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NEGOTIATING GENDERED DISCOURSES: MICHELLE BACHELET AND CRISTINA FERNÁNDEZ DE KIRCHNER

Jane L. Christie

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Spanish, The University of Auckland, 2012
ABSTRACT

Political observers have said that the presidential campaigns of Michelle Bachelet and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, in Chile and Argentina, during the years 2005 and 2007, respectively, used a rhetoric of “newness.” The first women of these countries to successfully run for the highest office were presented as the “new faces of democracy” – according to some – based exclusively on the biological fact that they are women. Yet a focus on this single characteristic also generated heavily gendered criticisms of these two campaigns and their mandates. Paradoxically, others argued that gender was not a determining factor in their electoral success. Rather than attempting to resolve this contradiction, this thesis asks how “the gender factor” is negotiated when women run for high political office.

To respond to this question, this study looks at how Bachelet and Fernández positioned themselves in relation to the numerous women-led social movements that have “gender-sensitised” the political context. Using in-depth critical discourse analysis from a feminist perspective to problematise these relationships, I reveal the ways in which their campaign platforms drew on existing sources of female authority when negotiating complicated ideological debates about human rights, the economy, and women’s rights. I place a particular emphasis on two women-led organisations, active since the mid-1970s, which have developed a political leadership model unique to “women”: the Madres de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos in Chile.

I propose that the re-appropriation of this “maternal legacy” of discourses created by women publicly leading the defence of human rights and more recently socio-economic rights entailed both gains and sacrifices. While this process enabled Bachelet and Fernández to avoid association with socialist discourses, severely repressed under dictatorship; to differentiate themselves from neoliberal experts, largely discredited after Argentina’s 2001 crisis; and to distance themselves from feminist traditions, deemed to represent the interests of the few, it also limited the degree to which either of these candidates could explicitly champion women’s rights. Bachelet and Fernández did respond to some feminist demands by addressing women’s “practical interests.” However, I demonstrate that they strategically avoided one particular demand: women’s corporal right to full autonomy over their bodies and life projects.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For inspiring this life project, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my “maternal legacies.” First and foremost, I am indebted to my mother, Lesley Christie, my aunties Patsy Dutch and Jennifer Garrett, and my great aunty Dorothy Hueston, for defying the patriarchal obstacles of their time to become university women. In that same vein, I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Kathryn Lehman and Dr. Walescka Pino-Ojeda, and my advisor Dr. Jennifer Curtin for their generous support, endless conversations, and positive encouragement.

I am extremely grateful to the women NGO leaders, feminist politicians, and academics working in the field of women-in-politics for generously providing me with their experience of politics and social life in Chile and Argentina, despite their busy schedules. In particular, I am beholden to the Madres Hebe de Bonafini, Juana de Pargament and AFDD leader Gabriela Zuñiga for sharing with me their experiential knowledge. I was especially moved during my interview with “Juanita,” who possessed the most astounding sense of hermandad, made manifest by the fact that at the age of 95, she tirelessly offered to extend our interview beyond the hour that I had originally requested. I am in awe.

My genuine thanks also go to my colleagues at the School of European Languages and Literatures at The University of Auckland, particularly to Marisol Rodríguez Rodríguez and Gwyn Fox for their tireless energy, mentorship, and friendship. I am thankful to my uncle Ross Garrett for showing me the way through this intellectual journey. And, I am eternamente agradecida to my partner in life Pablo Toro Gardiazabal for his constant companionship and for keeping me grounded during the harrowing final stages of this project.

