presents only one side of the Chilean "transition". For the popular sectors, and *pobladoras* in particular, there is another side to this "transition" which is given little public attention.

Contrary to Chilean government rhetoric, Part One of this chapter argues that the process of so-called "democratization" in Chile has left popular women's interests and needs unaccounted for. As a result, *pobladoras* remain excluded from the social, economic and political benefits of the "transition to democracy". The exclusionary nature of the regime is evident first, in the "transition" process itself, an elite process of negotiation between political parties and the military which has yet to provide direct channels for expression of *pobladora* interests. Secondly, popular women

have been excluded from the benefits of economic growth. Economic

exclusion of *pobladoras* is due both to the continued inequitable distribution of

resources as well as the gendered nature of their participation in the

economy. In this manner, the "transition" has not altered the economic

situation of *pobladoras* in any fundamental way.

1. An Elite Transition is Negotiated

The election of Patricio Aylwin as President on March 11th 1990,

marked Chile's return to electoral politics and civilian government. The

Chilean "transition to democracy", however, must not be equated with the

establishment of democracy. As Schuurman and Heer note,

> a distinction must be made between democracy as such and the
> democratization of society. In the political praxis, democracy has
> rather a formal political-institutional connotation. Democratization,
> on the other hand, refers to the effective political participation of
> actors in civil society (Schuurman and Heer,1992:1).

Rather than promoting the political participation of all segments of civil

society, the Chilean process of "democratization" has proved quite

"exclusionary".

1.1 Who Took Part, Who was Excluded

In the case of Chile, while the "transition" resulted in the election of civilian government, the elite form it assumed excluded much of civil society, including *pobladoras*. The exclusionary nature of the Chilean "transition to democracy" becomes evident if one considers who participated in its negotiation and how the "transition" process, in turn, led to the displacement of popular organizations as channels of political participation.

With the plebiscite of 1988, an elite "transition" was negotiated between political parties, representative of national economic elites[63], and the military, bolstered by foreign (primarily U.S.) capital interests (Cañadell,1993:46; Petras et al.,1993; Waylen,1993). Largely excluded from these negotiations were representatives of the popular sectors. To begin with, popular organizations had little say in setting the terms of the "transition" (Fischer,1993:40). Very minimal pre-election contact was had between social movements and the "Concertación", a coalition of 12 political parties

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[63]

the sectors linked with agro-export, financial and industrial capital (Cañadell,1993:46)

dominated by the Socialist and Social Democratic Parties which not only

succeeded in forming the Chile's first civilian government but, was re-elected

for a second term of office in 1993. According to Schuurman and Heer, with

the exception of the CUT (*Central Unitario de Trabajadores*) and the less

controversial of human rights organizations, the *Comisión Chilena de*

Derechos Humanos, many movement leaders were hardly consulted [64]

(Schuurman and Heer,1992:40).

Instead of promoting participation on the part of the popular sectors,

say some observers, political parties came to displace grassroots

organizations, including women's organizations, as popular "channels of

expression" (Cañadell,1993:55; Canel,1992:278; Waylen,1993). Despite

democratic and participatory rhetoric, state channels of participation have not

proven effective channels of participation for popular won.en. The

displacement is particularly evident at the local level where popular

organizations have been encouraged to participate in the municipal structure.

The incorporation of popular organizations in local municipal structures

through the process of municipal democratization, is seen as having the

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[64]

Paradoxically, note these authors, politicians chose to meet with members of
NGOs working with popular movements rather than with leaders of the actual
movements, as if the former were more representative.

potential for bringing the grassroots voice into decision-making. However, a process of municipal democratization (in which formerly appointed municipal administrations have been replaced by elected officials) underway in Chile since 1992, may not promise increased opportunity for pobladora participation. Although ties between municipal government and popular organizations have been "formalized" through their incorporation in the municipal structure, arguably democratic practice at the local level is limited. In the 1992 municipal elections, for example, some observers felt that major parties and the political Right had intervened in the electoral process (Sherman and Garcia,1992). Also limiting full popular democratic participation and representation was inadequate knowledge of the new municipal structure[55].

Further knowledge of the new municipal structure has not changed its inherent limitations particularly for *pobladora* organizations. Incorporation of popular organizations in the municipal structure depends on the organization's obtaining of legal recognition (*personalidad jurídica*) raising questions

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[55]

"...despite the democratic and participatory rhetoric, there was a notable absence on the part of the government of an effort to have the people understand the (new) system and structure of the Municipality. Therefore, the protagonism of the population and the social organizations in the process of municipal elections (was) limited to the act of voting"(Sherman and Garcia, 1992:6)-my translation.

regarding the future autonomy of these organizations. Most popular women's organizations, particularly the OEPs do not have such recognition. According to Legassa, the current "legitimacy" accorded to neighbourhood councils as primary channels of popular representation and participation, could lead to conflict or competition between local organizations lacking formal/legal recognition. With the "transition", Legassa notes, women's popular economic organizations have found themselves with scant external linkages. As women's popular economic organizations (OEPs) lack formal recognition to establish relationships with third parties, women's organizations may chose to join neighbourhood councils (provided under Law 18983). On the other hand, organizations may not wish to risk losing autonomy through incorporation of their organizations in the neighbourhood council which was originally established as an institutionalized mechanism of participation (Legassa, 1992:84).

However, the displacement of women is not unusual with a return to traditional party politics. Not only have *pobladoras* and other women been displaced within political parties but, within human rights and popular groups (Cañadell,1993:57). Again, in the case of the 1992 municipal elections, "many social movement leaders commented that the parties had displaced

independent local leaders-in many cases local activist women" (Petras et al.,1993:150).

1.2 Political Exclusion Required for "Consensus" and "Continuity"

Popular political exclusion was necessary, however, to maintain political consensus around the terms and conditions of the "transition to democracy". It might be said that political exclusion of the popular sectors was meant to prevent their demands from undermining what was said to be a fragile transition but, there was seemingly more to official strategy[66]. In fact, while the civilian government claimed that democracy had been restored to Chile, the "transition" was actually premised on ensuring continuity; on consolidation of the military regime's economic model and preservation of the state apparatus. In this manner,

> The transition presented a paradox in which greater electoral
> freedom was accompanied by a shrinking of the acceptable
> politico-economic spectrum of views and policies (through)

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[66]

Unfortunately, this placed the Right in a favourable position. As Schneider argues: "The current government's concern with economic stability and political cooperation with the military and the political right (has) dissuaded all 17 governing parties from organizing among the urban poor...The Socialist Party...has embraced the free market, leaving ironically, only the neo-fascist Independent Democratic Union(UDI) with an incentive - which it vociferously pursues - to mobilize from below" (Schneider,1993:31).

cohabitation of (an) electoral regime and (an) authoritarian state (Petras et al.,1993:83)[67].

The kind of continuity embodied in the "transition" accounts for the nature of present day political exclusion. On the one hand, exclusion reflected "Concertación" efforts to contain any popular challenge to their political and economic programme. On t̶ other hand, it reflected the terms under which the transition had been negotiated. The military also established its conditions for "transition" to civilian government, limiting the scope of "democratization". These conditions are evident in various legal and institutional continuities.

1.3 Legal and Institutional Continuities Prevent Full Democratization

The "transition" did not serve to challenge the military's programme for negotiated "transition". Continued involvement of the Chilean military in national politics represents perhaps the central obstacle to any "transition to democracy". The most obvious illustration of current military power is

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[67]

To ensure this kind of continuity, popular participation had to be managed and reduced to the narrow exercise of voting. According to Oxhorn, "The elitist nature of the transition required that the demands of all segments of Chilean society be moderated and that their political participation managed by political elites within the limits of the electoral process" (Oxhorn,1994:57).

persistence of the former Dictator, General Pinochet, as Commander-in-Chief

of the Armed Forces. As Schuurman and Heer note,

> Pinochet uses every occasion to threaten the fragile democracy...' This
> democracy is finished if anyone touches the army', is one of Pinochet's
> recurring threats with respect to a possible tribunal for military
> personnel which violated human rights during the Pinochet period
> (Schuurman and Heer,1992:44).

The Armed Forces' "right" to intervene is embodied in the military's

Constitution of 1980 which remains unamended to date. Embedded in this

Constitution, there remain important institutional and legal continuities[68]

(Rodo and Hevia,1991:15) which went largely unchallenged by the

"Concertación". According to authors Oxhorn (1994) and O'Malley (1994), in

order to have engaged in effective negotiations with the military, the

opposition "Concertación" would have had to push for the reform or complete

abandonment of the military's Constitution of 1980 (Oxhorn,1994:53;

O'Malley,1994).

Even today, abandonment or amendment of the Constitution still

proves difficult as does challenging the bases of military power. Nowhere has

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[68]

Of the 47 senators there remain nine appointed by the military junta (the so-called *senadores designados*) (Schuurman & Heer,1992:47).

this challenge been more difficult than in the area of human rights. To date,
however, "Concertación" governments have been unable to establish a means
by which the perpetrators of gross human rights violations committed during
the dictatorship[69] may be brought to justice[70]. As Neier reminds us,
however, lack of justice prevents full democratization.

> To the extent that a society or a government dismisses the
> principle of accountability as unnecessary, it undermines its
> possibilities of becoming a true democracy (Neier in Jelin,
> 1994:51)[71].

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[69]

There are reports to suggest that human rights violations do indeed continue
in "democracy". According to one observer, preventing local democratization
are persistent violence incidents at the hands of militarized police in the
poblaciones (Fox, 1995:19).

[70]

In 1990, the "Concertación" created the National Commission for Truth and
Reconciliation which led to the publication of the "Rettig Report". The five-
volume report, which documents more than 2 500 disappearances, produced
important public reaction/outrage and a sense of "collective shock" but, "it
did not recommend the trial and punishment of the guilty parties" (Agosin,
1994:13).

[71]

Writing about the human rights movement in Argentina Jelin notes that
political leaders may find it too risky in periods of transition to hold
trials. As a consequence, however, the "settling of accounts will remain an
unfinished task, and the wounds slow to heal...(reemerging) time and time
again in different ways, ranging from artistic symbolizations to personal
vengeance". But for the "irretrievable loss that can never be articulated at
the political level, says Jelin, "memory can then partially take the place of
justice." (Jelin, 1994:52) When memory (and history) is denied, however,
reparation is made impossible. In the case of Chile justice is still pending
while those responsible for the crimes committed during the dictatorship
remain outside of the law. While human rights violations have been discussed
publicly, many victims of the dictatorship suffer in silence.

2. Economic Exclusion

For over a decade, the Chilean "economic miracle" has received a great deal of attention for some of the highest regional growth rates (an average of 5% per year), reduced inflation (to a yearly 20%) and unemployment, (which by 1993 had fallen to an official figure of 5 %) (Schneider,1993:30). Despite these impressive macroeconomic figures, however, "the economic situation of the poorest segment of the population has not improved significantly" (Schild,1994:60; Petras et al.,1993) Although, the first elected government introduced an increased budget for social welfare, as well as local and national policies for addressing poverty, "no significant break with economic policies of the previous regime" were made (Fisher,1993:41).

2.1 No break with economic policies of the past

"Concertación" initiatives are reformist at best for these do not fundamentally alter a commitment to maintain the prior regime's neoliberal approach to economic policy (Veltmeyer,1993:12). In 1991, the Aylwin government sought to remedy economic conditions by doubling the official minimum wage. The raising of wages, however, has had little effect on the

"in٠٠iole" informal economy which has continued to grow (Schild,1994:60;

Rodo and Hevia,1991:14). Far from bringing about a fundamental

transformation in the Chilean economy official unemployment rates have been

made to look a great deal lower. As analysts argue, the Chilean government

claims of reduced unemployment may be misleading as the definition of

"unemployed" used to calculate official unemployment figures considers

"employed" anyone who has worked a minimum of one hour per week (Petras

et al.,1993:130). Such action is limited in its ability to remedy the roots of

inequity.

2.2 Growth without Redistribution

The neoliberal policies of the Pinochet regime have been inherited by

the current government. Chilean economic growth has led not to substantive

redistribution but rather increased concentration of wealth. Between 1979 and

1989 the share of national income held by the richest 10% increased from

36.5% to 46.8%, "while the richest 20% of all households increased their

share of national income from 43 to 58% (Veltmeyer and Petras,1996:11).

Since 1991, the so-called "trickle-down effects" have been quite minor. In

effect, it may be said that any semblance of redistributive gains merely

reflects an enlarging of the pie, while the proportions allocated to different groups has not changed substantially (Petras et al.,1993).

2.3 Demands of the Current Economic Model

The current economic programme is bent on increasing Chile's insertion in the global economy through a deepening of the agro-export model and further transnationalization. These objectives require an increasingly "flexible" labour force. Greater international competitiveness will not be achieved without important social costs. These costs include maintaining cheap, exploitative wages and a steady deterioration in working conditions. As further transnationalization occurs it will arguably occur on the backs of women[72] (Mies,1986; Beneria and Sen,1987; Safa,1993; Tiano,1994).

2.4 Gendered Impacts of the Current Economic Model

The "transition to democracy" has not meant an improved economic

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[72]

Despite increased demands for women's labour under NAFTA, Safa (1993) has shown that an increasing proportion of men are assuming the more highly qualified jobs furthering the pattern of gender stratification.

situation for most women[73]. The neoliberal economic programme has had a

differential impact on women workers whom are disproportionately engaged in

underemployment and casual employment. Women still represent the majority

of those employed in the informal economy which continues to grow (Rodo

and Hevia,1991:140). Twenty-five percent of women are currently engaged in

domestic service (Schneider,1993:31). There are current indications that

despite economic growth and a supposed "political opening", women are

subject to increasingly difficult working conditions with little or no labour

protection. Such is the case of women engaged in casual employment whom

remain among the unorganized, often unable to claim their rights as workers.

