

**Feminist Activism and Women's
Rights Mobilization in the Chilean
Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer:
Beyond Maternalist Mobilization**

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Abstract

This case study of women's mobilization under authoritarian rule in Chile exposes some of the challenges in the history of women's definition of a liberation language and of subsequent activist strategies for rights. It adopts a gendered lens to analyze the distinct contributions Chilean women have made in defense of human rights as they helped shape a new human rights practice in Chile. Examining a pioneering women's organization under the Pinochet Dictatorship (1973-1989), the *Círculo de Estudios de La Mujer* (Women's Studies Circle), it shows how women redefined their responsibilities and rights when the regime prohibited previous patterns of political participation. *Círculo* activists built new foundations for a mobilization in favor of "mothers' rights," connected to traditional gender-based responsibilities and family life. They helped lay the foundation for new paradigms of women's political participation and quest for citizenship rights when male breadwinners were absent or silenced by the military: they linked "mothers' rights" to women's rights and to women's *individual* claims to civil liberties.**

Introduction

In 1979, hidden in plain sight at the *Academia de Humanismo Cristiano* (Academy of Christian Humanism) in the midst of the terror of military dictatorship, a small group of Santiago feminists decided to use their political connections and friendships to announce a meeting "to discuss the situation of women in Chile."¹ These women were the founding members of the *Círculo de Estudios de La Mujer* (Women's Studies Circle),² a group committed to collective learning, to promoting self-awareness, and to challenging the authoritarian society in which they lived. Despite the difficulties of mobilizing under harsh military rule and the climate of violence that pervaded every aspect of Chilean life, attendance at the first *Círculo* meeting exceeded all expectations: approximately three hundred women answered the call.³ Braving streets still far from peaceful, they came from different Santiago neighborhoods and from diverse class backgrounds. They consequently contributed a wide range of educational and personal

experiences to the endeavor. As meeting participants shared their knowledge in the safe-haven of the Academy, they initiated a new stage in the discourse and practice of women's rights in Chile.

At the time of the *Círculo's* first gathering, the slogan "women's rights as human rights" had begun to make its way into mainstream language in Europe and the United States; it would become a familiar global reference by the 1990s.⁴ Its meaning and application in Latin America, however, often remained contested due to local variations and to the specific characteristics of women's rights mobilization within each nation. Experiences of violence under military regimes, for example, were inseparable from the development of a rights discourse, and shaped feminist critiques of patriarchal authority in the Latin American Southern Cone. Much has been written about the heightened significance of human rights under military dictatorships in the region.⁵ But just as a universal language of rights has shaped recent scholarship, Latin American women's access to individual rights has remained uncertain and varied. Attention to the connections between local, domestic, and global contexts of Chilean women's mobilization for rights reveals that universal ideas of women's rights had multiple regional implications.⁶ The *Círculo* women's approach to feminist activism demonstrates some of the multiple strategies women used to defend human rights and gender equity.

This study locates the activism of a pioneering feminist organization within the history of women's maternalist and feminist mobilization in 20th century Chile to highlight the strengths of women's resistance to human rights abuses during the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1989). Focusing on the *Círculo de Estudios de La Mujer* that emerged at the height of a regime of terror, it sheds light on the transformation of a rights discourse and practice of unprecedented dimension by asking new analytical questions: How did women use the traditional

understandings of motherhood at the heart of the Chilean gender system to justify new forms of political engagement under dictatorship? How did they transform motherhood as a political tool to draw in *women*, not *mothers* first? In the first part of this study, I situate *Círculo* initiatives within the historical trajectory of women's mobilization in Chile. Next, I expose the changing manifestations of women's activism provoked by military rule and explore the specifics of the *Círculo* women's mobilization. Their contributions to a new understanding of women's individual rights are central to this study. I argue that both the *Círculo* women's skilful redefinition of tradition and the individual contributions made by its founding members contributed to a re-visioning of women's rights in Chile.

**Of *Beneficent Maternalism* and Feminist Activism:
20th Century Trajectories of Women's Mobilization in Chile**

In the Latin American Southern Cone, the centrality of motherhood to feminism has been well documented.⁷ Chilean women often used references to maternal responsibilities to increase their political weight. In the first decades of the twentieth century, for example, they engaged in either secular or Church related *beneficent maternalism*, thus asserting their voice in the politics of a modernizing nation. *Beneficent maternalism*, defined by historian Karen Mead as “any organized activism on the part of women who claim that they possess gendered qualifications to understand and assist less-fortunate women and, especially, children,” characterized a wide range of feminist activities.⁸ In Santiago, the capital city, Catholic women addressed what they saw as alarming byproducts of urbanization, industrialization, and modernization.⁹ Pioneer groups like the *Liga de Damas Chilenas* united women who saw the roots of society's problems in the misguided behaviors and consumption patterns of the poor, both men and women. Other secular and autonomous organizations of elite and middle class women were equally concerned about lower-class behaviors and got involved through benevolent commitment. Such secular groups

included the *Circulo de Lectura de Señoras* (Ladies' Reading Circle) and *Club de Señoras* (Ladies' Club) who actively engaged in what they considered their mission: to “uplift” poor women.¹⁰

Women’s citizenship rights and choices for political participation remained severely restricted by legal codes that denied women political, economic and cultural rights until they gained the vote in municipal elections in 1934 and unrestricted suffrage in 1949. Married women were especially disadvantaged. The Chilean Civil Code secured uncontested legal authority of male heads of household to administer the lives of wives and children. Proposals to reform the Civil Code to return to women the rights they had lost in marriage were rejected by political leaders as serious challenges not only to the authority of the *pater familias*, but also to social order.¹¹ In this legal setting, many women held on to the strategy of maternalist mobilization to increase the impact of their political influence.¹² Others, nonetheless, openly defied traditions and challenged the restrictions placed on the women’s lives – even those beyond the boundaries of the Chilean nation state.

Parallel to women’s beneficent maternalism and maternal activism some early feminists challenged the notion of biologically determined traditions in their writings and in public critiques of the Chilean gender system – and also mobilized the category of motherhood in quests for more radical change and for political rights. In the 1930s, Chilean feminist and leftist Marta Vergara showed that cooperation with other Latin American women and connections to transnational political quests was part of the feminist landscape in the Americas. Vergara and Columbian feminist Maria Pizano, for example, headed the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) of the Pan-American Union and lobbied the League of Nations in defense of citizenship rights of married women worldwide.¹³ They also helped document and monitor the

legal and political rights of women in the region, and promoted women's rights to property, education, and suffrage.¹⁴

Campaigning on the national level, a group of Chilean feminists founded the *Movimiento Pro-Emancipación de la Mujer Chilena* (Movement for the Emancipation of Chilean Women, MEMCh) in 1935. Marta Vergara, one of MEMCh's tireless activists, spelled out the greatest strength of the organization: its cross-class mobilization and the wide scope of its extraordinary program. It was attractive to "women of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat," and it covered subjects ranging from "the right to vote to the spread[ing] of methods of contraception among the destitute."¹⁵ MEMCh feminists drew on the discourses of the parties on the political left, where Communists and Socialists framed their demands for workers rights as mothers' and families' rights, and thereby gained political support.¹⁶ Yet even with suffrage, neither the women who relied on maternal activism to defend their cause, nor the women who defied tradition, effectively ended the patriarchal arrangement that assigned most power to the agency of men.