Finally, thanks to the dedicated staff at The University of Auckland for providing all of the facilities and support necessary in this long-term project and for the TEC Bright Future Scheme and the University of Auckland for the financial assistance offered to me in the form of annual stipends, fee payments, research and travel grants, and a completion award.
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<th>Abbr.</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AFDD</td>
<td>Agrupación de Familiares de Desaparecidos-Detenidos (Chile)</td>
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<td>ANAMURI</td>
<td>Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Rurales e Indígenas (Chile)</td>
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<td>AUH</td>
<td>Asignación Universal por Hijo de la ANSES (Argentina)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<td>CONADEP</td>
<td>Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas (Chile)</td>
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<td>CNI</td>
<td>Central Nacional de Informaciones (Chile)</td>
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<td>CDA</td>
<td>National Information Centre</td>
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<td>ECLAC</td>
<td>United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
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<td>ELA</td>
<td>Equipo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Género (Argentina)</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>HRO</td>
<td>Human Rights Organisation</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>INDEC</td>
<td>Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (Argentina)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEMCh</td>
<td>Movimiento Pro-Emancipación de Mujeres de Chile</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOMUPO</td>
<td>Movimiento de Mujeres Populares (Chile)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>OEP</td>
<td>Organizaciones Económicas Populares (Chile)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDC</td>
<td>Partido Demócrata Cristiano (Chile)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPD</td>
<td>Partido por la Democracia (Chile)</td>
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<td>PS</td>
<td>Partido Socialista (Chile)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RN</td>
<td>Renovación Nacional (Chile)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SERNAM</td>
<td>Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (Chile)</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDI</td>
<td>Unión Demócrata Independiente (Chile)</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNIFEM</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPMPM</td>
<td>Universidad Popular Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Argentina)</td>
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Political observers have said that the presidential campaigns of Michelle Bachelet and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, in Chile and Argentina, in 2005 and 2007, respectively, used a rhetoric of “newness” (Fernández Ramil 2009; Maffía 2009). The first women of these countries to successfully run for the highest office were presented as the “new faces of democracy”, and some argue that their uniqueness was based exclusively on the biological fact that they are women. Yet a focus on this single characteristic also generated heavily gendered criticisms of these two campaigns and their mandates. Throughout 2007, for example, Fernández’ candidacy was marked by negative speculation about her having been nominated by “el dedo de Kirchner” (Kirchner’s pointing), and she seemed to be rapidly losing her well-earned reputation as a national politician to projections of her marital status as “the president’s wife.” In the same year, while halfway through her presidential mandate, Bachelet faced severe criticism of her leadership style: she was accused of lacking leadership capacity during the 2006 student protests, her “citizen government” plan was criticised as “soft,” and her preference for forming legislative commissions was portrayed as a lack of decision-making confidence. Given the heavy gender coding of these attacks, a striking contradiction emerged when other observers argued that gender was not a determining factor in the electoral success of either Bachelet or Fernández.¹ Rather than attempting to resolve this paradox, this thesis asks how “the gender factor” was discursively negotiated when these two women ran for high political office and when they presented certain gender-related policies.

To begin to answer this question, this study builds on recent studies of these presidential campaigns by exploring how Bachelet and Fernández positioned themselves in relation to the numerous women-led social movements that have “gender-sensitised” the socio-political context (Gerber 2009, 32).² By historicising a selection of interpretive frames

¹ (Aylwin 2009; Baeza Freer 2009; Fernández Ramil 2009; Levitsky and Murillo 2008; Vallejos 2009; Yañez 2009)
² Here, I borrow from Gerber the phrase “sensibilidad de género,” which she used in a similar context for slightly different argument. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Spanish into English are my own.
using in-depth critical discourse analysis from a feminist perspective, this study explores the ways in which their public profiles drew on existing sources of female authority when negotiating gender perceptions during their campaigns. For all the connotations that casting a “new” version of political leadership brings – a sense of discovery, of surprise, a new beginning, the potential for empowerment – women leaders in the Southern Cone’s political history are not new. Two women-led social organisations, active since the mid-1970s, have developed a model of political leadership perceived as “female” and unique to “women”: the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) in Argentina and the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos (AFDD) in Chile. I propose that Bachelet and Fernández claimed kinship authority with this legacy of women publicly leading the defence of human rights, and more recently, socio-economic rights. Through an analysis of a selection of the gender-related policies that these two presidents continued or introduced, I will also indicate how they avoided the explicit women’s-rights claims of an even longer tradition of feminist organisations, whose public leadership, while female, was deemed to represent the interests of a small group of citizens.

DEFINING THIS MOMENT IN DEMOCRACY

Looking back retrospectively from Argentina’s agricultural conflict in 2008, the death of Argentina’s ex-president Néstor Kirchner in 2010, Fernández’ re-election to the presidency for a second term in 2011, the transfer of power in Chile’s 2010 presidential elections, and the massive student-led protests that filled the streets of Santiago in 2011, it becomes clear that any analysis of the public discourses surrounding Bachelet’s and Fernández’ presidential campaigns grows out of a specific moment in the reconsolidation of electoral democracy in the Southern Cone. This is not news to those who research the politics of this region, as it has been nearly impossible in the literature to date to define this moment by ignoring the region’s recent history of military dictatorship and the socio-economic meltdown that has plagued Argentina since 2001. In addition, this recent past spans a period of more than three decades and is marked by at least three major socio-political shifts. The first begins with repressive military regimes under which all citizens lived in fear of being linked to an ill-defined “subversive” identity. The second begins when both of these countries moved through transitional periods that brought certain expectations for the eventual consolidation of a new

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3 I wish at this point to acknowledge the classic work of Erving Goffman (1974), upon which several current-day frame analyses are founded.
model of electoral democracy and high hopes for increased civil participation. And the third period begins with the long march toward the consolidation of democracy that has been accompanied by a growing “spirit of rebelliousness” (Arendt 1963, 57). 