As one author indicates,

> the new employment opportunities in seasonal agriculture have
> been filled largely by women, who work for minimal wage, and
> have no organizational representation and no history of
> familiarity with labor organizing (Schneider,1993:31).

Analysts predict that as Chilean development continues along the same

path, the trends towards informalization of the work force will continue. Not

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73

The persistence of poverty in "democracy", is illustrated by the continued
existence of popular economic organizations (OEPs). Until end of 1989, Oxhorn
suggests that women's soup kitchens were still multiplying. According to this
author, it is estimated that between 1986-1989 the number of soup kitchens
doubled (Oxhorn,1991:86).

only is the trend evident in the agricultural sector but, in manufacturing where maquiladora type industry is now establishing a foothold.

Instead of productivity through technological innovation, we are likely to see the growth of manufactured exports relying on the increasing informalization of labour-capital relations and establishment of maquiladora-type operations (Petras et al.,1993:177).

In the future, these economic trends will have particular consequences for popular women. With demands for greater flexibilization of the workforce, popular women will not only continue supplying cheap labour but, shoulder the increased costs of social reproduction (Leiva,1993:43). Economic insecurity combined with continued privatization of social services such as health and education will undoubtedly place more demands on women. In Chile, neoliberal reforms transformed education and health care systems into commodities available according to one's ability to pay (Collins,1995:246). As the main support of state social policy "providing the nexus between the family and the services provided by the state"(Rodo and Hevia,1991:14), popular women will continue to bear the brunt of the Chilean economic model.

3.   Summary

Despite a "transition" to civilian rule and impressive macroeconomic growth figures, I have argued that the benefits of democracy and economic prosperity have not accrued to *pobladoras*. An elite transition process aimed at ensuring continuity in the economic model and preservation of the authoritarian state has left *pobladoras* excluded from the social, political and economic benefits of the "transition to democracy". Faced with the demands of an exclusionary economic model while limited in their ability to influence political decision-making, the "transition" has not provided *pobladora* women with the means to improve their situation.

Part Two: Regime and Conjuncture: The Gendered Effects of Chilean Social Policy

Introduction

Having demonstrated the exclusionary nature of the Chilean transition, I now examine "Concertación" social policy to show how the context is affecting *pobladora* organizing and shaping their responses. Section one argues that in practice, "Concertación" social policy aimed at promoting

"growth with equity", does not depart from the neoliberal policy agenda. As a result, the policy supports the continued subordination of *pobladoras*. Section two argues that rather than promoting the empowerment of pobladoras, the proposed "integration of women in development" has contributed to the reduction of political space they once occupied. In this manner, subordination of popular women on the basis of class and gender is perpetuated by means of (1) state social policy which encourages *pobladoras* and their practices to fit the neoliberal agenda and (2) the coopting of *pobladoras* and their demands. First, I will show how state policy encourages popular women and their practices to fit the neoliberal agenda. Second, I will show how the state coopts *pobladoras* through the collaboration of the international development community, national NGOs and the Church. Finally, I discuss how women are both conforming to and resisting the constraints imposed on their organizing.

1.   State Social policy and Neoliberal Agenda

1.1 Encouraging Women's Adjustment to the Neoliberal Agenda

In July 1990, the "Concertación" created MIDEPLAN (*Ministerio de desarrollo y planificación*) to coordinate the action of social service ministries around the "Program of Integration to Development" (Petras et al.,1993:119).

A couple of specialized agencies within MIDEPLAN were then established

including the ACI (*Agencia de cooperación internacional*), and FOSIS (*Fondo*

de solidaridad e inversión social). Also established was the SERNAM

(Servicio nacional de la mujer) to be responsible for state gender policy[74].

"Concertación" social policy, emphasizing "integration of the poor

in development" does not depart, however, from the neoliberal political and

economic agenda of the past. Consistent with regional economic development

thinking, state social policy, including that of the more recent Frei

administration, is premised on "growth with equity"[75] (Schild,1994:11; Rodo

and Hevia,1991:15). In practice, a state-led participatory development

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[74]

Schuurman and Heer (1992) and Fischer (1994) note that in theory, the purpose
of SERNAM includes the following: mobilization and coordination of a national
network of women's organizations, incorporation of women in the development
process, bringing Chilean jurisdiction in line with the U.N. Convention
concerning the abolition of all forms of discrimination against women, and
stimulation of gender research. SERNAM also intended to revise the activities
of the *Secretaría nacional de la mujer* and *CEMA Chile* and the *Instituto*
nacional de la juventud (INJ) for youth (Fisher,1994:198).

[75]

The concept of "growth with equity" arose as a response to the failure of the
Orthodox economic development strategies. Increased inequality between
nations, persistent unemployment and the stagnation of real income levels
among the poor prompted a re-assessment of development planning based on
laissez-faire. Inherent to the analysis is an explicit rejection of the
market's ability to distribute the benefits of economic growth. Notable in
these analyses is the reform of Hirschman's "monoeconomics", to examine other
non-economic variables. By the same token, "growth with equity" reflects a
distinctly Keynesian theoretical approach to issues of development
characterized by "maintaining circuits of production, consumption, and trade
by ensuring the availability, and appropriate volume of concessional finance
to the developing world" (Levitt,1992:93).

strategy is advocated emphasizing the "empowerment of the poor"[76] through

their "integration in development" (MIDEPLAN,1992:29; Schuurman and

Heer,1992:59; MIDEPLAN,1992:29).

Despite seemingly reformist elements suggested by official discourse

on "participation" and "empowerment"[77], economic objectives underlie the

strategy of "integration". The objective of "integration" is to maintain economic

growth and stability. Economic growth, in turn, is viewed as the means to

means to alleviate poverty[78].

By integrating poor communities into development efforts, it is felt that

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[76]

According to Schuurman and Heer (1992) "Empowerment of the poor is the name of the game" in Chile today.

[77]

According to MIDEPLAN (1994) "The active and direct participation of the community, of its families and organizations, is society's best resource to make possible the obtaining of successful results in the case of different programmes and projects aimed at poverty alleviation, to make use of efforts and initiatives, to give encourage creativity and solidarity, to foment dignity and self-esteem of people, to channel multiple resources, public and private, converting the community, into users and beneficiaries, in actors of their own destiny and not mere passive recipients of external offers" (MIDEPLAN,1994:15).

[78]

According to authors (Petras, Leiva and Veltmeyer,1994), "growth with equity" presumes no contradiction between maintaining economic stability and redistributive policies.

local productivity levels can be raised, thereby reducing poverty[79]. "Invest in the people" is the government's slogan which seeks poverty alleviation by means of integrating the poor into the marketplace (MIDEPLAN,1994:15). The concept of "investment", however, is couched in economistic terms of "efficiency" and "costs reduction". Promotion of "participation", through institutionalized channels such as the municipality, is tl.ought to provide a means for improved targeting of resources (Legassa,1992; MIDEPLAN,1994:12). In this manner, Chilean social policy today does not depart from an Orthodox policy framework which maintains that the fruits of modernization will "trickle-down" (Petras, et al.,1993:118; Schild,1994).

1.2 Popular Women and the "Integration of Women in Development"[80]

In the case of *pobladoras* state social policy is explicitly aimed at "integrating women into development". From the government's perspective, the "integration of women into development" will improve the lives of

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pobladoras by increasing their productivity. To increase women's productivity, "integration" seeks the removal of barriers to women's role as economic producers through the introduction of programmes for low-income women (Mires,1993:105; Serrano,1992:212; MIDEPLAN.:994:16). Responsibility for "integrating women into development" belongs to various state agencies[81], including the Ser: ~io nacional de la mujer (SERNAM), that direct implementation of social policy by the municipalities (MIDEPLAN,1994:16).

From the perspective of pobladoras, however, the "integration of women in development" neither takes their interests nor demands into account. Rather than empowering pobladoras, the "integration of women in development" does not challenge the class and gender bases of

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[81]The "integration" of women in development is a strategy which finds its origins in Liberal Feminist analyses and prescriptions best illustrated by the "Women in Development" approach adopted by many development agencies in the 1970s. The concept of "integration", is premised on the notion that women have been historically marginalized from participation in the modern economy where they experience discrimination and exploitation.Proposed prescriptions involve top-down strategies involving legal and administrative reforms. These WID policies include "Welfare", "Equity", "Anti-poverty and "Efficiency" approaches- to be administered by the State and/or one of its organs which is deemed the "most apt mechanism for meeting women's needs" (Moser,1989:1808; Young,1988:21) According to MIDEPLAN(1994) responsible for "integrating women into development" are the following public agencies: SERNAM, Ministry of Health, Housing, Justice while the work is to be implemented by the municipalities (MIDEPLAN,1994:16).

subordination.[82] Instead, the policy promotes the homogenizing of women's movement preventing the articulation of *pobladora* demands. What follows is a critique of this strategy from the point of view of popular women.

"Integration" Does not Challenge the Bases of *Pobladora* Subordination

A central goal of state social programmes has been to encourage income-generating projects and microenterprise (Waylen,1995:90). As comparative studies suggest, however, the promotion of private initiative does not provide a viable solution to the longer term goal of women's emancipation. According to a study by Yudelman, NGOs have been unsuccessful in attempts to integrate women into development due to "institutional legacies, cultural constraints, and competition for scarce resources". On the one hand, income-generating projects produce little income for women involved, while they tend to increase their workload. On the other hand, cultural constraints and scarce funds limit their growth (Yudelman,1987:184; Schild,1994:17). Inattention to the nature of women's subordination often explains the ineffectiveness of "integrating women into development".

82

Ultimately, the strategy of "integration", provides no special attention to women as the benefits of modernization are supposed to trickle down to all marginalized groups.

To begin with, the "integration of women into development" is not in the interest of *pobladoras* because its proposed solution fails to address women's triple role in production, reproduction and community management (Moser,1987). The suggestion that equality will be achieved through higher productivity in the household, and/or women's income generation outside the home, is false. If policies do not aim at a fundamental restructuring of the sexual division of labour then, the goal of equality with men is unlikely to be achieved (Benería and Sen,1982:168).

Second, the "integration" strategy poses no challenge to traditional gender ideology which perpetuates the subordination of popular women. No attention in this strategy is given to the private sphere where the social relations of gender are reproduced. Gender ideology, based on socially constructed beliefs and attitudes concerning the nature of men and women relegate women to a position of inferior status (Young,1988; Elson.1994). The concept of "integration" does not challenge the beliefs or structures which account for women's reality but, rather it is thought that women are "brought in" to participate in development processes on "equal" grounds. Failure to acknowledge the importance of gender ideology in perpetuating the sexual division of labour leads to the elaboration of strategies that only increase women's burden (Rogers,1980:94).

Finally, the concept of "integration", is problematic for *pobladoras* in that it proposes no alteration in existing structural relationships. As Beneria and Sen indicate, the "integration" strategy for women "ignores the class dimension" (Beneria and Sen,1982:172). In this manner, economic analyses do not go far enough in questioning the nature of systemic oppression, including the role of the State and Capitalism, amongst other mechanisms, that perpetuate the subordination of women. The "integration" strategy's failure to challenge systemic oppression makes the articulation of *pobladora* demands difficult. As experience demonstrates, even when "integrating women into development" places women in positions to influence state policies, the strategy often results in the cooptation of women's more radical demands for systemic transformation.

"Integration" Does not Support *Pobladora* Demands

Despite pronouncements of the "successful integration of women in development" (CEPAL,1993) there remain important obstacles to achieving equality. This is true even when some women have been successful in finding their way into state and or large development agency structures. Studies show that when women set foot into the state policy arena, their demands are often coopted by the classist, racist and patriarchal development regime itself

(Schild,1994; Alvarez,1990). The systemic containment of women's demands pose obstacles to the formulation and implementation of policy for all women, as these authors note,

> ...although the international women's movement 'has been able
> to penetrate a relatively weak, decentralized development
> regime' the formulation and implementation of specific policies is
> still contained by the very nature of the system[83] (Acosta-Belen
> and Bosé,1993:65).

For popular women, cooptation of their demands by the state poses obstacles to the transformation of structures and institutions which perpetuate their subordination. As one author indicates, although the "integration of women in development" has been the preferred strategy of the U.N., donor agencies and national governments. it is based on a fallacy. The "integration of women into development" does not bring about real transformation but, simply adds women to existing structures and institutions. As such, "integration" prevents the full participation of women in society. Analyses of women's situation in processes of development indicate that

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[83]

See Kardam (1991) for an outline of the impact of mainstream development policies and practices on women.

the real and full participation of women requires a transformation in the existing patriarchal structure of society [84] (Lycklama à Nijeholt,1987:32).

In the Chilean case, the *Servicio nacional de la mujer* (SERNAM)[85] has brought some women into the state. The move to occupy positions in the state on the part of women activists may, however, pose some disadvantage for the autonomy of women's movement and its demands.[86] The creation of SERNAM, however, raises similar concerns regarding the risks of integration and the institution's ability to effect real change in the interests of popular women[87].

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[84]

Rogers (1980) makes point that the "integration" of women into development projects leads to women's segregation in those projects away from the main projects.