Times of Terror: Authoritarian Constructions of Motherhood and Women's Lives under Dictatorship

When well-known feminist writer and *Círculo* founder Julieta Kirkwood characterized women's activism under dictatorship, she evoked the daring nature of their acts in light of the changes that shaped the nation:

'...We were very brave: heretics by dint of shamelessly, openly turning everything around;...we discovered, discovered with passion, laughter, tough fights, difficult reflections, we kept going, we opened the Circle [of Women's Studies], the House [of the Woman, called "La Morada," the Dwelling], we opened books, even the Lila Women's Bookstore; we were crazily daring, I can see it now.'¹⁷

Indeed, Kirkwood and other feminists walked dangerous grounds. They mobilized in desperate response to the contradictions between the dictatorship's promotion and destruction of families. On the one hand, the regime promoted the traditional family and women's role in the domestic sphere. On the other hand, it simultaneously broke all democratic traditions and shattered the peaceful family life it claimed to protect. Women, caught between this, were forced into action that neither they, nor the government, could have foreseen.

Chileans quickly realized that life had changed dramatically with the military coup on September 11, 1973, and that the economic and political changes imposed by the regime had directly and adversely affected women in myriad ways. The dictatorship terminated socialist President Salvador Allende's *Unidad Popular* left-of-center coalition government and its leaders soon instigated a rule of violence and human rights abuses. At first, the nation was ruled by the same four-man *junta* that led the coup, but by 1974, General Augusto Pinochet had seized control and built his personal dictatorship. In the short term, the military regime undertook numerous executions and "disappearances" of dissidents. Over time, it combined arrests and state terror with systematic economic and political restructuring. Censorship, violence, and the threat of torture affected all members of Chilean society and forced an estimated two hundred thousand into exile. Those who stayed were forced to live with the suppression of the democratic political process, and for many, with economic hardship as well. Neoliberal economic reforms led to a dramatic increase in poverty and income inequality, and this caused especially harsh effects on women of the lower sectors of society.

The military regime moved public rhetoric on the family and gendered responsibilities center stage and promoted the notion of natural, transhistorical characteristics of family life in service of the nation. First Lady Lucía Hiriart de Pinochet proclaimed that "the family is the

basic unit of society. It is the first school..., the mold in which the moral character of each citizen is formed, [so that] the Nation is truly the reflection of the hearth.”¹⁸ Governmental institutions, like the Women’s Secretariat, further strengthened the connection between “patriotic values and family values” and the fixed, unchanging notion of *family*. The Secretariat’s newsletter asserted that:

‘In its basic trait - the emotional, spiritual, and human bond between the couple and the children - the family has existed always. This proves that the family is an institution based on natural law. In other words, it [the family] corresponds to human nature itself, and is not an invention of specific eras or cultures.’¹⁹

Relying on the explanatory power of nature itself, the military discouraged citizens from questioning not only the natural role of the family, but also the natural role of women.

Reminding mothers and wives of their “proper” place in society, the First Lady encouraged women to excel in their natural, “inborn” traditional responsibilities and expected women “to serve others” in “self-surrender.” In this logic, motherhood was a woman’s primordial task, and her dignity depended on her acceptance of this reality, of her “superior destiny and her vocation to be a mother.”²⁰ Generous and self-abnegating, women, as mothers of the nation, had to collaborate with the government and provide support even if it meant personal sacrifice. Pinochet, in the image of the nation’s father, relied on the cooperation and self-sacrifice of patriotic mothers.

The testimony of a former agent of the security forces shows that the every-day violence and mass murder at the time stood in stark contrast to the image of domestic harmony the regime claimed to defend:

‘The first cadavers began to arrive at the clandestine cemetery in November of 1973, a few months after the military coup. The first executed prisoners were from the National Stadium.At first, due to the quantity of dead that were arriving, the graves were one meter deep. Later they gave orders that the graves be at least four meters deep.’²¹

Although leftist politicians and civilians were the first victims of the dictatorship's arrests, torture, and executions, state terror soon affected all members of Chilean society. Everyday life in Santiago was marked by curfews, censorship, arbitrary police violence, and the general absence of a democratic political process. An estimated 200,000 Chileans sought exile in the Americas and in Europe to escape military violence. The women who gathered to form the *Circulo* built on their own political consciousness and goals. They redefined and defended their rights in the midst of these developments.

Feminist sociologist María Elena Valenzuela eloquently described the politics of the military regime as the quintessential expression of patriarchy:

'The Junta, with a very clear sense of its interests, has understood that it must reinforce the traditional family, and the dependent role of women, which is reduced to that of mother. The dictatorship, which institutionalizes social inequality, is founded on inequality in the family.'²²

At the time of her outspoken critique in the 1980s, many women in Chile had already drawn conclusions of their own, and had begun to protest the dire consequences military rule had brought to their everyday lives. The dependent, apolitical role of mothers endorsed by the military stood in stark contrast to the new political positions women, as mothers, adopted in response to the extraordinary pressures they experienced under authoritarian rule.

Contrary to the regime's worship of the family as a pillar of social stability, many families could hardly function in an environment shaped by sudden military raids, curfews, and ongoing arrests. Women started to mobilize and, in the process of finding new voices as mothers, began to redefine the traditional connection between mother and home, that is, the private space. With arrests and disappearances of family members, women not only protested the military state, but also began to address domestic oppression in new ways: they recognized that the authoritarian and patriarchal practices used by the regime to control the public sphere

resembled those employed by men to control women in the private sphere.²³ The military regime created extraordinary demands on the family and on women, and women both chose and were forced to engage the public, political sphere. A political configuration of mother's roles in the public sphere, once reserved for men, emerged as a result.²⁴

Initially, women organized in response to political repression and economic need. After the coup, women rallied “in defense of life” to protect and save family members and relatives. The *Agrupación de Mujeres Democráticas* (Association of Democratic Women), for example, located missing family members in Santiago's National Stadium, now a concentration camp, and supported detainees who were released from prison. One woman recalled,

‘You never knew when someone was going to be released. Sometimes they would let someone out by 7 p.m. ...with no money and no way to get home. If they didn't get home before the 8 p.m. curfew, the police would arrest them again....So we organized the people with cars to be ready to pick up people at a moment's notice.’²⁵

Self-help organizations included consumer cooperatives, which consisted of over three hundred groups in Santiago alone.²⁶ Women in poor neighborhoods networked in communal kitchens, housing organizations, and cottage industries to overcome both their material poverty and feelings of fear and hopelessness. Teresa Valdes, feminist activist and scholar, remembers the long-term impact of the protests: “We have brought women massively into the political process...in defense of our concerns and priorities as women.”²⁷ Some women, the *Círculo* participants, supported these developments and added feminist goals to their struggles for survival and for human rights.