To further complicate any comparative analysis of the Southern Cone, historically-specific contextual factors shaped Chile and Argentina’s transitional and early consolidation periods in diverse ways. Chile’s transition to electoral democracy (1987-90) was a slowly negotiated process, in which the departing Augusto Pinochet was able to leave the military with a degree of influence not seen in the Argentine case, where the military regime departed suddenly in 1983. In addition to institutional differences, these two countries have followed dissimilar economic paths since the transitions. Nevertheless, some thirty years on from the military coups, Chile and Argentina virtually paralleled each other in their election of women to the presidency for the first time in their histories as independent nation-states.

At the time of their election – in January 2006 and October 2007, respectively – some observers asked whether Chile and Argentina had reached a new moment and whether a major cultural shift had actually occurred. These two elections did challenge global historical patterns suggesting that women are less likely than men to compete in popular elections for powerful executive positions within presidential political systems (Jalalzai 2008, 2010). This counter-evidence is strengthened by the fact that both Bachelet and Fernández ran against other women at different stages of their presidential candidacies. Encouraged to run by high popularity ratings, two women bid against each other in the race to be the centre-left Concertación coalition’s presidential candidate in Chile: Bachelet and Soledad Alvear. Likewise, in Argentina, the main contender among a very divided group of opposition parties for Fernández’ presidential bid was Elisa Carrió, who had already taken advantage of shifting attitudes in 2003, when she became the “first woman” to run for the presidency in the history of Argentina.

Observers have understood these two particular elections within a range of cultural interpretive frames. Farad Jalazai stressed the benefits of familial ties to power and privilege

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4 Here, I borrow from Hanna Arendt a phrase that she used to describe how Karl Marx’s teachings persuaded revolutionaries “that poverty itself is a political, not a natural phenomenon” (Arendt 1963, 57). I find similarity in CONFECHE leader Camila Vallejo’s definition of the pre-conditions for the 2011 mobilisation of students in Chile: “the current right-wing government… is governing only for the few, for those who are taking advantage of the education system today, who don’t want to understand that this difficult crisis cannot be resolved without structural change at the base” (quoted in Población 2011).

5 The popular presidential elections of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil (2010) and of Laura Chinchilla in Costa Rica (2010) further substantiate this counterclaim.

6 Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia
and highlighted the historical importance of the family frame in constructing political identities in Latin America (2010). Likewise, the significance of the “first woman” frame, into which all of these candidates neatly fall, cannot be underestimated (Murray 2010, 13). However, global analyses have also revealed the political costs underlying these particular frames. Apart from the short-term novelty appeal, the “first woman” frame can also evoke negative long-term perceptions of unnaturalness (ibid.). Similarly, Jalazai pointed out that kinship ties are generally more prevalent in a cultural context where “women are not viewed as independently politically ambitious…” and she correlates these frames to “politically unstable, post-conflict societies” (2010, 136-152).

By my interpretation, Bachelet’s and Fernández’ respective presidential campaigns responded to the post-dictatorship context by suggesting that these women represented a more inclusive phase of democracy. Building on her personal biography, which set an extraordinary example of forgiveness and compromise, Bachelet’s campaign team presented her as the trustworthy leader of an enhanced style of “citizen government” (“gobierno ciudadano”) that would lead by example, rather than by imposition, and support citizens in reconstructing the Chile that they “need.” Approximately one year later, Fernández’ campaign platform was largely understood as the continuation and enhancement of the Kirchner administration. In addition, however, her frequent visits to economic superpowers in Europe and North America during the campaign year, hinted at a more sophisticated business-friendly approach and an improvement in international trade relations, weakened under Kirchner’s mandate. Four months before the election, Peronist politician Patricia Vaca Narvaja defended Fernández’ candidacy: “following this country’s political, economic, and social destruction, there were four years of reconstruction. The country turned 180 degrees [under] Kirchner... Now is the time for Cristina. It is time for Argentina’s institutionalisation” (Schurman 2007).