[85]

In the case of other institutions established for women there has been change and continuity. Just before the "transition", CEMA-Chile which had been the responsibility of the President's wife, was placed under the direction of the wife of the commander-in-chief of the Army. As such, CEMA-Chile remains under the direction of Lucia Hiriarte de Pinochet. The "Secretaría de la Mujer" was eliminated with the creation of SERNAM. Of all the institutions formerly run by the first lady, today she has been left with the *Fundación de ayuda a los menores* (INTEGRA).

[86]

In the case of Sernam Waylen (1995) notes that the institution has had little space to achieve some of its goals due to various obstacles including, " a limited budget, inexperienced personnel and lack of power within the government." In addition to opposition from within the State, SERNAM has also faced that of right-wing political parties and the Church (Waylen,1995:90).

[87]

As regional studies suggest, women's entry into the state policy arena has been accompanied by a fragmentation and general demobilization of women's movements (Schild,1994; Alvarez,1990:38) while their demands have been largely" institutionalized" (Serrano,1992; Schild,1994)

The promotion of 'strategic interests' and empowerment have proven more difficult to achieve. As Waylen indicates, "popular women's movements in particular are confused about what SERNAM does and do not feel represented by it". Moreover, they have been disillusioned by its lack of radical approach (Waylen,1995:91). One must question whether SERNAM may simply be a mechanism for containing the "more acceptable demands of women's movements" (those which do not seek change in the power structures) while the State imposes its own agenda on gender policy[88].

In theory, the creation of SERNAM opened a space for articulation of women's demands within the State. In practice, the state has succeeded in imposing its political and economic agenda. SERNAM's active role in the "integration of women", however, means that SERNAM "is at best a very exclusive and contradictory space" (Schild,1994:21) leaving little room for the articulation of pobladora demands. According to one analyst, while SERNAM has provided some women with an important positions and a source of

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[88]

Waylen (1995) observed, "The greatest space for change has existed on those issues which are considered least controversial. These centre around social and economic measures such as women's employment training which are seen as part of poverty alleviation and income generation. Huge tensions have appeared around issues such as divorce and reproductive rights, particularly abortion".

financing, the benefits of SERNAM are not felt by all women.[89] Moreover,

says Schild, instead of unity across Chilean women's organizations the

"integration of women into development" is reproducing class hierarchy

among women. Rather than providing for the articulation of demands and a

common political project from the different women's organizations (particularly

those of popular women), the strategy tends toward the overall

homogenization of women's movement. Such a strategy is not empowering

popular women.

"Integration" is not a Strategy for Empowerment of Pobladoras

The solution proposed by critics of "women's integration in

development" point to the importance of promoting women's empowerment by

means of strengthening possibilities for women's movement (Moser,

1994:199). As discussed in the previous chapter, much has been said about

how individual *pobladoras* have been empowered by taking part in collective

organizational processes. According to DAWN (Development Alternatives with

Women for a New Era), not only is organization critical to the process of

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[89]

It must be noted that SERNAM has taken important steps in bringing the issue of family violence to the public's attention. Although unable to meet the needs of all women, part of SERNAM's work has been to support a centre for battered women in the comuna of Santiago providing legal and psychological counselling (Serrano, 1992:212).

popular women's empowerment but also, the strengthening of women's

organizational networks across differences such as class, ethnicity and race

(DAWN,1987:89). It is a strategy for empowerment that has been central to

the international women's movement since the UN decade for women began

in 1975. The following is a definition of empowerment proposed by DAWN:

> We want a world where inequality based on class, gender and
> race is absent from every country and from relationships
> between countries. We want a world where basic needs become
> basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are
> eliminated. Each person will have the opportunity to develop her
> or his full potential and creativity, and women's values of
> nurturance and solidarity will characterize human relationships.
> In such a world women's reproductive role will be redefined:
> childcare will be shared by men, women and society as a
> whole...only by sharpening the links between equality,
> development and peace, can we show that the "basic rights" of
> the poor and the transformation of institutions that subordinate
> women are inextricably linked. They can be achieved together
> through the self-empowerment of women (DAWN in
> Moser,1989:1815).

Contrary to the longstanding objectives of women's movements,

however, the "integration of women in development", is not empowering

pobladoras. As suggested thus far, neoliberal social policy promotes a

different kind of empowerment which does not provide the potential for

strengthening pobladora movement or their ties with other women's

organizations. Embodied in Chilean social policy is a definition of

empowerment which stresses the role of the individual thereby discouraging

collective organization.[90] The definition of empowerment itself has changed

accordingly to fit the neoliberal agenda:

> Today empowerment is defined in narrowly individualistic terms
> to fit the neoliberal ideology. Empowerment becomes the
> removal of all obstacles to individual choice and initiative
> presented by State regulations, State services and 'popular'
> organizations interacting with the state to control entry into
> labour markets, incomes, job security and working conditions
>
> (Steifel and Wolfe,1994:183; in Schild,1994:3)[91]

By emphasizing the individual in this manner, state social policy of

"integrating women into development" does not empower popular women but

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[90]

Instead of strengthening popular women's movement, the promotion of private initiative tends to discourage collective movement. As one observer of popular movements in Peru noted, microenterprise schemes tend to undermine popular women's movement. First, the promotion of private initiative runs counter to the cooperative economic support networks established by women. Second, state objectives in promoting women's microenterprise do not centre on strengthening ties with the popular world, but rather, these "correspond to the institutional objective of strengthening ties between government and the NGOs" (Pásara,1991:66).

[91]

As Waylen (1995) indicates, the majority of SERNAM's programmes are focused on income generation in one form or another."Many of these have been seen as part of a move away from the broad emphasis on empowerment in the programmes of may grassroots NGOs, to much more narrowly defined 'market empowerment' which fits with the socioeconomic policies of the government i.e. an emphasis on poverty reduction through increasing individual access to the market such as training women for the labour market"(Waylen,1995:90)

is conceived to encourage the conforming of popular women and their practices to fit the neoliberal agenda. As viewed from the perspective of *pobladoras*, the state strategy of "integrating women into development" neither takes their interests nor demands into account. Rather than empowering popular women, the strategy of "integration" does not challenge the class and gender bases of their subordination. Instead, it encourages the homogenizat'on of women's movements.

Having outlined the bases of state social policy of "integrating women into development", I now show how implementation of this policy is shaping the context of *pobladora* organizing. In section 2, I demonstrate how the state is co-opting *pobladoras* with the collaboration of the international development community, national NGOs and the Church. Rather than strengthening popular women's movement, this cooptation has led to the continued subordination of popular women through the reduction of political space.

2. Pobladoras, Co-optation, and Reduction of Political Space

2.1 The State and International Development

The perception of Chilean "democratization" and economic prosperity

has created a new environment for national and international development funds. Not only is there a perception that economic need is less urgent but, with a "transition" to civilian government, so too is there a perception that popular political opposition is a thing of the past.

In Chile today, the majority of development funds (in the form of international bilateral aid) are channelled through state social service agencies (Fisher,1993:41; Petras and Cañadell,1993:16). As such, the international development community has shifted away from providing support to popular women's organizations as they did in the past through aid and solidarity funds via NGOs and churches (Agosín,1994; Schuurman and Heer, 1992; Petras et al.,1993). These facts have brought about changes in the relationship between *pobladora* organizations, the state, national NGOs, and the Church.

2.2 A New Role for Non-governmental Organizations

With the "transition", NGOs are adapting to the changed national and international development funding environment (Schuurman and Heer,19ย2). One means of adaptation pursued by NGOs has been to join with the regime. Some have joined with the regime by taking part in the implementation of

state social policy. Other NGOs are struggling to maintain their organizational viability by reorienting their programmes to fit the neoliberal agenda. The new role for the NGO in development has had a significant impact on popular women's organizing efforts. Whereas in the past NGOs played a prominent role in supporting *pobladora* struggle, many have now withdrawn their support of movement building organizational activities. Today *pobladoras* find themselves at once more dependent on national NGOs, while paradoxically, they find themselves in competition with the latter for project funds[92] and political space (Schild,1994:13)[93]. As Waylen argues, grassroots women's organizations have lost "potential resources because funds that used to go directly to NGOs are now channelled through the State, and (popular women's) organizations then have to bid for them" (Waylen,1995:91). These changes in the role of the NGO has former supporters of popular women's movement working in collaboration with the state in the subordination of *pobladoras*.

92

"The post-Pinochet period provoked a profound division between the NGO professionals attaching themselves to a new regime based activity and the local leaders left without economic resources available for community organization" (Petras and Cañadell,1993:219)

93

Schild (1994) has suggested that the changing relationship between NGOs and popular women's organizations indicates the development of clientelistic relationships.

NGOs Implement State Social Policy

Due to the NGO's longstanding relationship with the popular sectors, the Chilean government enlisted the support of NGOs to implement their development programme[94]. In doing so, some NGOs have come to play a role of intermediary between *pobladora* organizations and the State. The role of intermediary consists in accessing and delivering state subsidies to popular organizations. The bulk of these subsidies are provided by the social agency FOSIS (*Fondo de solidaridad e inversión social*), whose primary responsibility consists in financing national and local development projects with the help of international cooperation.

It is through FOSIS that the NGO-State relationship is mediated[95]. The building of closer ties between NGOs and state agencies such as FOSIS, however, is causing the displacement of *pobladora* organizations. Accessing

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[94]

As Clark's (1990) study of voluntary organizations indicates, this kind of shift often results in cooptation. "Many liberal governments are coopting NGO leaders on to various official bodies or commissions." This, he says, is a "double edged sword". On the one hand, it provides an important forum for NGO opinions. "On the other hand, it can dull the sharp edge of criticism and occupy the attention of much of the best NGO talent."(Clark, 1990:68) Clark concludes that there are inevitable risks for NGOs, including conflict with government as well as between NGOs themselves. In such an event, "intimate contact" with its popular base may become difficult(Clark,1990:69).

[95]

The relationship here is of particular relevance to women's popular economic organizations (OEPs), as FOSIS has come to finance many more recent organizational activities.

development funds have pobladora organizations engaged in an hierarchical

system through which state subsidies are delivered or competing with NGOs

to submit acceptable project proposals. Although in theory grassroots

organizations are encouraged to submit project proposals directly to FOSIS,

in practice the government is relying increasingly on NGOs to direct

development efforts.

> At a "Concertación" conference in March 1989, where
> representatives of the government and the NGOs met, it was
> tacitly agreed that it will be the NGOS who will submit the bulk of
> the projects to FOSIS (Schuurman and Heer,1992:57).

A privileged place is accorded to NGOs in local development given

their role in promoting participation. FOSIS relies on NGOs as *agentes*

promotores, as promoters of local participation. FOSIS calls to "invest in the

people" emphasizing the importance of promoting community participation in

the design and implementation of projects. According to FOSIS discourse, the

poor are considered "not as beneficiaries of aid but as actors capable of

(promoting) their own development" (MIDEPLAN,1992:139;

MIDEPLAN,1994:19). To attain this objective FOSIS designed the programme

"Entre Todos" to get poor communities to identify problems and elaborate

project proposals. One of the results of this process has been a "deepening of

the relationship between NGO and State across the country" (Cooperación y

Desarrollo,1993:23). According to MIDEPLAN,

> Given that FOSIS does not implement projects but rather
> designates resources, NGOs have become an important element
> in this program...it is estimated, in general, that 40% of the funds
> designated by FOSIS go to NGOs (MIDEPLAN,1992:142).

The role played by NGOs in implementing state policy is causing the

reduction of *pobladora* political space. As one author points out already

popular women's organizations complain that they "do not find space to

dialogue with government agencies created to serve them" (Matus,1994:4).

Furthermore, as NGOs continue to play a role of intermediaries competition

between NGOs and popular women's organizations for project funds may

result in the latter's inability to negotiate development assistance. Schuurman

and Heer suggest that the "quality and quantity" of project proposals to

FOSIS determines their rate of acceptance. In this case, NGOs are faster at

producing project proposals for FOSIS than are popular organizations.

> Hopefully this will not lead to rash or hasty approvals of projects,
> nor to a limitation of the possibilities for grassroots organizations
> to realize their ideas through a project of their own choice, in
> their own wording and on their own terms (Schuurman and Heer,
> 1992:57).

There are signs that popular women leaders are being displaced by

NGOs. "Many of the local leaders who worked with the NGOs for several

years have been marginalized because, they are told, they lack the 'technical

level" necessary for the new projects" (Petras and Cañadell,1993:219). These

new projects reflect the ideological orientation of social policy to which some

NGOs are conforming. The costs of this ideological shift are incurred by

pobladora movement.

NGOs Carve a Space of their Own in the Neoliberal Environment[96]

NGOs were established during the dictatorship to meet what was

perceived as a temporary crisis. Today, however, along with popular

organizations NGOs struggle to survive as organizational entities. Apart from

converting to semi-state agencies (as "intermediaries"), NGOs are changing

the nature of their programming to fit the demands of the neoliberal

environment. During the last few years NGOs have begun orienting their work

"toward action complementary to government policies, especially social

policy" (Mires,1993:110; Gonzalez,1992). By means of greater levels of

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Petras and Arellano (1993) in their study of Bolivian NGOs suggest that on a
regional basis the political orientation of NGOs is shifting in support of
the neoliberal agenda. In doing so, NGOs are coming to occupy a political
space of their own to the detriment of popular interests.

specialization, today these NGOs now aim to meet the demands of the "transition" (and development industry) for those with the technical expertise to train budding entrepreneurs. Rather than providing the socio-political and economic support to popular movement, we see NGOs limiting their activities to the provision of training courses[97] (Petras and Cañadell,1993).