New Gendered Contexts and *Círculo* Initiatives: Feminist Pioneers in the Struggle for Rights

When *Círculo* organizers called for their first meeting in 1979, they were part of these emerging protests, and used their personal experiences and connection to promote change. The

twenty or so professional women who sponsored the first official meeting call were already connected either to a feminist tradition or to left-of-center politics. They formed the *Círculo* with the explicit goal to further the struggle against all forms of discrimination and oppression against women. As they set out to research and discuss the condition of women, they also envisioned their agenda as far beyond mere academics.²⁸ For them, their commitment was:

‘...political, since it proposes to eliminate a form of domination that is strongly embedded in the social, economic and cultural spheres. The Feminist commitment entails revolutionary changes because the elimination of sexual oppression compromises all forms of social relations. And it is necessarily democratic because only in conditions of equality between the sexes is it possible to create a social project that is just and libertarian.’²⁹

They declared that the resistance to dictatorship and to gender-based discrimination in domestic settings went hand in hand. Feminists Rosa Bravo, María Isabel Cruzat, Elena Serrano, and Rosalba Todaro, all among the founders of the *Círculo*, emphasized that “one is not born a woman, one learns to be a woman.” They set out to share this insight with fellow Chileans, ready to redefine and defend their rights.³⁰

In preparation for their first outreach efforts, *Círculo* organizers carefully selected the spaces that allowed them to overcome not only the difficulties of organizing under dictatorship, but also to break some of the barriers posed by the Chilean gender-system. They sought the protective umbrella of the church, and, specifically, the support of the *Vicaría de Solidaridad* (Vicariate of Solidarity) that helped support moral opposition to dictatorship, documented human rights abuses, and offered practical help where possible.³¹ In 1975, founder Raúl Cardinal Silva Henríquez added an academic branch, the *Academia de Humanismo Cristiano* (Academy of Christian Humanism, AHC), which provided relatively secure meeting places for human rights groups and study circles.³² Originally set up to offer academics a secure space for research and writing, the Academy, unofficially, offered human-rights and self-help groups the option to

organize and “hide in plain sight.”³³ The *Círculo* organizers laid out the research component of their initiatives and thereby helped the AHC’s willingness to consider the *Círculo*’s quest for affiliation.

In 1979, the women could formalize their institutional relationship with the AHC only after negotiating their responsibilities within the current class-gender system. Reminiscent of a society that assigned decision-making power to the male head of household and assessed a woman’s position in society through her connection to her family, *Círculo* founders were deemed trustworthy only after they submitted personal data on their families. When Academy representatives requested a list of names and occupations from the organizers, it was not until they identified themselves through their husbands that they were seen as acceptable affiliates.³⁴ In this manner, they secured ties to the Church, as manifestations of continuity and tradition, and facilitated the functioning of the *Círculo* for both organizers and attendees of the meetings. Those who initiated events could invite participants to a “safe haven” under the protection of the Catholic Church and could avoid getting official permission from the regime. Those who attended the meetings often found it easier to participate in Church-related events than in feminist meetings which could convey a tone of “radicalism” to family members.³⁵

The *Círculo*’s affiliation with the Church, as well as the location of their meetings at the AHC helped build cross-class relationships among women, and brought together women engaged in a range of initiatives, and from a spectrum of political affiliations. A woman-activist of the *Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos* (Association of Relatives of the Disappeared), had to confront the sudden loss of her family, and remembered that:

“When they were detained, my family, ...I went to the *Vicaria* to find support and protection, and there I met people I knew, wives of *compañeros*, ...and we helped each other, and I met more people from different political parties, and we got to know each other. In this period I was alone ...and when I came home at night ..I thought of them

[my family], where they might be, if they had been killed. ...and I spent most of the time crying. I felt bad, but every day I went to the Vicaria, and there, in conversations with other women, *compañeras*, I recovered.”³⁶

For this woman, and for many of the women she met, recovery meant taking the initiative. Women engaged in self-help and human rights initiatives and sought contacts to fellow women who all wanted to “do more” to find their family members and to save lives. Women’s mobilization was initially inspired by the responsibilities they assumed as mothers who had to secure the wellbeing of their families. Yet as they began to redefine the very notion of mothers’ responsibilities located in the domestic sphere, they ultimately expanded their traditional responsibilities in response to the threat posed by the military regime.

***Círculo* Activism: “Mothers’ Rights as Women’s Rights”**

In this environment, *Círculo* women were able not only to question motherhood as a naturalized identity, but also to address *women*, not *mothers*, first. In a document specially prepared for their initial outreach-gathering *Círculo* founders proposed a first re-assessment of the meanings of motherhood.

“We have learned that motherhood is the fundamental reason for our existence.... We have learned to love our children, not as independent and autonomous people but as extensions of ourselves, as if we existed, for the world, only to the extent that they exist....We have learned to use motherhood as a justification for what we do and what we don’t do...Some of us have learned to emancipate ourselves...We work, we read, we are up-to-date with work issues, we can have conversations, analyze, intellectualize....Nevertheless, we are between waves of guilt as a result of having abandoned the house and the children...”³⁷

In clear, straightforward language, the text introduced women, and mothers, to a critique of the exploitation of women’s reproductive labor and the contradictions of a capitalist, patriarchal society that domesticated women for the sake of the family yet refused to assign value to their labor. Motherhood, in this discourse, remained central to womanhood and remained the signifier of a collective identity in which non-motherhood represented a void. Nonetheless, the striking

novelty in *Círculo* initiatives lay in its presentation of unprecedented variations of womanhood that challenged motherhood as a fixed, essentialized identity and connected it to a new political praxis.

Círculo propositions did not mark a radical departure from a "motherist" agenda to a new brand of "radical feminism", but, instead, initiated a gradual process in which women found new responses to experiences of gender-based violence and combined those with the adoption of new obligations under the extreme conditions of military rule.³⁸ Discursive and practical ties to human rights mobilization helped raise awareness of gender-based violations of rights. Part of the *Círculo*'s organizational success lay in their effective connection between emerging human rights networks and feminist connections, thereby drawing on moral authority, family responsibilities, and an emerging understanding of women's individual rights. *Círculo* organizers made gender-specific concerns more prominent through their ties to other organizations: *ASUMA* (*Asociación para la Unidad de las Mujeres*), among others, brought together professional women to work with the Academy of Christian Humanism.³⁹ Other early women's groups like *CODEM* (*Comité de Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer*), and *MUDECHI* (*Mujeres de Chile*) relied on existing networks based on pre-coup political affiliations. Women also organized the first *Encuentros Nacionales*, meetings among women who shared personal experiences, addressed immediate problems, and discussed possible strategies of mobilization. *Encuentros*, organized by the *Departamento Femenino de la Coordinadora Nacional Sindical* (CNS), met in 1978, 1979, and 1980.⁴⁰

Círculo founders developed their activist course in response to specific developments within Chile, but they also learned from international exchanges, and especially from ties to international feminisms and transnational feminist themes. Many Chilean women, among them

Círculo pioneer Julieta Kirkwood, were active participants in the *Encuentros Feministas Latinomericano y del Caribe*, Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Meetings, first held in 1981 and reconvening every two years thereafter. The first *Encuentro*, convening in Bogotá, Colombia, marked a special moment for those who had lived with censorship and human rights violations under dictatorship. For some, like Kirkwood, Bogotá symbolized the recuperation of a space by and for women; it signified access to an international realm that was, until then, patrimony of patriarchal culture and closed to women.⁴¹ Participants began to question patriarchal institutions collectively, identifying violations of women's rights including reproductive rights. In agreement over the need to commemorate violence against women, they declared November 25 as the International Day of Nonviolence against women.⁴² Women exposed state-sponsored violence and family-sanctioned violence as tools that not only perpetuated male dominance, but also caused the ongoing violation of women's rights. Kirkwood and others translated the connection between the patriarchal history of violence against women and the violence against women exhibited by the military regime into what became Chilean women's rallying cry, "democracy in the nation and democracy at home."⁴³

Just as Chilean women gained knowledge at international gatherings, individual women's encounters abroad contributed to the re-shaping of Chilean feminist positioning and to the spread of a women's rights discourse in Chile. Some women learned of feminist struggles when they spent time in Europe or the United States. Isabel Gannon, a founding member of the *Círculo*, recalled:

"I first became aware of feminism in the United States, where I was living, in California, from 1967 to 1970. My experience with women's lib changed my life and was a most gratifying discovery. Once conscious of the issue...I was more than willing to join the *Círculo*, from its very beginning, always with the idea on my mind that creating a movement needed consciousness raising groups - which I proceeded to form as soon as it was possible."⁴⁴

Gannon drew on what she personally experienced while living abroad and she then shared it with other women upon returning home. She valued collective consciousness-raising efforts as a tool not only for individual growth, but also for the unity and strength of women's mobilization.