Considering the socio-political contexts that Chile and Argentina shared at the time, it makes sense that these two campaigns would incorporate the idea of “newness.” By the year 2000, Chile had experienced a decade, and Argentina more, of recovering democracy, largely conceptualised as the rebuilding of political and economic institutions destroyed by the Old Right. Studies show that around the same time, however, these two new democracies were suffering from “low levels of interpersonal trust” (Klesner 2007, 18). The phrase “un antes y un después” (a before and an after) had become a key referent suggesting a separation of “old” and “new” socio-political cultures and this corresponded with demands for a renovation of the “antiguo régimen” [old guard] (Barrancos 2009). In Chile, voters were calling for new
political faces. Despite President Ricardo Lagos’ popularity (1999-2005), questions were beginning to be raised about elitism in the Concertación government’s sixteen-year mandate. In Argentina, corruption scandals had begun to erode Kirchner’s legitimacy and despite his successful economic recovery programmes, there was a strong call for greater political and economic responsibility. By these two election years, both of these populations had expressed disillusionment with existing democratic institutions.

As the socio-political gaps widened over negative perceptions of the “old guard’s” failure to reach the utopian dream of full democracy, these political electorates divided more noticeably in accordance with generation gaps that question the support for pre-dictatorship ideologies and values when consolidating electoral democracy some thirty years on.

In post-dictatorship Chile, where political cultures were once divided into left, centre, and right – during the pre-dictatorship, transition, and early consolidation periods – much of this ideological conflict is contextualised by a wide political centre, a modestly decentralised political system, and a market-led economy. Chile’s Concertación coalition is often applauded for designing a non-confrontational governance model that “worked well during a period of democratic transition…” and for continuing an economic model – Pinochet’s neoliberal project – that would avoid “destabilizing change” at a politically fragile time (Siavelis 2010). Nevertheless, many also see these two institutional factors as the primary cause of Chile’s “high levels of inequality…” (ibid.). Critics argue that in order to sustain an economic model “designed to fragment, atomize, and weaken all subordinate strata,” post-dictatorship governments would have needed the continued demobilisation of civil society (Dominguez 2000, 358). The way to achieve this, they feel, is through Chile’s political-economic system, which “suppresses the expression of conflict and overvalues consensus” (Angell 2006, 163). In contrast, supportive positions argue that the “revolutionary” generations of the 1960s and 1970s suffered from “rigid utopian thinking that caused Chile’s democracy to break down…” (Purveyear 1994, 37). In addition, sympathisers point to the consensus-based political model as explanation for Chile’s economic and political stability the Latin American region. This last view is held as particularly credible in relation to neighbouring Argentina.

The constant negotiation between competing political cultures has been less subtle in Argentina than in Chile. While Chilean society experienced a radical change in 2011, when students led massive anti-neoliberal street protests throughout Santiago, the tables had already turned a decade earlier in Argentina when the 2001 economic crisis brought a dramatic end to ex-president Carlos Menem’s infamous decade of large-scale privatisation,
unfettered free trade, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans. By 2001, any trace of civil compliancy regarding the eroded neoliberal economy had long been replaced by civil unrest. Compared with Chile, there were numerously more civil protest events and movements in Argentina throughout the final decade of the twentieth century, namely, the unemployed workers’ movement, the piqueteros (road-block protesters), escraches (public-shaming), and the recovered factory movement. Likewise, two years after Kirchner had won the presidential election in 2003, with only 22 percent of the voter support base, he began to face growing fears about government corruption and rising inflation. Although Kirchner left office in 2007 with high approval ratings, many of his decisions had been heavily contested. For example, critics had long accused him of lacking a medium or long-term vision and of being power-hungry: “His sole concern was the day to day and having power to gain more power” (Aguinis 2007, 36). Recalling the moment when Fernández gave her first speech as president-elect on October 28, one columnist expressed his desire for serious change as a dream, in which “Cristina” would conduct herself as the “president of all Argentines,” calling for “harmony” and revealing “a strategic vision” (Aguinis 2007, 37). “In contrast to her spouse,” he added, Fernández demonstrated all of the above in a speech that maintained “a form of speaking that the Nation needs” (ibid.).