The Case of Women's NGOs

Even women's NGOs[98] have not escaped pressures to reorient their activities.[99] By conforming to the neoliberal agenda, however, women's NGOs are weakening women's networks and collaborating in the subordination of popular women (Schild,1994). As Verónica Matus and others

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[97]

Already by 1989 the future role for NGOs was being considered. According to Pina's (1989) study on the future challenges and prospects of Chilean NGOs in local development, he notes that if NGOs hope to continue playing a role in local development then they must respond to the challenges of the current context by increasing their level of specialization and professionalization.

[98]

In Chile there are 38 NGOs specializing in women's issues and 120 that have women's programmes. In Santiago alone there are 30 municipalities that have state sponsored women's offices.

[99]

The political climate following the UN decade for women made funds available to women's movements throughout the region (Rodriguez et al.,1990:8). Since then women's movements have been constructing organizational networks, including feminist NGOs. Now the both the "transition" and the international funding environment has placed women's NGOs, and their movement building activities, under strain (Moser,1994:11).

argue, women's NGO programmes served as definite support to the

construction of a women's movement (Matus,1994; Rodriguez et

al.,1990:8)[100] but, with the "transition", these NGOs are "centred on

themselves", showing a lack of leadership "leaving a vacuum in the

orientation and reference point of the (women's) movement". Like other

NGOs, while women's NGOs have had to renegotiate their relationship to the

civilian government financial support to popular women's organizations has

dwindled. In Chile, notes Chinchilla, diminished funding to political activities

has women's NGOs reverting to support of traditional development projects.

> the external funding that once supported women's political activism has
> greatly diminished. That which exists has largely reverted to its
> traditional pattern of favouring social and economic development
> projects, albeit with a greater gender consciousness than before
> (Chinchilla,1993:20).

Veronica Schild's observations support these last observations.

According to Schild, women's NGOs have been under pressure to adopt a

definition of empowerment[101] consistent with neoliberal ideology or risk

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100

"It is perhaps this convergence between the feminist movement and the popular
women's movement- not always easy or harmonious- which is Latin America' most
important contribution to the international feminist movement" (Rodriguez et
al.,1990:8).

101

An empowerment approach to development arose as a critical response to
strategies of "equity" on the part of popular women's organizations and

disappearing altogether[102]. Once again, ideological conformity to the state's

neoliberal economic and political project is reducing the political space of

popular women.

3. The Church: a Silent Collaborator

In addition to the withdrawal of some NGOs, the "transition" brought an

end to the solidarity extended to popular women's organizations by the

Catholic Church. In other words, the space once available for *pobladora*

organizing activities is no more. Instead, the Church is now limiting itself to

spiritual work. The change in Church policy is a direct consequence of the

"transition" and a political "shift to the right" which lend support to the

neoliberal agenda[103].

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feminist writings in the "Third World" (Moser,1989; Klasen,1994:34). The
approach emphasizes the need to empower women through greater self-reliance
as subordination is connected to colonial and neocolonial oppression.

102

In contrast, for those women's NGOs which have not conformed, the task of
building and strengthening women's movement
has become an arduous task. Those women who continue,
"either out of political commitment or because they lack the necessary skills
and contacts to engage in 'retooling' themselves...cling to their projects of
popular education and "building movement" through the toughest mission of
all: organizing the unorganized"(Schild,1994:13).

103

Schild argues that the Church's withdrawal of support to popular movements
can be traced to a "shift to the right" coinciding with erosion of Vatican II
principles during the mid-1980s (Schild,1994:9).

In 1991, the *Vicaría de Solidaridad* stated publicly that it would

be closing its workshops because "it had concluded its work in defense of

human rights in this new phase of democracy and reconciliation" (Agosin,

1994:13). The Church's withdrawal from political activity reflects a move to

establish unity in the hierarchy but also to "defuse some of the more radical

Marxist and feminist organizations nurtured on its doorsteps" (Schneider,

1993:31).

The idea of providing meeting space to *pobladora* organizations

believed to be associated with political movements of any kind has become

an unacceptable practice. Ultimately, however, as in the case of some NGOs

it reflects the Church's silent collaboration in promoting the neoliberal agenda

the result of which has been to limit the organizing alternatives of popular

women's organizations. The words of Marjorie Agosin are telling:

> the end of the Vicariate's support is symptomatic of the general
> state of silence in the face of what has occurred- a kind of
> complicity with the years of the dictatorship. The Vicariate's
> decision was also a capitulation to the systematic imposition of
> the cultural values linked to market capitalism- the exaltation of
> individual success, order and national security. Curiously, many
> of these values are carry-overs from the authoritarian model of
> the previous regime (Agosin,1994:14).

According to the women (*arpilleristas*[104]) Agosín interviewed, other international bodies such as Amnesty and the World Council of Churches have also withdrawn their support. In 1989, the 32 existing *arpillera* workshops had closed. From approximately 200 women 13 *arpilleristas* remained to resist the demobilizing effects of the "transition" (Agosin, 1994:14).

3. Pobladora Responses

The changing political space of the "transition" was accompanied by a general decline in *pobladora* movement and organizing activities (Schild,1994:1; Petras and Cañadell, 1993:216; Waylen,1995:91; Oppenheim,1995). In 1993, one study noted that of popular health groups which numbered over 200 in the metropolitan region prior to the "transition" only 27 remained. The same had occurred with the soup kitchens (*ollas comunes*) which had declined from more than 500 in 1986 to 50 and were expected to be completely phased out by the end of the year (Petras and Cañadell,1993:216).

104
See Glossary for definition.

3.1 Conforming and Resisting

Pobladoras who have remained active in local organizing have responded to the "transition" by both conforming and resisting. Conformity on the part of popular women is evident in organizational structures and practices which have adapted to regime ideology. In some cases this has meant the conversion of *pobladora* organizations. As authors note, state policy emphasizing "the integration of women into development" has meant the majority of development funds are directed at *pobladora* organizations willing to convert into small businesses [105] (Schneider,1993; Petras et al., 1993). With government support and NGO training courses, in fact, many *pobladora* organizations have become private restaurants, bakeries, groceries (Schneider,1993:31). Other *pobladora* organizations are showing signs of changing internal practices. According to Cañadell, the autonomy "self-government and direct democracy" of these organizations (their "new ways of doing politics") are already showing signs of erosion (Cañadell,1993:55).

Despite the challenges, however, there are indications that popular

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In Chile, the current development regime determines what are acceptable projects. In other words, it is also a means to control what is deemed acceptable organizational activity. In present day Chile, "the entrepreneur is encouraged, (while) the political organizer is repressed" (Schneider,1993:31).

women are resisting the demobilizing effects of the "transition". Evident are those leaders who recognize the continued need for collective organization. Although reduced in number, studies show that women's popular economic organizations (OEPs) are indeed struggling to maintain themselves, signalling the economic and political contradictions of the "transition". According to interviews conducted by Fisher, popular women cited the "persistence of poverty and the need for 'social democracy' - equal opportunities and wider social participation" for the continued existence of OEPs (Fisher,1993:41). Finally, the "transition" has seen *pobladora* groups resisting current pressures of decline with the holding of annual "Popular Feminist Meetings" (Fisher,1993:36) and their criticism of state social policy. As Waylen indicates, in the forefront of this criticism has been MOMOPU (*Movimiento de mujeres populares*). On the one hand, MOMOPU has been openly critical of projects being funded by the current Chilean government which centre on "narrow market oriented economic aims" that "treat poor women as isolated individuals without allowing for the creation of collective spaces". On the other hand, while pointing to the relatively recent changes to property laws between men and women, they argue that SERNAM's policies are having a "differential impact on women", placing *pobladoras* at risk of losing the "very roof over their heads" (Waylen,1995:91).

Summary

The previous discussion has only touched on some of the challenges

facing popular women. Far from creating the conditions for *pobladora*

"empowerment", the "integration of women in development" is providing for

their continued subordination. Furthering this process of subordination, as

shown, are former supporters of popular movement in the international

development community, national NGOs and the Catholic Church.

In some cases, real limitations on organizing activities were introduced.

Whereas in the past popular organizations were direct recipients of overseas

development (solidarity) funds, foreign aid is now being channelled through

government agencies. Furthermore, the return to electoral politics has

engendered the absorption of parts movement leadership and development

funds by state institutions, party organizations, and "new semi-state social

organizations" (or NGOs) (Petras and Cañadell,1993:216). In the process

organizations have had to become increasingly self-sufficient both in the

economic and political sense (Schuurman and Heer,1992:41), or else conform

to the demands of a new organizing context.

The "transition" brought new organizational challenges to popular

women providing, it seems, little in the way of strategic alternatives. The creation of SERNAM, as a women's space, has not provided the framework for the empowerment of *pobladoras* but, again their subordination through programmes which do not challenge the bases of inequality. In the end, instead of providing the conditions for empowerment, the neoliberal economic and political agenda may serve to undermine the articulation of *pobladora* demands.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

The present thesis is based in field work I undertook between July 1993 and July 1994 in one of the neighbourhoods (*poblaciones*) of Santiago, Chile. During this time I took part in a women's participatory research project. The project was the initiative of a Chilean woman, popular leader and educator with whom I had the honour of working throughout the entire research process. For the purposes of ensuring anonymity, I give the author of this project the name Clara[106]. Before presenting my account of the project, however, I have outlined the bases of my methodology and its application below.

2. Methodology: Feminist participatory research

Feminist participatory research finds its origins in "radical and reformist

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[106] All other women I cite in the case study have been given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

reconceptualizations" of development theory and alternative educational approaches (Maguire,1987:31). Unlike mainstream social science approaches[107], its theory and practice are intimately connected and oriented toward transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationships[108].

As a feminist methodology it represents an attempted break with dominant, androcentric, positivistic social science paradigms by starting with women's experiences[109]. As such, it seeks to challenge traditional epistemologies by legitimating women as "knowers" or "agents of knowledge" (Harding,1992:3).

In practice, the feminist participatory research projects encourage the

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Mainstream methodological approaches draw a rigid distinction between the researcher and "researched", placing emphasis on the researcher's capacity to remain objective and maintain a distance from the object of research.

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The development of participatory research has been influenced by the work of Brazilian Paolo Freire in the area of popular education. As such, it seeks to promote the development of critical consciousness on the part of both the researcher and participants toward the improvement of the lives of those involved in the research project. Feminist participatory research represents the feminist response to Freire whose work has been criticized for its failure to account for women's experience.

[109]Women as a heterogeneous group have a variety of experiences which are shaped by other factors such as class, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, culture, nationality, etcetera...

active participation of all women in all stages of the research process although often the researcher may play an initial role in designing the project. Feminist participatory research projects create all-women settings where a dialectical process involving investigation, reflection and action are encouraged. These projects use a variety of methods which may be used to investigate a problem by both researcher and participants, as the distinctions between the two become increasingly blurred. Methods may include, but are not limited to, use of popular education, participant observation, group interviews, individual interviews, and collection of oral history.

Strengths

The strength of feminist participatory research lies in its capacity for validating the subjective experience of women as it seeks the involvement of women as active subjects in the research process. In ideal situations the dichotomy between "researcher" and "researched" breaks down promoting the development of nonhierarchical relationships and situations of mutual self-disclosure (Reinharz,1992:185). In this manner both the process and product of research aims at the transformation of power relations.

Practitioners of feminist participatory research argue that women benefit from active participation in such projects. Among the beneficial outcomes Maguire (1987) cites increased self est-esteem, increased solidarity among women, and the development of democratic participatory skills which are often transferred to the household. These processes have also been known to promote the strengthening of women's organizations and the formation of autonomous women's organizations (Maguire,1987:75).

Limitations

Critics of participatory research point to both theoretical and practical limitations. First of all, there is the question of whose knowledge emerges from these participatory processes. According to Rahnema, although researchers admit that every knowledge system carries its inherent biases, researchers "seem to exclude the possibility that, as products of a certain knowledge born out of the economic/developmental age, they could be, themselves the very carriers of questionable values and biases". To the same extent, there may be a tendency to overlook the potential existence of similar biases in local knowledge systems (Rahnema,1992:117).

Second, there is reason to question whether this knowledge is able to challenge the power relations and structures it is intended to transform. Critics of participatory research argue that there is insufficient evidence to suggest that new knowledge emerges from these participatory processes which leads to the articulation of socio-political alternatives based in a society's own values and capacities (Rahnema,1992).

Among the practical limitations of this methodology there exists that of balancing the conflicting roles of researcher, educator, organizer, and participant. In part this tension arises from the need to challenge one of the fundamental assumptions underlying participatory research, the assumption that women are in need of consciousness-raising (Maguire,1987). Compounding this tension are difficulties associated with creating non-hierarchical relationships and ensuring that control of the process is in the hands of group members. A final limitation is the time consuming aspect of participatory research projects. These projects require a great deal of time as relationships of trust must be established. The amount of time that women are able to devote to such projects, however, should be given careful consideration given that women's time is limited by their gendered position in society.

3. Application

In undertaking the participatory research for the present thesis a variety of methods were used including participant observation, unstructured interviews[110] and group interviews. A total of 12 individual interviews were conducted with *pobladora* leaders from the same community while group interviews and workshops[111] provided the opportunity for contact with approximately 20 women leaders.