Other Chilean women returning from political exile in the late 1970s and early 1980s contributed to international network building and to the *Circulo* in different but equally important ways. They joined *Circulo* activities with an understanding of feminism and women's rights activism from their experiences abroad.⁴⁵ In formal and informal meetings, some showed allegiance to a feminist discourse and practice far beyond the process of awareness-raising a number of Chilean women had just begun. Nonetheless, the former exiles' assertiveness, their confidence, and their use of a feminist vocabulary all seemed to confirm and validate the path taken by Chilean women who had, only recently, still struggled with feminism as a term they saw as too provocative and shocking.⁴⁶ Those "foreign" voices conveyed a sense of confirmation not only on the legitimacy of feminist thought; they also affirmed that Chilean women had to find their own feminist positioning in the context of their histories and contemporary challenges.⁴⁷ In short: while transnational feminist themes strengthened feminist initiatives in Chile, Chilean feminist mobilization gained its strength from its connection to local experiences and national historical trajectories.

In Chile, *Circulo* organizers went on to share their realization that "[o]ne is not born a woman, one learns to be a woman."⁴⁸ The first enthusiastic meeting of 300 participants who had heeded the invitation to discuss the situation of women in Chile, confirmed the exceptional spirit of the organizers and the true grass-roots nature of the *Circulo*. One of the participants commented on her feeling of companionship and on the relief she felt when associating with others who understood her pain:

‘When I left I had the worst argument with my husband; so when I came to the meeting I felt very bad, guilty, that I had caused trouble again, and that my marriage would end. And the best thing was that the meeting started with everybody talking about how difficult it had been to get there, everybody had encountered similar problems: those who were married, with children, were feeling terribly guilty, felt that they had put the family second place. And, at the same time, their fears were connected to the coup and the dictatorship; well, for many people it meant that they had to shut the doors of the house, stay inside, and the family was the most important, trying to carry on in spite of the dangers outside.’ (Ema, from Santiago)⁴⁹

This participant described the guilt well familiar to all who had taken a more autonomous path and, thereby, challenged women’s dependent roles. Her comments represented a discursive continuity by voicing the same feelings organizers had written about in the first document prepared for the occasion. In addition, the voice of the women we know only as Ema offers insights into the nature of change inspired by *Círculo* meetings: the collective, shared sense of difficulties provided an alternative community for women, an alternative to the traditional community of the family that defined a set of behavioral rules for women. In this new community, women could make individual choices about their place in the negotiations that were breaking the constructed boundaries of an already rigid gender system further ossified by the military regime.

The organizers encouraged ongoing collective reflections on the condition of women in Chile,⁵⁰ and participants like Ema were invited to draw conclusions about their roles in family, community, and nation. *Círculo* women saw awareness-raising, *concientización*, as a crucial step towards feminist practice of human rights. Accordingly, discussion topics included women’s internalization of repressive roles, discrimination against women in the legal system and the labor force, as well as the lack of value assigned to women’s household work.⁵¹ The meeting was closed with an appeal for women to organize. The first barriers that had prevented women’s collective action had been broken.

Subsequent meetings gave further insights into a process in which women debated not only their experiences of gender oppression, but collectively rejected marked violations of *women's* rights.⁵² Asking ‘Where are the women who have disappeared?’⁵³ women spoke about the violence under dictatorship, and agreed about the need for collective action to defend their families. They provoked conclusions already familiar to some: men and women had become victims of state oppression. Disappearances and arrests of women were hardly compatible with the military’s ideological exaltation of femininity and its quintessential incarnation, motherhood.⁵⁴ Following the call that ended the first gathering, women set out to act in accordance with the new responsibilities they adopted as women, wives, and mothers in the setting of military dictatorship that obliged them to take charge: “We believe that it is our, and only our, responsibility to demand that women receive their rights. If we don’t fight for ourselves, no one will.”⁵⁵

Circulo founders envisioned several stages of research and activism, ranging from the allocation of a proper space for women to assemble, “raising awareness of women’s discrimination and oppression,” spreading of “new knowledge” on women’s roles, to supporting “the formation and development of other women’s groups.”⁵⁶ The six working groups *Circulo* organizers set up initially were geared towards these objectives: they promoted awareness-raising and legitimized the critical evaluation of subjects that generated the production of “new knowledge on women.”⁵⁷ In meetings on *women and work* participants examined different worlds of working women and different forms of labor discrimination. Workshops on *ideology and mass communication* critically examined the construction of the “modern woman” in the media and deconstructed the images of women that had not been their own making. Other working groups, *the legal condition of women; women and health; cultural and artistic diffusion;*

and *politics and history* all contributed new gendered approaches to women's roles and exposed dimensions of citizenship that illustrated institutionalized violations of women's rights.

The production of new knowledge remained an important part of *Círculo* activism, and their academics made significant contributions to a body of scholarship participants translated into feminist strategies. Economists Thelma Gálvez and Rosalba Todaro, for example, used oral histories of women workers to document their life experiences and to explore specific violations of the rights of the female labor force.⁵⁸ Other researchers contributed to their cause: the *Círculo* published studies of rural women by Ximena Valdés, who asked specific questions about the organizational challenges women confronted in the countryside and examined the difficulties of women's articulations of feminist positions in rural regions.⁵⁹ Published interviews, life histories, and women's testimonies strengthened the knowledge that women of different classes and regions had of each other. Conferences and workshops helped distribute new awareness and new interpretations of women's roles. At a 1982 Women's Conference at the Mapocho Cultural Center in Santiago, Julieta Kirkwood reminded the audience that research and writing were acts of reclaiming power, meant to challenge the roles men had assigned women in history:

“...We had to learn about all histories written about women through the pen and the lance of men. ...they spoke to us of prostitutes, of witches, of mother-saints, and of martyrs, ...never of real women, in real worlds.”