The campaign period is a fragile moment in any context but it is worth asking whether these two women politicians had to negotiate gender frames in particular ways. By election year, many people would have recognised the phrases used to describe the two candidates without linking these phrases to their social history. The epithet Reina Cristina (Queen Cristina), used to describe Fernández in a biographical account of her life prior to running for the presidency (Wornat 2005), and Bachelet’s campaign slogan “Estoy Contigo” (“I’m with you”) encapsulate a set of discourses that reference two very different socio-political systems, while also suggesting gendered differences. The first phrase points to Argentina’s strong presidential tradition, which contrasts with the more heavily negotiated consensus system in Chile. These phrases also tell us about the contrasting economic models within with these two women campaigned. The first references Kirchner’s active implementation of regulatory and interventionist economic recovery programmes, whereas in Chile, the Estoy Contigo campaign slogan differentiated Bachelet’s horizontal approach from the dominant hierarchical neoliberal model. Importantly, these simple phrases articulate these different gendered political relationships in coded ways.

Recent comparative studies of women running for political office around the world have observed resistance to cultural change within a context historically constructed as
masculine (Jalalzai 2008, 2010). Likewise, studies focusing on the internal gender balance of the Southern Cone governments reinforce the argument that cultural change necessarily corresponds to wider socio-political change (Baldez 2002). As these two fledgling democracies were experiencing waves of economic and political challenges, there were surges in the number of women entering the formal political arena. For example, in the year 2000, as public discontent toward the continuation of neoliberal economic policies in Argentina was reaching crisis point, as the discontented piqueteros were beginning to shout “que se vayan todos” (get rid of them all), and as Argentina was heading toward severe economic crisis, the existing gender quota law was extended to include women’s candidacy to the Senate. Through this legal change, women were ensured a 50 percent share of electoral candidacy nominations and hence, “the Argentine Senate achieved a critical mass (30% representation) of female senators in 2001…” (Piscopo 2006, 9).

On the other hand, the discourses surrounding the passage of this new quota law are telling of a numerical as opposed to substantive gain for political women in Argentina. According to Michelle Bonner, who attended an event celebrating the new law, the key speakers chose to frame this amendment in terms of how more women in the Senate would better serve areas of social policy, due to women’s caretaking, especially maternal responsibilities (2007, 80-81). In addition, she noted an explicit rejection of feminism in their vocabulary (ibid.). Further down the track, under the Kirchner and Lagos administrations, women were encouraged to enter politics at higher levels than ever before. Importantly, these women were appointed to non-traditional roles, which challenged the logic of women’s primary role in the family and in service to the community. The timing of these developments corresponds to other fragile moments in the consolidation of electoral democracy. Amid a wave of human rights trials, heavy negotiations with the IMF, and a cabinet reshuffle in 2005, Kirchner appointed Argentina’s first woman defence minister, Nilda Garré, and its first woman economic minister, Felisa Miceli.7

Similarly, in Chile, the term “fragility” certainly characterises the moment Bachelet was named defence minister in 2002. Two years before, Pinochet had returned a “free” man to Chile, despite numerous attempts to have him extradited to Spain to stand trial for human rights abuses. In that same year, Chilean Judge Juan Guzmán pledged to bypass Chile’s Amnesty Law and pursue Pinochet’s prosecution. The Supreme Court stripped Pinochet of

7 Garré kept her defence role after the transition to the Fernández administration and remained there until December 2010, when she was appointed to head the new Ministry of Security. Miceli was forced to resign after a corruption scandal in July 2007.
his political immunity and in 2001 and he was placed under house arrest. However, Guzmán’s efforts to have him stand trial were blocked by “political uproar” and “medical pretext” (Burbach 2003, 132-139). Later, on September 11, 2003, Chile commemorated thirty years to the day when Salvador Allende, along with electoral democracy, was overthrown by Pinochet’s military coup. Two weeks following that commemoration, Lagos convened the Valech Commission, which began to hear testimonies of thousands of victims of torture and other human rights violations that had occurred during the dictatorship years. Finally, after evading trial for “health and mental reasons,” Pinochet died in 2006 without prosecution. These years (2000-2006) represent a significant moment in Chile’s transition to democracy when at least half of Chile was remembering the devastating human rights abuses of military dictatorship, vividly portrayed in slogans such as “Nunca más en Chile” (Never Again in Chile). However, it is well documented that opinion is still starkly polarised over Allende and Pinochet. Thus, while one half of Chile was declaring “nunca más” with respect to dictatorship, the other half would still prefer dictatorship to a government clearing a path for socialism.