The participatory process was encouraged by means of group discussions when use was made of the tremendous leadership skills of participants, product of over a decade experience in local organizing. In the case of individual interviews, questions were designed to be open-ended so to promote an exchange of ideas and reflection[112]. In Chapter Five, the

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See Appendix for interview questionnaire.

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Planned workshops using techniques in popular education, were held in the final stages of the project. These workshops explored various themes including the nature of women's socialization, women's work, and women's local leadership.

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These interviews were unique in that it usually consisted of one interviewee and two interviewers as both Clara and I assumed the role of researcher. Apart from the wondrous exchange of experiences which took place during these interviews, the interview situation allowed both Clara and I an opportunity

central concerns of the research project, including additional observations regarding the process, are explored in greater depth. I now turn to Chapter Five and presentation of the case study.

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to explore a wider range of concerns.

CHAPTER FIVE: POBLADORA RESPONSES TO THE TRANSITION: CASE STUDY OF AN NGO WOMEN'S PROJECT

1. Introduction

1.1   Background to Case Study

My experience in Chile began with an NGO-supported women's project. Beginning at the NGO and then moving out into the community, I spent my first few months talking with both NGO staff and *pobladora* leaders to get a sense of those issues considered most pressing. As I soon discovered most every conversation was centred on the "transition to democracy" and the changes they had observed in the *población* where individuals lived and worked.

1.2   Central Concerns

All those with whom I spoke, expressed concern about a "transition" that presented many contradictions. On the one hand, the "transition" had left much of the authoritarian state intact and significant levels of poverty. On the other hand, the recent period had been accompanied by a decline in levels of

popular organization. In the *población*, women leaders (*r 'gentas*) were

wondering how to bring their members back to the various organizations. At

the NGO, there was concern regarding how to best direct their efforts so to

support grassroots initiatives and respond to their needs.

1.3   The NGO

The NGO, composed of a majority of professionals and some "non-

professionals" with grassroots leadership experience, had been active during

the dictatorship in supporting popular movement. During this period, popular

education was used by the NGO as the primary vehicle for discussion and

analysis around socioeconomic and political issues with popular leadership.

Missing from these "political" discussions, however, was an effort to

understand the specific contribution of women to popular struggle or

pobladora struggle in and of itself. Until more recently, women played a

secondary or invisible role at the NGO, while little or no attention was given to

gendered dimensions of popular movement by staff. It was upon the

incorporation of one woman, a *pobladora* leader and popular educator with a

long history of organizing experience, that the issue of gender was raised.

1.4 A Woman's Project

In late 1993, when I met Clara she was preparing to introduce a participatory research project she hoped to carry out with a group of *pobladora* leaders (*dirigentas*) in a local *población*. Prompted by the recent decline in popular women's movement, the project was designed to promote current organizing efforts by creating a collective space for research and reflection on the specificity of *pobladora* struggle.

The project proposed a series of planned workshops guided by feminist popular education, which were to promote a "gender analysis" of *pobladora* organizing experience from the dictatorship into the "transition to democracy". First, participants were to reflect collectively on the nature of obstacles they encountered in daily life as *pobladoras*. Second, while exploring the different spheres women occupy and the numerous responsibilities they assume, the group was to situate these experiences in a wider social, political and economic context.

1.5   A Response to The "Transition"

The project was designed as a response to the fragmenting and demobilizing impact of the "transition", to strengthen and support pobladora movement. By reflecting on pobladora experience, group reflection was to promote a process by which personal and political ties among *pobladoras* might be strengthened and so too a sense of collective identity. In the final stages of the project, Clara hoped that this process would lead to the elaboration of political alternatives grounded in *pobladora* experience.

In practice, the 12 month project would be introduced by Clara and carried out with the help of one or more women facilitators in the *población*. My role was to collaborate as one of the facilitators in the preparation of workshops and documentation of the process which involved the recording of women's testimonies. At the same time, I undertook my own research hoping to gain greater understanding of how *pobladoras* were responding to the "transition".

2. The Case Study

I have divided the case study in two parts which correspond to the pre and post electoral periods in Chile between July 1993 and May 1994. The description to follow includes excerpts from interviews with women leaders, followed by observations and analysis made throughout the course of the project which illustrate the impact of the "transition" on *pobladora* organizing and movement. The research supports arguments made in the previous chapter regarding (1) the exclusion of *pobladoras* from the "transition to democracy" as a result of constraints imposed the neoliberal social policy (2) how *pobladoras* are being coopted by the State and their political space being reduced and (3) how women are responding by both conforming and resisting.

Part One: First Meetings in the Community (July 1993-December 1993)

Introduction

It was at the end of the so-called "transition to democracy" when we started making our first visits to the *población*. During this time, we introduced Clara's project and myself to some of the local women leaders

whom we hoped would take part in the project. Sometimes we were
successful in finding the women at home but, most often we had to return
several times before making contact due to the busy nature of their daily
lives.

Once we made initial contact with various women, the challenge was
then to coordinate a meeting time and place for the workshops. This was no
easy task. We found a community of women not only engaged in work (both
at home and outside of the home) but, busy with organizational activities and
electoral campaigns in anticipation of the presidential elections scheduled for
December 11th, 1993.

During these months, the women's concerns centred on the upcoming
elections, influencing the contents of our first meetings in the *población*. While
we managed to introduce workshop themes and receive some feedback, we
found most of our discussion time was spent evaluating the first four years of
"transition". Here I include excerpts from those first meetings when women
shared their thoughts about a "transition" which in their view had left
pobladora interests unaccounted for.

An Exclusionary "Transition"

When the "transition" began in 1990, many women leaders were
hopeful that there would be improvements in living conditions and the
opportunity for greater political participation. Many felt that with civilian rule
they could finally "take time out" from organizing and attend to their own lives.
As Lila and others explained, however, women soon realized that the
"transition" had not brought about the kind of change for which they had
struggled.

> With democracy many people thought they could relax...they
> said that you had to take care of the democracy because it was
> still in diapers. For about one year people relaxed, there was talk
> of participation, a lot of things...but we realized that was a
> mistake because nothing had changed (Lila,1993).

Instead of change, women spoke of economic and political
exclusion.

Economic Exclusion

There had been little change in the economic situation of those
pobladoras with whom we spoke. Instead of prosperity women insisted that

the economic benefits had failed to reach their community. According to Lila,

"Things are pretty hard, it's difficult. It's like I said, this población hasn't seen

it! (the prosperity)" (Lila,1993). While women had seen some job creation

during the past four years, they indicated that *pobladoras* had failed to benefit

from these new economic opportunities. This was particularly true, said one

woman, of *pobladoras* who were active in local organizations during the

dictatorship. Jazmín expressed her dissatisfaction with the inequitable

distribution of economic benefits:

> I expected that (with democracy) that at least for us, housewives, a
> path would be opened for work. They say that there are many
> workshops here and there, but that's not the reality, they're for some
> people but not others...and not for women who were organized. There
> are people that I've never seen in any of the organizations and they
> have great jobs. That was the complete disappointment of democracy
> (Jazmín,1993).

Among the jobs available to women were those which did not present

real opportunities. As leaders explained, among the new jobs created in the

población were minimum wage positions at a local supermarket, where we

were told young women were finding employment. The non-unionized

positions at this supermarket, however, did not represent viable employment.

Women did not stay very long in these positions due to the low wages and

long hours which failed to compensate for their absence in the home.

Poverty Persists

All leaders agreed that instead of economic prosperity the community continued to suffer from significant levels of poverty, the costs of which were borne disproportionately by women. With "democracy" the communities still struggled with the same social problems among these, unemployment, prostitution, delinquency and drug addiction. Furthermore, equitable access to social services, particularly health and education, had yet to be established.

The persistence of poverty women emphasized, affected the "most marginal" women and children. As one leader noted, the government's failure to bring about change only meant more work for *pobladoras* because "the reproduction of the workforce falls on the shoulders of women"(Laurel,1993). Not only is this evident in the home but in the community, insisted another leader. "The government claims that poverty has been reduced", but women continue to organize. Organizations such as the soup kitchens and health groups still served a real need in the community.

> The government should ask itself why the *ollas comunes* continue... because I don't think that we women are there at the *ollas* because it is nice to be there...and if there are still health groups it's not because health in the *población* is that great, it's because health is 'unhealthy', as they say...(Marielena,1993).

Political Exclusion : The Promise of Political Participation

Political Parties

Another promise of "democracy" was that of political participation. Time and time again, however, *pobladora* leaders spoke of how their communities had been forgotten by the civilian government and how they had been frustrated by attempts to meet with political parties of the "Concertación". Contrary to expectations, they emphasized, the "transition" had not created a space for the articulation of *pobladora* interests.

Lila recalled her frustration when in December 1989 *pobladora* leaders met with political party members of the "Concertación" prior to their first electoral victory in 1990. Despite this consultation, she insisted, in the post-electoral period the "Concertación" had yet to respond to *pobladora* organizations. Lila expressed her frustration with the return to politics as usual:

> Every time there are elections they start talking about the five million poor and everything they talk about is in favour of the poor, but then they are elected and they forget about us (Lila, 1993).

Social Policy: FOSIS and SERNAM

Pobladoras with whom we spoke felt that not only had they been forgotten by elected representatives but, also by newly created state social agencies such as FOSIS and SERNAM where they felt *pobladoras* had no voice. Attempts to meet with representatives of FOSIS (*Fondo de solidaridad e inversión social*), who were now responsible for channelling development assistance, had been not been realized raising questions regarding the substance of democratic rhetoric. In the words of Lila,

> I don't feel represented by any representative in power...real participation would mean giving us the right to express our opinion in the places of power and decide how to use the resources (Lila,1993).

The kind of participation Lila talked about had not been achieved. Instead, women expressed frustration with their inability to direct state resources or influence social policy. In the case of FOSIS, women indicated that state-sponsored development assistance promised to a variety of organizations never arrived. At the time Clara and I held our meetings, the only assistance provided by FOSIS was being received by the soup kitchens

which had subscribed to a programme of powdered milk subsidies.

Although FOSIS was known to sponsor a wide-range of local development initiatives, including training courses and support to microenterprise, there were no such programmes taking place at the time. Although there was talk that with FOSIS' help some soup kitchens begin providing meals at the local school, this had not taken place as of yet. The submission of project proposals from *pobladora* organizations, although encouraged by FOSIS, were not always accepted.

> Nothing else was done by FOSIS, (neither) help for training courses, (nor) help to set up a microenterprise...we even sent a project proposal and it was rejected (Marielena,1993).

Servicio nacional de la mujer (SERNAM)

Similar frustrations were expressed with regard to the *Servicio nacional de la mujer* (SERNAM), the newly created state agency for women. While most women felt that SERNAM had succeeded in "making public" the very private issue of family violence, most were critical of the institution. Most felt that SERNAM's work was largely irrelevant to their lives as it did not challenge the bases of class inequality.

In this manner, the creation of SERNAM did not create a political

opening for *pobladoras* as was hoped. "During the dictatorship women

became protagonists" explained one pobladora, "but today the nature of

(women's) participation has changed with the creation of SERNAM. The

effects of SERNAM can only have a 'palliative effect' without structural

change" (Marielena,1993). Similarly another woman insisted, the impact of

legal reforms advocated by SERNAM can only benefit some women when no

change in the system is proposed. The state will approve these laws only to

placate women she suggested.

> The government will approve a divorce law so that they (women
> at SERNAM) will stay quiet but the system is the same...What
> good is a divorce law if you can't pay for a lawyer? What do you
> get from legalizing abortion when you have to pay for a private
> clinic? There must be a profound change (Jazmín,1993).

When asked whether SERNAM's programmes had had an impact in

the *población* one woman had this to say. "No, we only know them by name".

When pressed the same woman then recalled a meeting organized by

SERNAM which she had attended. When asked, however, she could not

remember the subject of the meeting (Laura,1994).

Laura's response was indeed quite typical of many women who

appeared to be fairly unfamiliar with SERNAM. To others more

knowledgeable about SERNAM, it was often perceived as yet another state

institution which held no solutions for *pobladoras*. According to Marielena, the

only alternatives presented to women were small, labour-intensive economic

ventures which she felt underestimated the wider potential for pobladora

contribution. SERNAM does not provide real alternatives, she insisted but,

"mediocre" alternatives, especially for *pobladoras*. *Pobladora* organizing

experience, she stated emphatically, tells us that women are capable of many

things.

> The organizations get filled with projects, projects that are
> mediocre, projects for homemakers. We are homemakers, we do
> the things around the house and afterwards we do these
> projects that instead of taking us away from these chores give
> us an even worse chores with the baking and frying,
> etcetera...all small projects especially for women, but that's not
> the idea, we are more than that, we have done more than that in
> our organizations, for this reason we will fight this thing
> (Marielena, 1993).

Observations on Part One: Establishing a Participatory Process in the Context of the "Transition"

Stimulating Interest in the Project

The defiant words spoken in these first meetings established the tone for months to come during which time women leaders established the agenda. The workshops we had planned were not introduced at this point, as the meetings tended to be irregular and so too was attendance. Concerned with how to stimulate interest in the project we did, however, make a number of observations in these early stages.

The Challenges

First of all, there was the issue of time and the nature of women's responsibilities which made it impossible for various women to attend. Apart from time devoted to household work and income-generation, organizational responsibilities were particularly demanding for leaders confronted with low levels of participation. Moreover, the pre-electoral period placed additional pressure on these same women whom had been recruited by local political parties to work for their campaigns.