According to Kirkwood, women had to contest the simple categories they were expected to fit in a world that denied them agency. For her, research and the writing of history were political acts, and she encouraged women to seize interpretive power in their claim for citizenship rights equal to those of men. *Círculo* initiatives left marks: for many participants, the learning experiences in working groups and at conferences were formative steps on the path toward a feminist consciousness, and helped overcome initial reluctance to connect to a feminist cause.⁶⁰

Meeting participants recalled that women's interactions at small workshops were stepping stones to overcome their traditional suspicions of feminism. One woman remembered that "nobody wanted to call herself a feminist, because here the word caused a shock, we, ourselves were shocked."⁶¹ The exchange among women created a new learning environment and helped overcome some of the old doubts:

"I remember some of the small meetings where we spoke about different topics, where each participant presented a theme, and where we talked about them. I spoke about adolescents who ended up pregnant. Others talked of other things, related to what they did. That's how we kept learning from each other."⁶²

Meetings ranged from small group discussions among twelve to fifteen women, to large conferences whose attendance ranged from about one hundred to two hundred participants. *Circulo* members added in-depth studies of the condition of women, and offered self-awareness workshops that were open to all women. A participant testified to some of the specific outcomes these gatherings:

"I was not one of the founders of the *Circulo*, but was one of those who started participating in their workshops...and after that, with some other women, we set up a theatre group to dramatize the questions [that were posed],...and we did that among ourselves, for us, and for yet other groups of women; we were super-bad, but it was enjoyable...."⁶³

While it is difficult to measure and document new understandings of *feminisms* inspired by the *Circulo's* awareness-raising campaigns, this confirmation of women's ongoing activism that addressed "the condition of women in Chile" confirmed the success of their outreach efforts and the spread of women's critical analysis of a gender-system that limited their rights.

Circulo participants reevaluated their historical roles as women, not mothers, first, and simultaneously reexamined the characteristics of motherhood. When they first discussed what they loosely called "the situation of women in Chile" in May 1979, they also expressed specific concern over questions of women's "...right to freely and responsibly choose, with adequate

birth control information, the number of children [they would have].” Focus meetings and workshops added depth to a changed discourse on the meanings of motherhood. On September 29, 1980, the *Círculo* arranged a gathering on “Population Policies and Birth Control.”⁶⁴ First, economists, physicians, a priest, and selected *Círculo* women presented multiple views on topics like overpopulation and birth control, family planning methodologies, and the Church’s position on responsible parenthood. The second part of the meeting took shape in the spirit of collaboration and discussion. Presenters invited questions and viewpoints from the audience, aimed at finding a consensus not of specialists’ views, but rather those of local women on the topic of motherhood and reproduction.

The objective of voluntary motherhood stood out as a theme that embodied the links women established between old traditions and new rights. Participants in the audience agreed on the need to defend women’s liberation from prescribed motherhood, thereby declaring a new element of choice a *woman’s right*. While theoretical considerations about the meaning of choice took up one part of the discussion, conclusions focused on practical matters. Participants identified several obstacles to voluntary motherhood. They pointed out that women had limited access to information about family planning and to contraceptive devices. They identified cultural prejudice and the weight of traditional norms in the seemingly inseparable connection between sexuality and reproduction—a link that left little space for women’s sexuality. And they exposed that women who would rely on family planning might likely be condemned as sexual libertines, as promiscuous. Participants concluded that a recognition of women’s rights of equal citizenship with men required that their choices regarding birth control be legally and culturally respected.

Diverse topics in subsequent single-issue workshops and open-enrollment courses allowed organizers to provide spaces for in-depth discussions of the multiple dimensions of womanhood, such as experiences of mothers, workers, different generations of women, and women of different class backgrounds.⁶⁵ Ranging from workshops on “the oppression of women” to forums on “women’s history and women’s memory,” women communicated the nature of their oppression in different “languages,” the latter relying on a range of vocabulary and cultural references familiar to women of different classes and educational levels. The *Círculo*’s own theatre group contributed inventive outreach efforts. It worked with women from shantytowns in creative and participatory sessions to learn from poor women how they viewed their problems.⁶⁶ Participants at all levels of *Círculo*-inspired events sometimes disagreed about appropriate mobilization strategies for women’s rights and some feminist leaders were accused of being elitist and promoting a “professional feminism” removed from the political realities of society. What some critiqued as detached, however, still provided a new autonomous space in which women could make individual decisions protected by the new collective identity of womanhood.

In 1983, a public disagreement between *Círculo* initiatives and the Catholic Church led to a break with Academy. Long-standing tension between the *Círculo* women and the Academy were fueled by the Church’s critique of women’s workshops on sexuality, their discussions on the problem of abortion, and their outspoken position on women’s rights.⁶⁷ When *Círculo* members supported a demand for the right to divorce, at the time still illegal in Chile, they touched a highly sensitive subject matter that both contradicted the view of the Church and broke a government-sanctioned silence on the matter. Kirkwood’s 1982 article in the *Círculo*’s

journal, “Divorce, another issue Adjourned” set in motion a chain of reactions that led to the *Círculo*’s expulsion from the Academy.⁶⁸

In the aftermath of their departure from the AHC, the *Círculo* broke up in two independent organizations as participants re-assessed their agenda according to new priorities. Some women were committed to keeping a close activist connection to grassroots feminists and joined in the *Casa de la Mujer La Morada*, The Woman’s House of Dwelling. The second group proposed to focus on feminist research and the ongoing production of new knowledge on women’s lives and founded the *Centro de Estudios de la Mujer*, Women’s Studies Center (CEM). Research and activist interests overlapped and women continued to work together for specific goals: to end dictatorship and to support a democratic government defending the citizenship rights of both women and men.⁶⁹

Women’s Resistance and the Roots of Re-Democratization

The year 1983 also marked the beginning of “Las Protestas,” the onset of widespread public protests against dictatorship led by women. The legacy of the *Círculo* was present in their rallying-cry for “*democracia en el país y en la casa*,”⁷⁰ democracy in the country and in the home, attesting to substantial changes women had made for the mainstreaming of hitherto excluded gendered demands for change. In the process of their construction of claims as interventions in the national political struggle and, simultaneously, as interventions for individual rights, women’s collective protests significantly contributed to the decline of military power. Women’s participation was instrumental in the preparation of the 1988 plebiscite proposed by General Pinochet to secure the longevity of his regime. Chileans voted NO or YES to the question of ongoing support for the military. The victory of the NO campaign was a first official step towards democratic elections in 1990. In late 1988 and the first months of 1989, a massive

campaign guided by the motto “*Soy Mujer, Tengo Derechos*” – “I am a woman, I have rights” further expressed the lasting legacies of women’s rights mobilization.⁷¹ Women, as political actors who made demands, had come to stay.

Conclusion:

Today, *Círculo* legacies can be found in the ongoing dialogue between political leaders and women’s groups, in women’s voices that continually question the gendered nature of Chilean democracy and demand full citizenship rights for women and men. In 1991, for example, the persistent demands of feminists achieved the establishment of the National Office for Women's Affairs (*Servicio Nacional de la Mujer, SERNAM*).⁷² SERNAM represented a new step towards incorporating a gender perspective into public policy and consolidating the principle of Chilean women’s equality. An entanglement between lasting legacies of authoritarianism and the struggle for gender equity persists – and women’s rights as human rights are often given greater or lesser attention depending on their match with state interests and the ongoing process of re-democratization.⁷³ Nonetheless, women with a clear sense of rights have secured a place for gender-based concerns at the government level and in the public discourse of a nation in the process of re-democratization. Due to local women’s mobilization, the recognition of the universal legitimacy of women's human rights claims remains a significant part of the ongoing negotiations and compromises of re-democratization. *Círculo* activists have, indeed, increased women’s interpretive power and assigned a new role to *womanhood*, opening space for a re-configuration of “Mothers’ Rights as Human Rights” to “Women’s Rights.”