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN IN POWER: REINAS AND PAREJAS

Within a historical culture of kinship politics in Latin America, wherein powerful families facilitate the pathway to power for relatives, it is still the men, within this culture, who are assumed to have got into power on their own merit, while women continue to be linked to a powerful man. Because men are framed as individuals, their achievements are considered their own. It cannot be argued that women in the Southern Cone have yet gained widespread recognition for their legitimate rise to positions of such power through the popular vote. While Bachelet was leaving office with over 81 percent popularity ratings and recognition as a stateswoman,8 President Fernández, at the halfway point of a four year mandate, was accused of relinquishing decision-making powers to her husband while playing the ceremonial roles of First Lady (Maffía 2009).

Since Fernández announced her candidacy for the presidency in 2007, there was much speculation about her and Kirchner’s plans for tandem presidential rule. Part of this grew out of regressive attitudes toward her ascendency to the most powerful political position in

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8 Bachelet’s approval ratings reached a record breaking 82 percent, after the recession in 2009-10, when it became clear that her careful administration of public spending had avoided major economic consequences of the global financial recession in 2008-9.
Argentina. In response to these suggestions, Fernández often stressed the fact that she was as much of a political animal as Kirchner. While Kirchner was serving sequential mandates as Governor of Santa Cruz (1991-2003), Fernández shifted from provincial diputada (representative), a role to which she was elected in 1989, to senator for Santa Cruz in 1995. After his election to the presidency in 2003, she became a national senator in 2005. In fact, Fernández has had more experience in national politics.

These character attacks were also sparked by the Fernández administration’s well-publicised conflict in 2008 against a mobilised organisation of soya bean farmers, which clearly damaged Fernández’ approval ratings. However, like Bachelet, the second half of Fernández’ four-year mandate was characterised by a rapid rise in approval ratings that saw her climb from a very low 27 percent in 2009 to a high 62 percent in 2010 (Mora y Araujo and Rossi 2010). Since Kirchner’s death in 2010, Fernández has managed to define her leadership as an individual. Some observers described this moment as the beginning of “a new chapter,” in which “the protagonism of the president, [was] no longer shared nor disputed…” (Mora y Araujo and Rossi 2010). As Kirchner’s death rendered the tandem rule speculation invalid, public debate during the first half of the 2011 election year shifted to whether Fernández would run for an election that she was likely to win (“Will she?” 2011). In 2011, Fernández won a second mandate with a wide majority (53.96%).

Nevertheless, this debate references a familiar frame for understanding women in power. Historically, women have been linked to power through their personal relationships to powerful and/or political men. Before the emergence of Bachelet as a strong candidate for the presidency, many observers around the region would still have shared the belief that the rise to power of women in the national era was due to their personal relationships or family ties (Jalalzai 2010). The reason for this perception lies in the history of women’s advancement to high political office in Latin America. Although both Eva and Isabel Perón participated in politics at the highest possible level and the latter was the first woman to become president in the Western Hemisphere after the death of Juan Perón in 1974, neither was elected. Similarly, Bolivian Lidia Gueiler, known primarily as a feminist activist, held her country’s top post.


10 Outside of Latin America, the best example would be India’s first and only woman prime minister Indira Ghandi, born into the Nehru Dynasty. Her grandfather and father were both pivotal figures in the independence movement. Notable exceptions to this pattern are Golda Meir, the world’s third woman to hold a leading government position (1969-74), Margaret Thatcher (1979-90), and Helen Clark (1999-2008). Sirivamo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka (1960-2000), the world’s first woman head of state, was the widow of a previous Sri Lankan prime minister, Solomon Bandaranaike.
only briefly, as interim president from 1979 to 1980, after a military coup had deposed the elected leader. The first Latin American woman to be elected president was Nicaraguan Violeta Chamorro in 1990.\(^\text{11}\) Nevertheless, her candidacy was viewed as appropriate because she was the widow of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, a hugely important resistance figure, murdered in retaliation by the departing Somoza regime. Chamorro’s role as president of the Chamorro government from 1990 to 1996 continues to be qualified in history books by her role as “the widow of …” (Keen and Haynes 2000, 475).

The historical pattern of a woman elected through her relationship to a powerful male family member largely explains the stereotypical constructions of political women such as “\textit{mujer de}” (“woman of”) and “\textit{reina}” (queen), both used for Fernández. Certainly many women have reached positions of great power through their personal connection to one or several important male figures. Therefore there are many reasons for these frames. Bachelet and Fernández are close family relatives of powerful leaders. Nevertheless, a number of constraining factors can be strongly associated with reaching an executive post through familial ties. This pathway carries assumptions about the successor sharing power, being closely affiliated with prior agendas, and lacking a strongly identifying and individual agenda. In recognition of this, the following section examines the extent to which family relations facilitated their political success and highlights the limitations of operating within kinship frames.