Second, we found that when we presented the project both misunderstanding and mistrust were expressed. When we first began talking with women, one leader took me aside and suggested that we not present the effort as a "project" because the word produced misunderstanding. Although we felt our presentation of the project suggested otherwise, upon hearing the word "project" many women thought we were offering funds for their organization.

Furthermore, the word "research" associated with the project, including my presence, was fraught with connotations. What usually happens, women explained, was that professionals came in to "study women" as "objects" of research. Women expressed a great deal of resentment regarding the practices of NGO professionals and academics in their communities whom they felt were the sole beneficiaries of research.

Pobladoras were particularly critical of women that they felt had joined with the regime. Clara described how they worked with feminist researchers who, with the "transition", had left NGOs to work for state social agencies.

> some of their books written have been written with popular
> organizations because we did the surveys, we brought the kids,
> we told them how much they ate, and there they got all the facts,

and all that stuff, from us because we opened the doors to them
because we thought it was important that they know. But we
gave them a lot of information and possibilities to control later
on...I think that is an experience that we should consider. That
you give and give and they don't give you anything back,
understand? (Clara,1993)

These experiences with researchers only had only served to
exacerbate a certain mistrust of most NGO projects. According to one
outspoken *pobladora*, the only reason she agreed to take part in the activities
proposed by Clara was because the initiative was that of a *pobladora* and not
a professional from outside the community. This last statement she repeated
several times in the presence of other leaders. I also heard Clara on several
occasions explain why as a popular leader she chose to work for an NGO.

Establishing Trust

Given the context of the "transition", it became increasingly clear that
Clara's status as a *pobladora* leader was that which made the project even
thinkable. The confidence and trust I established with Clara made my entry
into the group possible, but it took several months before I felt that women
were comfortable with my presence. Notably, NGO professionals working in
the same *población* remarked at the relative interest Clara's project had

stimulated on the part of women leaders when many NGO activities had experienced a drop in attendance levels.

Establishing trust was essential but difficult. Women placed their trust in Clara but, to establish trust among all participants was a difficult task given a legacy of dictatorship[113]. The majority of these women had experienced over a decade of state sponsored repression anc v.olence. They had also experienced the workings of a sophisticated intelligence gathering apparatus aimed at eliminating popular opposition. While the level of mistrust had diminished, outsiders, particularly foreigners, were treated with reservation.

Establishing trust took time but was critical given the subject matter of discussions. When we did get together in a group it was evident that women's personal and organizational issues were inextricably linked. While some women appeared to have a strong need to share their experience, for others to talk of the "transition" was to relive memories of dictatorship that were very difficult[114]. To speak of the past four years was also to initiate a discussion

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The legacy of mistrust was something to which even Clara was not exempt as we soon discovered. One young woman had even made inquiries in the community about Clara before agreeing to take part in the project.

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There are few places where women can receive support/help for their experience of trauma during the dictatorship another indication of how with the "transition" pobladoras have remained invisible.

around movement decline. Both these subjects produced strong emotion, evoking not only anger but a great deal of pain. Given participation in over a decade of organizing and protest, we also sensed some women felt our project effort was futile. I still remember the words of one leader responding to the questions of a foreign journalist one day in late September 1993, "we (pobladoras) have spoken and spoken, and I ask myself, has anyone ever really listened to us?" (Laurel,1993)

Engendering Participation When No One Is Participating

With all of the above, the question remained as to how Clara and I would engender a participatory process while, paradoxically, many women around us had ceased to attend their own meetings. Furthermore, among the leaders we hoped would form our group, we noted there was little communication or coordination of organizational activities. Our observations called for a change in course.

Preparing for Part Two: The Unstructured Interview

The challenges we experienced in these few months led us to make some changes in our approach. While we did maintain small group

discussions, we decided to conduct unstructured interviews with individual leaders. We began interviews with various objectives in mind. By meeting women on an individual basis, those who were willing (but not able to attend meetings due to time constraints) could take part in the project. We also hoped to allay any reservations women may have had concerning the project by introducing some of its central themes during the course of our interviews. Overall, it represented an opportunity to get to know one another better and for us to demonstrate our commitment to the project.

The Interviews: Women Speak of Decline

We conducted a total of 15 interviews over the next six months with *pobladora* leaders of various organizational types including health groups, soup kitchens *(ollas comunes)*, muralists, *arpilleristas*, and a women's group. The interviews focused on the organizing experience of each woman exploring the obstacles each had faced as women engaged in local organizing and how their participation had changed over time.

In interviews, women spoke about their organizing experience throughout the dictatorship and then about the challenges they had met with the "transition" to civilian rule. They also spoke at length of movement

decline. Based on these interviews and observations made in the community, a picture of *pobladora* movement began to emerge. I now turn to a series of observations made by women leaders which illustrate the state of their movement as it was in 1993-1994.

Part Two: Women's Organization and Movement: How Pobladoras are being Coopted by the State and their Political Space being Reduced (December 1993-May 1994)

Since the beginning of the "transition", levels of participation in the various organizations had been steadily dropping. The soup kitchens had been reduced from 14 to 8, while membership in the health groups had dropped from 70 to 20 and the women's group from 8 to 4. *The arpilleristas* had aι suffered decline, but it was not substantial according to the 15 women who continued to meeᵗ throughout this period.

Throughout this period, we listened as women tried to make sense of organizational decline. How was it possible ιhat *pobladoras* no longer felt the need to organize when "nothing had changed" or when there "remained so much to be done", were the questions being asked by most leaders. In interviews, women were provided with an opportunity to reflect on these and other related questions. During informal meetings they then exchanged

thoughts about the challenges they faced as leaders following the "transition to democracy".

During this period we noted women's responses and made some observations of our own. With the "transition" *pobladora* leaders cited the following factors as having contributed to low levels of participation: (1) the lack of external linkages (2) the absence of political project and (3) a weakening in democratic organizational processes. These factors supported our observations which revealed how with the transition, *pobladoras* were being coopted by the state and their political space was being reduced.

Cooptation and Reduction of Political Space

Lack of External Linkages

According to *pobladora* leaders, organizing had become more difficult with the "transition" because they found themselves lacking external linkages. With the "transition", the state had assumed a primary role in channelling development assistance while former supporters of *pobladora* movement in the international development, NGO and Catholic Church communities had been withdrawing their support.

The Church and International Development

The "transition" was accompanied by the Church's withdrawal from political activity which led to the severing of ties with *pobladora* organizations. Unlike in the past, when the Church worked to channel international solidarity funds, with "democracy" it had also ceased providing organizations with economic support. According to one leader, these changes were not only responsible for limiting economic alternatives but, were responsible for encouraging a certain apathy among the members of her organization.

> After (the 'transition') things changed, when the "transition" arrived the people went to work, they were no longer as *solidaria*[115]as before...before we received some help from the parish, because the money from overseas couldn't be received by that government or dictatorship, and so, it arrived at the Church, and the Church helped in a certain way...but when the aid stopped many people left, they didn't want to work anymore (Laura,1993).

To make matters worse, others indicated, Church facilities were no longer available for activities of a non religious nature. As such, the actual space in which to meet and organize had been lost. At this loss of space women

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Solidaria in the sense of women being in solidarity with one another.

expressed much frustration, as *pobladora* organizations had been responsible for building additions to the local church. One pobladora recalled her conversation with the local priest.

> They (the Church) say that the things belong to the community. But, for me the community is the *población*. He told me that the community is the Christian community. So I told him, 'such good Christians we are that we don't think of the people outside the chapel!' We are good Christians, I was even a community animator, but I didn't last long because I wasn't going to mass and they told me that I could not continue because I wasn't going to mass (Nadia,1993).

Non-governmental Organizations

Like the Church, women noted that many NGOs had withdrawn economic and political support to *pobladora* organizations. As one leader said, "the countries that helped the organizations and the NGOs closed their doors because this is a democratic country and supposedly poverty doesn't exist" (Marielena,1993). On the one hand, women saw the withdrawal of NGOs as a response to "democratic" rhetoric. On the other hand, those NGOs which remained were perceived to have re-directed their efforts and resources elsewhere.

In effect, some NGOs had re-oriented their activities away from the kind of sociopolitical support they once provided to *pobladora* organizations in the past. Moreover, NGOs as a group had become more heterogeneous than before due to the new relationships many had established with the civilian regime. Some NGOs to which women referred were almost indistinguishable from state social agencies, such as those working with FOSIS, while others had become increasingly specialized in providing training courses (including technical support to local microenterprise). Neither NGO type was seen as supportive of *pobladora* movement.

NGOs become Intermediaries

Women spoke at length about the leading role NGOs had assumed in the implementation of social policy as intermediaries in the delivery of state development funds. When women spoke of these NGOs they were almost indistinguishable from the state agency FOSIS with whom they worked closely. As women were most familiar with the case of FOSIS, they discussed the difficulties they were encountering as a result of the soup kitchens' new reliance on state development assistance and how NGOs had come to contribute to these difficulties.

They explained that rather than being received directly by the

organizations, state development aid was now being channelled through

certain NGOs whose job it was to administer the funds. Obtaining State

assistance via FOSIS meant engaging with these NGOs which had, in effect,

become the direct recipients of aid. This system has not benefitted the

organizations said Amanda.

> (FOSIS'aid) is received by large NGOs and not the
> organization, the very milk which is delivered to the soup
> kitchens (*ollas comunes*), for example, is not received by the
> soup kitchens but, by other administrative institutions, there are
> at least three steps before it is received by the
> organization...(Amanda,1994)

Not only had these NGOs become direct recipients of state assistance but,

they were undermining organizational autonomy. As Maria explained, the

system of state assistance delivery as one of the few available sources of

funding to the organizations was interfering with organizational autonomy. In

turn, NGOs as intermediaries had become instruments for state cooptation.

Decisions concerning the soup kitchens, she indicated, were being made by

the NGO rather than by the women themselves.

> ...to obtain funds at this moment you must have legal recognition
> (*personalidad jurídica*) and rely on FOSIS. So organizations may

form out of the needs of the *población* but when the time comes to get resources ...they have to go to the state... People think that it doesn't matter where the money comes from if you maintain autonomy, but it is not that simple, because in practice, as we have seen with the *ollas*, autonomy is not maintained.

I can tell you that those who are making the decisions are not the organizations but the NGOs that have been created to channel the funds that go to the *ollas comunes*. So, that's where the decisions are being made. It's not like before when the proposal came from the organization and the NGO took it if it wanted to or not (Maria,1993).

NGOs carve a space of their own in the neoliberal environment

In addition to those NGOs working with FOSIS, women leaders spoke of NGOs whose activities were now limited to providing specialized training courses. Some of these NGOs were new, such as those offering support to microenterprise development, while others seemed to be in the process of becoming increasingly specialized in their activities. For *pobladoras*, however, these NGOs defined as professional bodies separate from the popular organization had only contributed to

interviewed described the changes she had observed in one NGO. "We used go there (to the NGO), sit down, make ourselves a coffee and talk, but, today we are stopped at the door by a secretary who asks us if we have an appointment" (Amanda,1994).

Other leaders expressed similar dissatisfaction with the NGO's failure to incorporate *pobladoras*. Instead of engaging *pobladoras* to carry out community development work, suggested one leader, paid positions still went to professionals from outside the *población* (Marielena,1994). Still others remarked at the ineffectiveness of many training courses. Ironically, said one woman, the training courses offered by NGOs have not led to enhanced employment opportunities at NGOs or elsewhere, "all those courses and training got me nowhere" (Marta,1994). At the time of these interviews, there were only two NGOs which provided women with a private meeting space, the only remaining spaces in the neighbourhood.

Loss of political project

> My participation hasn't changed but what I do feel is that many *pobladora* leaders abandoned, so I feel very alone trying to still do something, that's what makes me most...it's like all of them went home, as if there's nothing more to do, but there is! (Ximena,1993)

Equally, if not more important than the loss of external linkages,

women cited the loss of political project as having contributed to decline.

Today, convincing *pobladoras* of the need for continued organization was

difficult when collective struggle had lost its focal point, said one leader, "it

was much easier during the dictatorship when you had something to fight

against" (Isabel,1993). Today, another woman suggested, instead of the

dictatorship, leaders are fighting a democratic rhetoric which is fomenting

complacency and causing disunity among women.

> The struggle against the dictatorship is over and there (women)
> sit, waiting for democracy to make miracles, but they (women)
> don't get it, that democracy didn't arrive...that's why the thing's in
> decline...there's this democracy and we're all sitting watching the
> democracy on television. Aylwin did this and did that... and me,
> where am I? No where. Women turn off the set and democracy
> is all over (Amanda,1993).

A Weakening of Democratic Practices

In interviews, *pobladoras* described how values of solidarity had been

replaced by an individualism which they felt was responsible for weakening

democratic organizational practices. Women had left the organizations to

looking out for their own interest but, those who had stayed on were now using the organization for personal ends. Women remarked at changes in organizational practices most evident in the case of the soup kitchens.

During the dictatorship, women explained, soup kitchens were run by women who made contributions to what was a collective effort. They drew from their own pockets and from what they could find in the community itself in unsold or discarded produce from markets and restaurants. In contrast, today the soup kitchens were purchasing and selling foodstuffs, while the women had stopped cooking meals collectively. In Jazmin's view the soup kitchen had ceased to function as it used to, providing food for those in real need. Instead, she insisted, the soup kitchens now resembled businesses.