Chileans elected their first female president in 2006, and subsequently participated in a process of remarkable increase of women’s formal political inclusion. President Michelle Bachelet ran as a Socialist Party candidate, promised “change with continuity,” and remained

outspoken about her goals of addressing the needs of women and the poor.⁷⁴ Some of her political weight stemmed from real and symbolic connections to military rule, from her personal experience of prison, torture, and exile, and from the dictatorship's murder of her father. Today, President Bachelet can claim credit for an increase in women's access to political positions that has risen from a slow start to a remarkable high in some sectors of government. Her policies led to an upsurge in women's access to the executive and legislative branches of government. While only 6.5 percent of senators and 5.8 percent of deputies were women between 1990 and 1994,⁷⁵ Bachelet elevated the presence of women in Parliament to 15 percent (slightly below the Latin American average) and female senators to 50 percent (the highest percentage in Latin America).⁷⁶

Chilean feminists are well aware of the many challenges that lie ahead, as an increase in formal political inclusion can hardly end century-old cultures of gender-based discrimination overnight. National and transnational advocacy networks are part of their activist strategies in the twenty-first century. On the national level, feminist activists showed that in 2006, 17 percent of all pregnancies occurred among women between fifteen and nineteen years of age.⁷⁷ In the same year, feminists reported that fifty-two women were killed by husbands or boyfriends in the first ten months of 2006 alone, and have alerted the public to the lack of adequate attention authorities have paid to the causes of teenage pregnancies and to domestic violence.⁷⁸ As a result, they have successfully lobbied, for example, for educational campaigns and legal measures against domestic violence and for healthcare and awareness-raising initiatives to address the lasting problem of teenage pregnancies.

Transnational advocacy networks include regional and world-wide feminist mobilization. Feminists from Chile have, for example, long been actively engaged in the global conferences on

women's rights first initiated with the 1975 Mexico Conference set up by the United Nations, and were founding members of such global networks as Isis International.⁷⁹ They have also become active participants in regional initiatives to monitor the state of gender equity in Latin America through the Latin American Index of Fulfilled Commitment (IFC). As part of the IFC social watch, they gather statistics on women's political participation and access to power, on economic autonomy and poverty, and on women's health and reproductive rights.⁸⁰

We have to continue to pay attention to women's ongoing strategies of mobilizing for gender equity, and to their successes in translating norms of "women's rights as human rights" into local practice. While women who mobilize for gender equity and human rights no longer have to fear the violence of dictatorship, they still carry the burden of its legacies. Chilean writer and actor Malucha Pinto Solari articulates the feelings of many fellow-women activists when she remembers, "The world that we inherited from the dictatorship has not yet died a certain death.... The mark it left is a tattoo on the national soul; it makes me cry when I see its image, when I watch how we built an intangible country, when I listen to words in the wind, when I meet people with whom I shared the hard years, and when we remember who we were back then."⁸¹

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¹R. Bravo, M. Cruzat, E. Serrano, R. Todaro, 'Y así va creciendo...el feminismo en Chile' in Isis International, *Movimiento feminista en América Latina y el Caribe: balance y perspectivas*, (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Isis Internacional de las Mujeres, 1986), 26.

²Also referred to as *Círculo de Estudios de la Condición de la Mujer*. Here, I use the more frequent references of *Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer*, or *Círculo*.

³Bravo et al., n. 1 above.

⁴Scholars, politicians, and activists alike refer to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as a major step on the path towards a global consensus of ‘women’s rights as human rights.’ The UN General Assembly adopted CEDAW in 1979. For many, it acquired the meaning of “an international bill of rights for women.” See <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>. For an overview see R. Cook and V. Oosterveld, “A Select Bibliography of Women's Human Rights,” *American University Law Review* 44 (1995):1429-1471; See C. Bunch, “Women's Rights as Human Rights: Toward a Re-Vision of Human Rights,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 12/4 (1990): 486-498 for an encouragement to take seriously the political and practical implications that go beyond the *rhetoric* of ‘women’s rights as human rights’.

⁵On human rights mobilization, see, for example, M. Loveman, “High-Risk Collective Action: Defending Human Rights in Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina,” *American Journal of Sociology* 104/2 (1998): 477-525; for the influence of human rights activism, including international initiatives, see D. Hawkins, *International Human Rights and Authoritarian Rule in Chile* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

⁶For examples of some of the difficulties of translating international norms into local practice in many parts of the world, see, for example, C. MacKinnon. *Are Women Human?: And Other International Dialogues*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006; and S. Merry. *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁷Historian Asunción Lavrin argues that “[f]eminism oriented toward motherhood was more than a strategy to win favorable legislation, it was an essential component of their cultural heritage: a tune that feminists not only knew how to play but wished to play.” See Asunción Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, 1890-1940* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 38.

⁸Karen Mead, “Beneficent Maternalism: Argentine Motherhood in Comparative Perspective, 1880-1920,” *Journal of Women's History* 12/3 (2000):120.

⁹Ericka Kim Verba, *Catholic Feminism and the Social Question in Chile, 1910-1917: The Liga De Damas Chilenas* (Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 2003); See also Elizabeth Q. Hutchison, “Señoras y Señoritas: Catholic Women Defend the *Hijas de Familia*,” chap. 6 in *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex: Gender, Labor, and Politics in Urban Chile, 1900-1930* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 171-197.

¹⁰See See Ericka Kim Verba, “The Círculo de Lectura de Señoras [Ladies’ Reading Circle] and the Club de Señoras [Ladies’ Club] of Santiago, Chile,” *Journal of Women’s History* 7/3 (Fall 95): 6-33.

¹¹Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change*, 211-216.

¹²Lavrin makes this point about Southern Cone feminists in *Women, Feminism, and Social Change*, 48.

¹³M. Marx Ferree and A. Mari Tripp, *Global Feminism: Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 57-58; Historian Francesca Miller has first drawn attention to the contributions of Latin American women to internationalist movements, especially as informal initiatives developed into organized, effective networks of Pan-Americanism between 1890 and the creation of the Inter-American Commission of Women in 1928. See F. Miller, “The International Relations of Women of the Americas, 1890–1928,” *The Americas* 43/2 (October 1986): 171–82.

¹⁴For the nature of their engagement and quests for married women’s rights, also see United States. *World Court, Hearings ... Relative to Executive A (71st Congress), Protocols Concerning Adherence of the United States to the Court of International Justice* (Washington: United States Government, 1932), 29-58.

¹⁵See M. Vergara, *Memorias de una mujer irreverente* (Santiago de Chile: Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, 1974), 174. Vergara also proposes voluntary motherhood.

¹⁶For this process, but also for tensions within the MEMCh and feminists’ changing tools, see Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures & the State in Chile, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), especially her discussion of

feminists, socialists, and citizenship, pp.95-122; For the most extensive study of the MEMCh, see Corinne Antezana-Pernet, "Mobilizing Women in the Popular Front Era: Feminism, Class, and Politics in the Movimiento Pro-Emancipación de la Mujer Chilena (MEMCH), 1935-1950" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Irvine, 1996).