According to a biographical account of her life published in 2005, Fernández and Kirchner had shared everything since they met in the 1970s: “militancy, prison, attacks, the management of their Santa Cruz posts, the home and the raising of their children, persecution and austerity, hunger, and fear” (Wornat, 182). When the media discussed either Fernández or Kirchner, reference to the other was never far behind, often referring to them as a couple, or using a mix of sarcasm and accolade to define their collective style of management. Olga Wornat’s biography of Fernández’ pre-presidential life (2005) repeated this pattern though the use of plural reference terms like “\textit{la dupla}” (the duo), “\textit{el matrimonio}” (the married couple), “\textit{Los Kirchner-Fernández}” (the Kirchner-Fernándezes), “\textit{la pareja militante}” (the militant couple). However, Fernández seemed well aware of the danger that such a perception posed to her legitimisation as a high-ranking politician, stressing in 2005 that “we don’t work as husband and wife. We don’t want to look like “\textit{muñecos de torta},” referring to the husband and wife dolls typically placed on top of a wedding cake (quoted in Wornat, 238). Her

\(^{11}\) Other Latin American women elected president before 2005 were Janet Jagan of Guyana in 1997, and Panamanian, Mireya Moscoso, in 1999.
denunciation of women who use their surname to gain political power caused a stir within the Peronist ranks, particularly during her race against previous First Lady Hilda González de Duhalde (“Chiche”) in the 2005 elections for senator. Fernández attributed much of this criticism to a “permanent devaluation of women,” adding that criticisms against her character suggested that “women like us who have our own thoughts aren’t intelligent; we are daughters of bitches, witches, evil, crazy, unmanageable” (Wornat 2005, 239). This argument helps to explain why she kept a low profile during Kirchner’s presidential campaign in 2003.

Focusing on Bachelet, few assume that she gained power exclusively through the use of her family name. However, her family connection was clearly recognised as a “plus” (Aylwin 2009). Her father, Alberto Bachelet was a military general, a socialist, and loyal to the Allende government until he died of a heart attack after being tortured by the secret police under dictatorship. Furthermore, non-Hispanic European surnames, especially English, French, and German, often carry a high prestige factor in Chile; therefore the level of respect that Bachelet’s name carries in certain sectors of Chilean society cannot be underestimated. Also, Bachelet’s campaign speeches often paid tribute to her father rather than her mother (Fernández Ramil 2009). However, family relations do not explain why in the year 2000 the then president Ricardo Lagos (2000-2006) brought women into power and why he gave Bachelet opportunities she would not otherwise have had.

Indeed, it is around this time that many political observers notice a significant shift in the Chilean state’s attitude toward the integration of women into politics. As Lisa Baldez asserts, “women found themselves largely excluded from positions of political authority” before Lagos (2002, 168).12 In an interview with María de los Ángeles Fernández, Lagos claimed the decision to nominate five women to cabinet was designed to “to send a powerful message… to take a notorious leap” (2007, 48), and Bachelet directly benefited from this shift. While forming his cabinet in 2000, Lagos personally selected Bachelet to serve as health minister. Two years later, when he felt Chilean society would support it he made her defence minister. Bachelet’s biographers refer to this second move as his most “spectacular nomination” (Subercaseaux and Sierra 2006, 131), which references Lagos’ controversial reputation as a man who “likes strokes of boldness and wants to be remembered as a leader who has dared to do spectacular things” (ibid.). In addition to the reputation he gained after confronting Pinochet on television during the lead-up to the 1989 plebiscite, he was Chile’s

12 Apart from appointing Soledad Alvear to a ministerial role as the head of SERNAM, Patricio Aylwin (1990-94) also appointed three women undersecretaries, Frei (1994-2000) appointed three women ministers and two women undersecretaries. In contrast, Lagos appointed five women ministers to his cabinet and eight women undersecretaries (Baldez 2002).
first agnostic president. Lagos defied the Vatican and confronted opposition from Church hierarchies and conservative parties by signing Chile’s first divorce law in 2004. Such acts suggest that Lagos based his nomination of Bachelet on the non-conformist elements that she brought both to his government and the ultra-conservative military. Apart from being the first woman in Latin America to head the military, Bachelet herself affirmed that she “brought together all the capital sins: socialist, daughter of my father, separated, not religious…” (ibid.). Alternatively, others feel that she was chosen because of her proven ability in public service and interest in coming to terms with the “hypermasculine” military machine (Jelin 2003, 76-78). In 1997, before being made health minister, she had studied defence at a military college in Washington D.C. She then worked for the former defence minister on her return to Chile.