> Things have changed. Before I saw it (the organization) as being more *solidaria*. Now it is more independent, because before you payed, I mean, you gave from your pocket (to the organization), but not like now, now it's a business. Before if you didn't have money to pay you made bread, made *empanadas*[116], you payed for it with your work. Not now, now it's money. If you don't have money you can't be there, you have to go. That's the difference now (Jazmín,1994).

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meat pies

Observations on Part Two: Pobladora Responses to the "Transition"

During the second part of the project, women spoke critically of the challenges posed by the "transition" first in their interviews and then in small groups. Observations in the community provided us, however, with additional insight regarding the state of *pobladora* organizing. At this time, we noted women's responses to the "transition" which revealed how organizations were both conforming to and resisting the neoliberal environment.

Conforming and Resisting: the Struggle for Self-Sufficiency

During this time, most organizations were simply trying to maintain levels of participation and finance ongoing activities by making use of what resources were most readily available. There were those which had undergone little significant change in their activities or practices during the year we spent in the community, while others had undergone significant transformation.

Among those did not experience significant change, were organizations which had managed to maintain a relative level of self-sufficiency, at least in the short term. We noted this struggle on the part of one organization to

maintain a small house they had inherited from an NGO which had withdrawn from the community. To maintain the house, the women had been renting out the space to other popular organizations while one leader was writing a project proposal she hoped would bring international development funds from Spain. We saw similar action on the part of the health group, which had just completed a successful educational campaign on household accident prevention. The health group had taken steps toward obtaining legal status (*personalidad jurídica*) in the hopes of accessing state funds via the Municipality.

There were other organizations that despite undergoing some changes, had been resisting due to their ability to maintain a common purpose. Such was the case of the *arpilleristas*. Following the "transition to democracy", although the *arpilleristas* had moved away from their political activity prevalent during the dictatorship, they nevertheless felt the organization served an importai ιι purpose for the women in the community. Members explained that the *arpilleras* no longer contained strong political messages but, "pretty" colourful motifs so to facilitate their sale abroad. Despite this change in orientation, however, the organization was still a place where women found emotional support and friendship. Comparing the *arpilleristas* to other organizations one women said the following, "Imagine that! the *arpilleristas*

are beating a record, we are 15 arpilleristas. Every thursday all 15 of us are

seated in the workshop...we are *solidaria* I guess that's why the organization

stays together". What perhaps served as an important advantage in the case

of the *arpilleristas* is that they never relied on a public meeting space but,

always met in the homes of women members.

Fragmentation

Other organizations, however, were showing signs of fragmentation

caused by a lack of economic alternatives and clearly by a loss of political

project. This was evident in the case of the women's group we interviewed

which had suffered decline. During the interview we noted a number of

contradictions between group aspirations and action (what they were doing to

achieve stated goals). On the one hand, women we interviewed spoke of

continuing the work they had begun with the training courses provided by

feminist NGOs during the dictatorship so to offer their own workshops on

personal development, sexuality and domestic violence. Despite the lack of

funds, they also hoped to remain active in a network of popular feminist

organizations that had been established with the help of a European NGO.

On the other hand, the group had become increasingly inactive and insular. The women members acknowledged in interviews to have ceased reaching out to other types of women's organizations in the community. Their words revealed that both financial constraints and internal conflict appeared to pose equal barriers to the realization of many of their projects. Internal conflict, we discovered in another interview, had been significant in dividing the group. Some original members we were told had left the group due to its lack of direction.

Finally, there was one organization to suffer complete transformation and decline. Among all the organizations mentioned, perhaps the case of the soup kitchens best illustrates the kinds of pressures women leaders were facing during this period.

Conflict and Decline

As we were completing our interviews, the soup kitchens began to experience serious internal conflict. The conflict began with the dismissal of two *pobladora* leaders, whom women had entrusted with negotiating state development assistance from FOSIS, for having appropriated funds (for personal use) from the soup kitchens. Although some *pobladora* leaders

dismissed the conflict as the result of (in the words of one woman) "that classic competition for scarce resources", the conflict nevertheless prompted a small group of women to review their contract with FOSIS as well as organizational statutes.

Efforts by this group to promote discussion among members concerning their relationship with FOSIS, however, did not work. As one woman observed, *pobladoras* could fight among themselves but felt unable to confront FOSIS.

> We fight for the things they send us...but we fight among us, not against them (FOSIS)...because people say, 'how am I going to fight?' (Amanda,1994)

The perceived inability to challenge FOSIS became increasingly evident when some women began to express fears concerning the possible loss of FOSIS subsidies. These women felt that the if governmen. failed to renew their contract then the soup kitchens would cease to function. At this time, one of the leaders we interviewed expressed her frustration with what many of the women had failed to recognize as a deliberate state policy designed to weaken the organization. The organizations should continue with or without state funds.

...it is really painful what is happening to the organizations but that is no excuse for something that has been going for years...because if we begin to see that out milk is running out (and the soup kitchens didn't have milk before), if the help we received in supplies from the Church stops and now we have to buy them... I think these are traps that a system puts in place, the institutions, so not to have to deal with organizations that have been around for a long time. I think that it is for the good of a society for them, for them it is not convenient to have people organized for the common good prepare themselves for tomorrow...and so they weaken the organization, they launch small projects that make each person their own businessman who works with money and so that person will forget about social work, the common good. That game we are not going to play...(Marielena,1993)

As we neared the latter stages of the project, FOSIS' contract with the soup kitchens did end. Despite attempts on the part of some women leaders to maintain the organizations, by mid-1994 the last soup kitchen closed.

CONCLUSIONS: Interpreting Pobladora Responses

In mid 1994, as the project came to a close we undertook an evaluation of our efforts. In the final stage of the project, Clara had hoped to stimulate the elaboration of political alternatives with women leaders. In the midst of women's struggle for organizational autonomy and self-sufficiency, however, while leaders often found short term solutions to organizational

challenges, long term economic and political strategies were seldom

discussed. Even less frequent were discussions concerning the gendered

nature of women's experience [117]. Instead, women remained isolated from

one another, discouraged and divided by the conflict they had experienced

with the soup kitchens.

These observations led us to review women's responses to the

"transition" in view of the challenges they had been experiencing. A re-

examination of those responses illustrates how (1) *pobladora* organizing had

been shaped by the process of "democratization" and (2) how, at given points

in time, political and economic conditions combine to create important

obstacles to organizing efforts concerned with promoting continued processes

of collective identity formation.

1. Pobladora Responses Shaped by The "Transition"

Pobladora responses were shaped by the changing nature of the

political-institutional context. Their responses revealed that *pobladora*

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[117]

In the final stages of the project we did manage to hold three planned workshops where we looked at the role of culture and society in shaping women's experience, their socialization, the nature of their leadership and history.

organizations were subject to structural dependency and ideological cooptation. Among the challenges women leaders cited in their interviews as having contributed to decline was the withdrawal of external agents. During the dictatorship external linkages had been critical for survival. With the "transition", however, the dependent nature of these relationships was made increasingly evident as withdrawal of NGOs, the Church and international development community placed *pobladora* organizations in the position of having to negotiate state development assistance. Having to negotiate a new relationship with the state, however, confirmed the vulnerability of *pobladora* organizations both to changes in political context and to cooptation[118].

Despite some resistance to decline, we saw how the state had succeeded in establishing clientelistic ties with part of the soup kitchen leadership. The cooptation of soup kitchen leadership had not only contributed to decline but to fragmentation of *pobladora* movement. Although definitive conclusions cannot be drawn regarding how *pobladoras* will address the potential for cooptation in the future, our experience in the community suggests that the "transition" has placed *pobladora* organizations at risk of

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Although this may be taken as a general assessment regarding the nature of structural constraints to *pobladora* movement, the relationship between popular organization and the State was still being negotiated. In the case of the health groups which had taken steps toward incorporation within the municipal structure, the long term effects remained to be seen.

losing what little autonomy they may have had in the past.

The risks of cooptation were evident in changes to organizational structures and practices. As discussed, some of the organizations were already undergoing conversion to microenterprise and experiencing an erosion of democratic practices. The pressures to adjust their practices to fit the neoliberal organizing context only reinforced a process of movement disarticulation[119] through increased competition both within and between organizations which found themselves in competition for state funds.

At the same time, the new organizing context served to limit the scope of economic and political alternatives[120]. Evidence of how women's possibilities for action had been curtailed was the tendency (on the part of

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When I use the term disarticulation here I mean to suggest a lack of coordination across *pobladora* organizations. Not only was disunity evident within a given organization but, across the various *pobladora* organizations coordination had become difficult. Jazmín described how a network of *pobladora* organizations had broken down, "...the women's groups, the soup kitchens, we all used to get together, the health groups, there were cultural groups, there was the house over there on *cienfuegos* street...there was coordination among all of these organizations and its as if it was just cut, it's not there anymore, or if it's there, there aren't people from the organizations" (Jazmín,1994).

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actions limited by projects which aim to increase women's productivity are the bases for "integrating women into development" as discussed.

some leaders) to view conversion to microenterprise as the only viable means to avert organizational decline.

The neoliberal organizing context had the additional effect of undermining the broader opposition movement established during the dictatorship. With the "transition", we saw how class based divisions were being reinforced between *pobladora* organizations and former supporters of women's movement. One means of reinforcing these divisions has been to enlist the support of NGOs, the Church and international development assistance in advancing the state's neoliberal agenda. The active collaboration of external agents in the implementation of state social policy had only served to exacerbate these divisions by contributing to the reduction of *pobladora* political space. Although the Church was widely criticized for its withdrawal from political activity, we noted the potential for further divisions particularly in the case of NGOs.

The NGO role in supporting the neoliberal agenda had fomented important tensions, some of which were already discussed. Not only were these tensions evident in expressions of *pobladora* mistrust toward outsiders but, made worse by the ease at which certain NGO members had been incorporated into the state (their incorporation raising questions regarding the

state's capacity for cooptation). The potential for further divisions was also evident during this period given that NGOs and *pobladora* organizations found themselves in competition for development funds. This was notable in *pobladora* attempts to acquire either state (FOSIS) or international development funds (i.e. case of women trying to secure funding from the Spanish government).

Finally, *pobladora* responses were shaped by the political climate of uncertainty that reigned during 1993-1994. Given the level of dissatisfaction with the nature of the "transition", the electoral period and its aftermath only contributed to political paralysis. When the election results in December, 1993 signalled continuity with the previous government programme there was evident disappointment for those who held critical views of the "transition", exacerbating existing levels of disenchantment.

2. Political Consciousness, Identity and the Search for Political Alternatives

The "transition" had created important obstacles to continued processes of collective identity formation most evident in efforts to develop

political alternatives. *Pobladora* responses suggested that women encountered difficulties when translating their organizing experience into concrete political proposals for social change. Without having developed a political project that went beyond the anti-dictatorial struggle, leaders were at a loss for encouraging women's participation. While we had hoped to engage leaders in a discussion concerning their struggle as women, differences in political consciousness among leaders mediated against such a discussion. These differences are described below.

A First Group

Our experience with one group of leaders suggested how reminents of the traditional discourse on gender identity (invoked by the dictatorship) combined with the "transition"'s democratic rhetoric to prevent the development of political alternatives. Until pressed these women did not establish any explicit connection between how their position as *pobladoras* had shaped their organizing experience. Moreover, they lacked an analysis of how larger economic processes and power relations in the context of the "transition" served to impact their movement.

Instead, these women were trying to make sense of the contextual

contradictions between official discourse and their experience of daily life. In these attempts to understand the nature of change and continuity in the current context, however, we noted some confusion which suggested women's vulnerability to official discourse[121]. The testimonies of these women suggested that they perceived their involvement in local organizing during the dictatorship (their involvement in the public sphere) to have been a temporary measure in response to economic and political crisis. However, with official discourse celebrating the end of political and economic crisis women seemed to question the reasons for continued organization. These leaders proved the most susceptible to cooptation and more likely to pursue individualistic means of meeting their needs. The actions of these women suggested that processes of collective identity formation had remained relatively static.

A Second Group

In the case of other women (those who figure prominently in the case study), however, their vehement critique and denunciation of the "transition"

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[121]

Sometimes women would speak of their economic situation as having changed with the "transition" saying, "we're better off now" while at other times, these same women would contradict themselves by saying "no, we are worse off now".

process signalled an important degree of political consciousness

(consciousness of class and gender exploitation) which generated critical

analysis of the current organizing context. Evidence was in their

preoccupation with decline. There was in their words an unwillingness to

abandon the organizations. Not only had these organizations served as a

primary means for *pobladora* participation but, a woman's space where

members drew strength from one another for their daily struggles. For these

women, organizations were clearly a means for claiming their right to political

citizenship as leaders defended their role as central actors in the struggle for

social and economic justice. Although this last group of leaders were still at

pains to articulate any political alternatives grounded in their experience as

pobladoras, levels of political consciousness suggested the likelihood of

continued movement [122]. Not only may the organizing efforts of these

leaders[123] serve to avert decline but with movement resurgence, promote

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In May 1994, Clara and I organized a two day workshop with women leaders from four other communities to gage the possibilities for widening the discussion group. We found that not only had other *pobladora* leaders been experiencing similar organizational challenges but agreed that pobladora movement would best be served by reviewing its history and developing alternative strategies based in *pobladora* experience.