¹⁷J. Kirkwood, *Ser política en Chile: los nudos de la sabiduría feminista* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 1990), 10-11, as cited in M. Agosin, 'Visions and Transgressions: Some Notes on the Writing of Julieta Kirkwood,' in D. Meyer (ed.), *Reinterpreting the Spanish American Essay Women Writers of the 19th and 20th Centuries*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 207-214 at 208.

¹⁸Secretaría Nacional de la Mujer, *Valores patrios y valores familiares: Cuadernos de Difusión no. 7* (Santiago, Chile: Secretaría Nacional de la Mujer, 1982), 11.

¹⁹Ibid., 21.

²⁰Ibid., 24.

²¹As cited in M. Spooner, *Soldiers in a Narrow Land: The Pinochet Regime in Chile* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 49.

²²M. Valenzuela, 'El fundamento de la dominación patriarcal en Chile,' paper presented at the Second Chilean Sociology Congress, August 1986, Santiago, Chile, as cited in M. Ríos Tobar, "'Feminism is Socialism, Liberty and Much More': Second-Wave Chilean Feminism and its Contentious Relationship with Socialism," *Journal of Women's History* 15/3 (2003):130/n 6.

²³J. Kirkwood, *Ser política en Chile* (Santiago: FLACSO, 1986), 180.

²⁴N. Richard, *Residuos y metáforas. Ensayos de crítica cultural sobre el Chile de la Transición* (Santiago, Cuarto Propio, 1998), 201, as discussed in M. Green, 'Diamela Eltit: A Gendered Politics of Writing,' *Cardiff University New Readings* 6 (December 5, 2000)

<http://www.cf.ac.uk/euros/newreadings/volume6/greenm.html#14>

²⁵As cited by L. Baldez, *Why Women Protest: Women's Movements in Chile* (New York: Cambridge, 2002), 129.

²⁶L. Razeto, *Las Organizaciones económicas populares la experiencia de las nuevas organizaciones económicas populares en Chile: situación y perspectivas* (Santiago: Programa de Economía del Trabajo, Academia de Humanismo Cristiano, Arzobispado de Santiago, 1983).

²⁷As cited in T. Kaplan, *Taking Back the Streets Women, Youth, and Direct Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 91-2.

²⁸Bravo et al., n. 1 above, 26.

²⁹Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer, "Reflexiones sobre la práctica feminista" paper presented at the III Encounter for Popular Education, Santiago, June 1983, as cited in Marcela Ríos Tobar, "'Feminism is Socialism, Liberty and Much More' Second-Wave Chilean Feminism and its Contentious Relationship with Socialism," *Journal of Women's History* 15/3 (2003) 129-134.

³⁰This quote well reflects the spirit of the *Círculo's* endeavors – and gives insight into the personal histories of *Círculo* leaders. Rosa Bravo, María Isabel Cruzat, Elena Serrano, Rosalba Todaro, all co-founders of the *Círculo*, describe this realization as one that was, for them, not only the significant outcome of their own analytical reflections, but also a revealing discovery they wanted to share with other women. See Bravo et al., n. 1 above, 26.

³¹On the Vicariate of Solidarity, also see H. Frühling, 'Resistance to Fear in Chile: the Experience of the Vicaria de la Solidaridad,' in J. Corradi, P. Weiss Fagen, and M. Garretón Merino (eds.), *Fear at the Edge: State Terror and Resistance in Latin America*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 121-141. For the role of the Church and moral resistance, see P. Lowden, *Moral Opposition to Authoritarian Rule in Chile, 1973-90* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

³²Academia de Humanismo Cristiano (sin fecha): *Folleto de difusión*, Santiago de Chile.

³³See my reference "hidden in plain sight" in the introduction.

³⁴P. Chuchryk, "Protest, Politics and Personal Life: the Emergence of Feminism in a Military Dictatorship, Chile, 1973-1983" (PhD diss., York University, Toronto, 1984), 360-61, ns 28 and 29.

³⁵Ford Foundation grants significantly eased the negotiations between the Academy and *Círculo* Women. While it is hard to conclude that Ford-Foundation support was indispensable to close the agreement, evidence of support by an international foundation helped feminist groups. See Cornelia Butler Flora, personal correspondence, January 2007.

³⁶E. Gaviola, E. Largo, and S. Palestro, *Una historia necesaria: Mujeres en Chile, 1973-1990* (Santiago: Aki & Aora, Ltd., 1994), 69.

³⁷C. Adriasola, M. Aguirre, M. Cruzat, M. Lago, and E. Serrano, *Algunas ideas respecto a la condición de la mujer* (Santiago, Chile: Academia de Humanismo Cristiano, 1979), 4-6.

³⁸Chilean women who mobilized under dictatorship shared characteristics with motherist groups whose action was “predicated upon overcoming the private/public divide” and made mothers central to the public stage. See S. Radcliffe and S. Westwood (eds.), *‘ViVa’: Women and Popular Protest in Latin America* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 18.

³⁹ASUMA women were instrumental in founding the *Círculo*.

⁴⁰See E. Gaviola, E. Largo, and S. Palestro, “Si la mujer no está, la democracia no va,” *Proposiciones* 21 (1992): 81-2. *Círculo* members were active participants of the meetings – as were women from different spheres of society. See “Seminario ‘Las Mujeres y el Feminismo,’” in J. Kirkwood and S. Montecino Aguirre, *Feminarios* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Documentas, 1987), 138-39.

⁴¹J. Kirkwood, *Ser Política en Chile: los nudos de la sabiduría feminista*, 2nd ed. (Santiago: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 1990), 233-249; Marysa Navarro, “El primer encuentro feminista de Latinoamérica y el Caribe,” in *Sociedad, Subordinación y Feminismo*, ed. Magdalena Leon, (Bogotá, Colombia: Asociación Colombiana para el estudio de la población, 1982), 261-267.

⁴²“Testimonio,” *Boletín Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer* 6 (Septiembre-October 1981): 5.

⁴³For a detailed account on women’s re-conceptualization of democracy, see A. Frohmann and T. Valdés, “*Democracy in the Country and in the ‘Home’: The Women’s Movement in Chile*, Serie Estudios Sociales No. 55 (Santiago: FLACSO, 1993).

⁴⁴Isabel Gannon, personal communication with the author, February 2007.

⁴⁵Cornelia Butler Flora, *Socialist Feminism in Latin America: Women in International Development, Working Paper No.14* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, Office of Women in International Development, 1982), 4.

⁴⁶E. Gaviola, E. Largo, and S. Palestro, *Una historia necesaria: Mujeres en Chile, 1973-1990* (Santiago: Aki & Aora, Ltd., 1994), 96.

⁴⁷Gaviola, Largo, and Palestro, *Una historia necesaria*, 96.

⁴⁸Bravo et al., n. 1 above.

⁴⁹(Ema, de Santiago),” as quoted in E. Gaviola, E. Largo, and S. Palestro, ““Si la mujer no está, la democracia no va,”” *Proposiciones* 21 (1992): 81.

⁵⁰See C. Adriasola, M. Aguirre, M. Cruzat, M. Lago, and E. Serrano, *Algunas ideas respecto a la condición de la mujer* (Santiago, Chile: Academia de Humanismo Cristiano, 1979). Also see P. Chuchryk, “Protest, Politics and Personal Life: the Emergence of Feminism in a Military Dictatorship, Chile, 1973-1983” (PhD diss., York University, Toronto, 1984), 280.