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One of the notable characteristics of *pobladora* organizing in this community was the absence of young women under the age of 30. For future organizing efforts we noted the importance of involving young women who would benefit from the organizing experience of current leaders who organized during the dictatorship. This kind of mentorship would be important given the degree of "burn-out" we noted on the part of *pobladora* leaders now in their 40s and 50s.

continued processes of collective identity formation.

Summary: Some Final Thoughts on The Nature of Women's Responses

After a couple of months into the government's new mandate the climate of political uncertainty appeared to wane enabling women to focus on the future. Despite the obstacles they continued to face relentless efforts to maintain the organizations continued. Although the project had not led the elaboration of a common political project, it did create sufficient space for women to challenge official discourse and receive validation for their perception of the "transition" process.

Efforts to engage women in the development of political alternatives had met with some difficulty due to differences in the nature of women's political consciousness. On the one hand, there were those who continued to organize according to traditionally ascribed gender roles consistent with official discourse. On the other hand, there were leaders who challenged this discourse. Women's denunciation of the "transition" process signalled the possibilities for continued struggle. Although the current context had created certain obstacles to collective organization, there was no question that women would continue to play a political role in the community, a significant number

of women having come to perceive themselves as political subjects. By the end of the project, we felt that part of the key to movement resurgence lay in bridging the gap between different levels of political consciousness through increased opportunity for exchange between the two groups delineated above.

Our experience in the community suggests that *pobladora* leaders had just begun what will likely be a lengthy process toward movement resurgence. It was a time for understanding what processes had been set in motion by the "transition" and identifying the possibilities for new forms of community organization. Given the nature of the political moment, women's responses (at times contradictory) signalled a process of adjustment was still underway.[124]

As leaders develop new strategies to maintain and build their movement in the current organizing context (ways of dealing with issues of dependency, cooptation, etcetera...) this period of adjustment is likely to continue. Our experience in the community suggests that while resistance may appear to remain at the level of discourse (in the form of denunciation),

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[124]

In the context of "transition", the decline of one organization may create the space for the redirection of political energies. Such is the case when an organization ceases to provide the means for effective struggle (as in the case of some organizations which have undergone conversion to microenterprise, for instance).

definitive predictions concerning the transformative potential of *pobladora* organizing cannot be made at the present time.

As such, we must be cautious and tentative when interpreting *pobladora* responses. As we observed in the case of organizations undergoing conversion, what we interpret as conforming to the neoliberal agenda may, paradoxically, represent the only means of resisting its effects at any given point in time. While resistance at the present time may not be accompanied by a clear political project it is too early to preclude the possibility that transformative processes are occurring or are set in motion once again. What we can say at the present time, is that women's possibilities for action are being shaped by the current context as are processes of collective identity formation which would promote movement resurgence.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

1.   Summary of Arguments

The thesis focused on the political impact of the Chilean "transition to democracy" on *pobladoras* and how they were responding to the "transition". In addressing the problem Chapter one provided a review of feminist approaches to the study of popular women 's struggles in Latin America. A primary distinction was drawn between writings which privilege economic, structural determinants in women's movement and those frameworks which are identity-centred. It was argued, that independent of one another, these approaches presents a narrow conceptualization of movement emergence and meaning. A suitable framework of analysis for the study of popular women's movement would combine economic, structural and identity-centred approaches with conjunctural analyses.

Chapter Two provided an historical context by outlining the nature of popular women's (*pobladoras*) struggle in Chile from 1973 to 1990. The historical outline is primarily concerned with the 1980s when mass mobilization coincided with a proliferation of *pobladora* organizations throughout Santiago. It is argued that during this period *pobladoras* came to

occupy a wider political space and attained greater levels of collective consciousness and identity.

Chapter Three provided both context and argument for the thesis by examining the Chilean "Transition to democracy". Using a gendered political economy approach, the Chapter reveals how the process of Chilean "democratization" has shaped *pobladora* organizing efforts. In part One it was argued that despite official celebration of "democracy" and "economic prosperity", *pobladoras* have been excluded from the benefits of the "transition". In part Two, it was demonstrated how state social policy has shaped the current context, posing particular obstacles to the empowerment of *pobladoras*.

The case study of an NGO-sponsored women's project is illustrative of the arguments advanced in the Chapter Three regarding the impact of the "transition" on *pobladora* organizing. In documenting women's responses to the "transition" women were found to be both conforming to and resisting the neoliberal environment. *Pobladoras* who have managed to resist decline while maintaining values of solidarity have been most fortunate (i.e. health group). Others, despite transformation of their organization to meet market demands still maintain unity among members who derive non-economic benefits such

as friendship and emotional support from their participation (i.e. the arpilleristas). Still others, who have not been as fortunate, fight to maintain organizations which are conforming to the neoliberal agenda (i.e. soup kitchens) often unaware of the manner in which the organization has been coopted by state social policy.

The thesis concludes that popular women's organizing has been shaped by the particular social, economic and political context characteristic of the Chilean process of "democratization". This process poses particular obstacles to organizing efforts that are concerned with promoting continued collective identity formation among popular women.

2. Implications for Theory and Practice

2.1 The Question of Movement Resurgence.

Given the political focus of the thesis, the central question which arises from the research concerns the potential for movement resurgence. In this final section I will attempt to address this question in view of its implications for theory and practice. If decline is to be temporary, I argue that there remain important challenges including: (1) developing a critical collective

consciousness on the part of *pobladoras* which combines gender and class dimensions of popular struggle; and (2) building a common political project which advances women's "strategic interests". In order to do so, *pobladora* movement today would best be served by activities and relationships that support empowerment.

2.2 The Risks of Absorption

While the more radical demands of *pobladoras* (and other women) are susceptible to cooptation by the state, at the same time, as the case study suggests, women will resist state attempts to impose certain gender regimes. As noted in Chapter Two, during the course of the dictatorship *pobladoras* organized in greater numbers than ever before, building movement and greater levels of consciousness while resisting state attempts at cooptation. Similarly, in the context of the "transition", we find some *pobladoras* resisting the pressures to conform to the neoliberal state social policy aimed at the "integration of women into development".

2.3 Supporting Pobladora Empowerment

With the pressures to conform to the neoliberal organizing environment

and reduction of political space following the "transition to democracy",
supporting *pobladora* empowerment means creating new spaces where they
may be heard. Critical today is the creation of democratic spaces for the
articulation of *pobladora* interests both within the context of institutions and
social movements.

For institutions that strive to support *pobla* ·a empowerment it means
becoming aware of how they may be contributing to the closing of *pobladora*
political space. As we have seen, the conforming of NGOs, the Church and
international development communities to the neoliberal agenda has
contributed to the continued subordination of *pobladoras*. As Petras and
Arellano (1993)'s study of NGOs in Bolivia indicate, not only must we be alert
to how women are responding to the current neoliberal context but, we must
concern ourselves with the responses of those who hope to support women's
movement. In the case of Chilean NGOs, awareness that they are not
immune to processes of ideological cooptation is critical to prevent potential
alienation of the popular bases they hope to support. The same may be said
of former NGO members who now occupy state positions with social
agencies such as FOSIS or SERNAM if they are to implement policy which
aims at the empowerment of *pobladoras*. Those who aim to support
pobladora movement must recognize both the possibilities and limitations of

their position.

For social movements, support of *pobladora* empowerment means constructing an inclusive political project which incorporates their specific demands. Moreover, it means creating alternatives that are social and cultural in nature. In the present context, what is urgently needed is a politics which presents alternative values to those of rampant individualism and competition associated with the neoliberal agenda.

> The problem today is the absence of a cultural and ideological link between the objective conditions of exploitation and poverty and the public response. The struggle in Chile is not only political-economic but cultural and ideological. The struggle to recover collective action depends on creating an alternative cultural movement that unites the ethnic and gender struggles, class solidarity and popular power (Petras and Cañadell,1993:227)

2.4 Empowerment: strengthening of pobladora organizations and identity

The participation of *pobladoras* as equal partners in the struggle for political alternatives, however, requires the support of community based efforts to maintain the strength of their organizations. This support to women's

movement may mean providing meeting space or promoting *pobladora*

economic self-sufficiency but, it also involves support to political activities

such as consciousness-raising.

Ongoing processes of consciousness-raising activities, including

popular education can contribute to the empowerment of *pobladoras* by

supporting continued processes of collective consciousness and identity

formation. Empowerment, however, does not involve the raising of

consciousness alone but, the construction of political identity which starts by

challenging traditional gender roles. Critical consciousness must emerge from

the community itself and for women must include reflection and analysis

concerning the specificity of their experience.[125]

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Support to initiatives like the one described in the case study represent a good starting point. Although many women's projects of a similar nature have been carried out by Chilean women and women's NGOs, I would argue that in many respects the project described was unique. To begin with, it was written by a *pobladora* leader and popular educator to whom primary responsibility was accorded by the NGO(in contrast to NGO projects directed by professional women). Furthermore, it was conceived on the basis of discussions Clara had undertaken with other women leaders across Metropolitan Santiago. The substance of concerns underlying this project she had identified with other women leaders, while the initiative itself was her own. (Clara was always quick to emphasize that her critical thinking about the situation of *pobladoras* was the product of "collective reflection" with other *pobladora* leaders.) Not only was it a new initiative for the NGO in an attempt to bring a gender analysis to their work, in the población where Clara works the kind of discussions and collective reflection she proposed was largely new to many women leaders. Never before had such a project been carried out in the población, or by the NGO, despite a history of strong female leadership and movement in the area.

One important means of supporting the construction of women's identity is through retrieval of historical memory. The construction of political identities, whereby women begin to see themselves as collective subjects, is supported through retrieval of historical memory. In the wake of the Chilean "transition", when there are those who would forget history altogether, the history of women's popular struggle becomes critical.[128] As Elizabeth Jelin notes, not only does the historic invisibility of popular women make this task imperative but, the analysis of women's history informs our understanding of power.

> It is now recognized that there is an urgent need to retrieve historical memory in order to bring to light what is missing at the level of power. In effect, history which is history of power leaves out issues relating to women and to reproduction. It is, therefore, crucial to build up a micro-history based on the retrieval of popular recollections and the recollections of the actors themselves and of their own movements, which has so much to do with the process of establishing identities. Because of the absence of women in the public sphere and, moreover, because there are so few written traces from the past concerning women of the popular sectors, reconstruction of history through personal testimonies is a priority (Jelin,1990:5).

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Writing about the Uruguayan case, Canel (1992) argues: "The decline of social movements cannot be understood in isolation from the overall sociopsychological and political context in the country following the return to democracy (Canel,1992:281). In the case of Chile, this means providing those most affected by a legacy of repression, including torture, with the means for personal reparation.

In the *poblaciones* oι Santiago this kind of historical retrieval is now

taking place, an effort to which this project made a modest contribution.[127] It

is only through support of such efforts that the present context be understood

and confronted. Building a common political project, like envisioning one's

future involves reviewing one's past. For those who would accompany the

struggle of *pobladoras* into this future, however, awareness of how the current

context poses obstacles to collective movement must be accompanied by an

analysis of how gender shapes women's struggle at various historical

junctures.

In the case of Chile, it may still be too early to tell what may be the

longer term impacts of the "transition" process on women's movements or to

determine who will be their political allies into the future. What is becoming

increasingly clear, however, is that with pressures to abandon the political

objectives embodied in the concept of empowerment, the possibility that

NGOs (or any other institution) sustain relationships which promote popular

women's movement will remain difficult. The likelihood that *pobladora*

organizations and their supposed allies sustain a relationship that is

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[127]

The "transition" has seen the small scale publication of *pobladora* histories
based on testimonies gathered in various *poblaciones* of Santiago.

supportive of women's struggles for empowerment, is highly dependent on whether both groups become aware of how contradictions in Chile's current development model work their way through their respective organizational structures and processes. At the present time, only history will show whether present day resistance to the neoliberal agenda leads to movement resurgence.

Research

The thesis presented here suggests there is a need for new studies able to account for gendered forms of resistance. As *pobladora* continue responding to the new organizing context it remains to be seen if new forms of organization emerge, which forms persist and why. Of importance will be the strategies women develop to combat the effects of the current neoliberal development model. To understand these processes of change, however, we must be able to establish the connections between resistance, transformation and emancipation. Under v hat conditions does women's resistance lead to transformation, or is it inherently transformative?

Helen Safa and others have argued that we are witnessing broad processes of transformation in the breakdown of public and private spheres.

Out of this process of transformation it has been suggested that popular women emerged as a new collective actor (Safa,1995; Jelin,1989). In Chile, I would suggest that while *pobladoras* have become increasingly visible as a collective actor over time, many still do not see themselves as political actors. Given the obstacles facing popular women's struggles in the context of the Chilean "transition to democracy", we must continue to examine the complex connections between economic processes and the breakdown of public and private spheres. Conjunctural studies of women and the state would inform these studies by addressing questions concerning the implications of women's entry into the arena of state policy arena and the impact of state policies aimed at "integrating women into development". For *pobladoras* these are important questions if we are to understand how and why women organize at particular historic junctures and what their organization tells us about larger processes of development. All the points raised above, will require answers if we are to move toward a comprehensive understanding of popular women's struggles and their potential for bringing about societal transformation.

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APPENDIX

Interview Questionnaire

1. When, why and how did you become involved in local organizing?

2. Did the nature of your participation in local organizing change over time?

3. Did your participation bring about changes in your life? (What kinds of changes?)

4. As a woman, have you encountered obstacles to your participation in local organizing?

5. Has the nature of your participation changed in the current context of the "transition to democracy"? (What constitutes your involvement today?)