⁵¹See A. Ipsen, *The Women’s Movement in Chile, From Grassroots to Nongovernmental Organization: A Case Study of La Casa de La Mujer, La Morada* (MA Thesis, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, July 2000) at 96-7; also see Bravo et al., n. 1 above.

⁵²P. Crispi (ed.), *Tejiendo Rebeldías: escritos feministas de Julieta Kirkwood* (Santiago: CEM La Morada, 1987); J. Kirkwood and S. Montecino Aguirre, *Feminarios* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Documentas, 1987).

⁵³See C. Adriasola, M. Aguirre, M. Cruzat, M. Lago, and E. Serrano, *Algunas ideas respecto a la condición de la mujer* (Santiago, Chile: Academia de Humanismo Cristiano, 1979), 14.

⁵⁴See X. Bunster-Burotto, “Surviving Beyond Fear: Women and Torture in Latin America,” in M. Davies (ed.) *Women and Violence* (New York: Zed Books, 1994) for specific references to women and torture.

⁵⁵See C. Adriasola, M. Aguirre, M. Cruzat, M. Lago, and E. Serrano, *Algunas ideas respecto a la condición de la mujer* (Santiago, Chile: Academia de Humanismo Cristiano, 1979), 14.

⁵⁶For list of objectives see Gaviola, Largo, and Palestro, *Una historia necesaria*, 97-98.

⁵⁷Gaviola, Largo, and Palestro, *Una historia necesaria*, 98.

⁵⁸See, for example. R. Todaro and T. Gálvez, *Yo trabajo así...en casa particular* (Santiago: Ediciones CEM, 1985). For their projects specifically related to domestic labor and inspired by this research see the *Círculo's* publication of December 1981, *Boletín Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer No.7*, dedicated to the subject matter.

⁵⁹X. Valdés, *Experiencias de trabajo con mujeres del campo: PEMCI, 1982-1983* (Santiago, Chile: PEMCI and Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer, 1983).

⁶⁰For reference to working groups see Cornelia Butler Flora, "Socialist Feminism in Latin America," *Women in International Development, Working Paper No.14* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, Office of Women in International Development, 1982), 21.

⁶¹Gaviola, Largo, and Palestro, *Una historia necesaria*, 98-99.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴For transcripts of the presentations and questions by the audience recorded at the meeting see Círculo de Estudios de la Condición de la Mujer, *Políticas de Población y Control de la Natalidad* (Academia de Humanismo Cristiano, Santiago, 1980).

⁶⁵Patricia Chuchryk, who participated in some of the activities, noted the participation of a large number of *pobladoras*. See Chuchryk, "Protest, Politics and Personal Life: the Emergence of Feminism in a Military Dictatorship, Chile, 1973-1983" (PhD diss., York University, Toronto, 1984), 287.

⁶⁶P. Chuchryk, *Protest, Politics and Personal Life: the emergence of feminism in a military dictatorship, Chile, 1973-1983* (PhD diss., York University, Toronto, 1984), 283-84.

⁶⁷For reference to the content of some of the workshops, see Amparo Claro, 'Sexualidad: un taller controvertido,' (Enero 1983) *Boletín Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer No.11* at 4-6.

⁶⁸See J. Kirkwood, 'El Divorcio: también en receso?' (Septiembre 1982) *Boletín Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer N. 10*, at 1; on the tensions with the Church, see also C. Tompkins and D. Foster (eds.), *Notable Twentieth-Century Latin American Women: A Biographical Dictionary* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2001), 156-57.

⁶⁹For a history of these developments, see L. Bravo, E. Largo, and M. Pisano, 'Nuestra historia reciente,' in (1988) *Cuadernos de La Morada, Centro de análisis y difusión de la mujer* at 1-9.

⁷⁰See Frohmann at al., n. 33 above.

⁷¹Multiple manifestations of women's demands pre-ceded this campaign and helped prepare for its unprecedented scale. For detailed studies on women's large-scale mobilization, see P. Chuchryk, *Protest, Politics and Personal Life: the emergence of feminism in a military dictatorship, Chile, 1973-1983* (PhD diss., York University, Toronto, 1984), and P. Chuchryk, 'From Dictatorship to Democracy: The Women's Movement in Chile', in J. S. Jaquette (ed.), *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Feminism and the Transition to Democracy* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 65-107; and L. Baldez, *Why Women Protest: Women's Movements in Chile* (New York: Cambridge, 2002).

⁷²In December 1988, women from political parties, feminist groups, and other women's organizations founded the *Concertación Nacional de Mujeres por la Democracia* (National Coalition of Women for Democracy), an autonomous political coalition aimed at shaping the political direction of the Coalition of Parties for Democracy, the *Concertación*. Their political strategies were not shared by all women's groups, and provoked much criticism from feminists who insisted on the importance of changes in abortion and divorce legislation. Georgina Waylen, "Women's Movements, the State, and Democratization in Chile: the Establishment of SERNAM," in *Getting Institutions Right for Women in Development*, ed. Anne Marie Goetz (London: Zed Books, 1997), 90-103. For a reference to the nature of policy propositions, see Sonia Montecino Aguirre and Josefina Rossetti, *Tramas para un nuevo destino propuestas de la Concertación de Mujeres por la Democracia* (n.p: 1990).

⁷³For different views on the role of SERNAM see M. Blofield and L. Haas, “Defining a Democracy: Reforming the Laws on Women's Rights in Chile, 1990–2002,” *Latin American Politics & Society* 47/3 (2005):35-68, and S. Franceschet, *Women and Politics in Chile* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2005), 111-14.

⁷⁴See Larry Rother, “A Leader Making Peace With Chile's Past,” *New York Times*, 16 January 2006; Larry Rother, “Chile Inaugurates First Woman to Serve as Its President,” *New York Times*, 12 March 2006.

⁷⁵See Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, “Concluding Observations: Chile,” U.N. Doc. A/50/38, paras. 105-159 (1995). <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/cedaw/cedaw-chile.htm>

⁷⁶About 18% of the seats of national legislatures in Latin America and the Caribbean were held by women; see Pamela Marie Paxton and Melanie M. Hughes, *Women, Politics, and Power: A Global Perspective* (Los Angeles: Pine Forge Press, 2007), 228-229.

⁷⁷See Jen Stange, “Chile and Emergency Contraception” Planned Parenthood: December 20, 2006, available at: <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/news-articles-press/politics-policy-issues/birth-control-access-prevention/chile-ec-11184.htm>

⁷⁸Matt Malinowski, “Thousands of Chileans to March Against Femicide,” *Women's eNews* (11/04/07) <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm?aid=3372> .

⁷⁹An analysis of Chilean women’s activism in international feminist organization goes beyond the space of this analysis— as does a study of the invaluable contributions by feminists in exile. For information, see some of the many publications in the Bulletin of the Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Network, Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Transnacionales, and Fempress (Organization). *Mujer/fempress*. Santiago, Chile; Isis International. *Mujeres en acción*. Rome, Italy: Isis Internacional, etc.

⁸⁰Teresa Valdés, Ana María Muñoz B., and Alina Donoso O., *1995-2003--Have Women Progressed? Latin American Index of Fulfilled Commitment* (Santiago de Chile: FLACSO, 2005).

⁸¹Malucha Pinto Solari, *Cartas de la memoria: patrimonio epistolar de una generación de mujeres Chilenas* (Santiago de Chile:Catalonia, 2007), 233.