There are alternative ways of looking at Bachelet’s nomination to this powerful role that go beyond her family connection. While her military father and family name would not have disadvantaged her, other factors were also working to bring her into power, which are more telling of a significant shift in the public perception of women in a position of authority. As Bachelet’s biographers assert, it was beginning to be seen as acceptable in the military that “a woman could be your comrade and also your superior” (Subercaseaux and Sierra 2006, 145). In 2005, Bachelet’s campaign team emphasised her capacity for caring and forgiveness in a number of ways. First and foremost, they articulated her shift from the position of victimhood, having been tortured by the military, into a position of military leadership, as the defence minister. This symbolises Chile’s own capacity to recover from and reconcile with the trauma of the past. Not only had she gained the respect of a deeply divided institution but also her transcendence of these deep-rooted divisions supported the idea of a more inclusive, democratic style of leadership, in a moment when this was deemed necessary.

The family frame of “paternal authority” positioned Fernández as the “wife of” Kirchner who was hand-picked by “el dedo” while it also undermined Bachelet’s leadership style as “soft.” This frame, therefore forced them into a difficult negotiation of the very gender factor that legitimised their access, presence, and success in a masculinised political sphere. As I suggest in the following chapters, an alternative way to maintain an autonomous political profile within these narrow parameters was to appropriate kinship authority from a legacy of women human rights icons. However, my analysis later demonstrates how this

13 The Inter-American Defense College
appropriation lent itself to a reliance on role-based frames, which emphasised women’s roles in the family and created further tensions.

ROLE-BASED LEADERSHIP FRAMES: DOMESTICATING DISCOURSES

In this thesis, I maintain that role-based frames are used to construct political women as more caring, more inclusive, and more in touch with everyday life than men. I attempt to show how these discourses were strategically employed during the campaigns to present women candidates as having a more profound level of empathy for victims of human rights abuses, socio-economic inequalities, and as having a “natural” capacity to renegotiate starkly divided terrains such as the military and citizenry, public and private economic spheres, and Church and state.

One gender construction that resounds throughout my analysis is known as the domestic angel (“ángel del hogar”) and the “reina de hogar” (domestic queen). When limited to the domestic space by this frame, “womanhood” is automatically associated with women’s roles in the home, with children and the family, and the unquantifiable ethic of care. In addition to these domestic roles, I reference marianismo: “[the] cult of the ‘Virgin Mary,’ idealising motherhood, and chaste and decorous behaviour in women” (Chant and Craske 2003, xi). Depending on religious positionality, the “mariano icon” has undergone diverse interpretations in Latin America: “pro-and anti-Virgen” (Montecino 2001, 27). For those who believe that Catholic cultural values, a history of patriarchal rulers, and enduring machismo, have all helped slow the advancement of gender equality in Latin America, for example, she “reinforces the discrimination and subordination of women” (29). Despite their limitations, such constructions of “womanhood” have been successful in contemporary Latin America for at least three reasons: 1) they represent a set of ideals (humanity, life, and love) that were destroyed under dictatorship; 2) they stand in stark contrast to the ingrained neoliberal logic of “meritocracy,” which rewards efficiency as well as other quantifiable achievements; and 3) they offer a simplified answer to a very complex negotiation of gender ideologies.

The first twentieth-century woman leader to successfully politicise “feminine” ideals from a position of influence was Eva Perón (Evita) in Argentina (1919-52). She was also the first woman with influence at the highest political level to advocate strongly for the protection of socio-economic rights in Argentina, exemplified by her declaration, “where there is need, a right is born” (quoted in Ministerio de Educación de la Nación 2010). However, when Evita used a language of “rights” she interpellated the working classes as a
whole. Few would have linked this claim specifically to women’s rights (women as individuals with specific rights). Correspondingly, during the Eva Perón Foundation’s earlier days, role-based discourses were used to mask Evita’s political influence. For example, Evita’s office was described as “an extension of herself: a quasi-domestic setting where people could talk to her, touch her, and reach out to her without the formality of normal bureaucratic relationships” (Viladrich and Thompson, 346). Evita is known to have metaphorically described herself as “the bridge between Perón and the people” (Plotkin 2003, 146). Public constructs of Evita, as a bridge between the figure of Perón and the people were likened to a maternal relationship, between the “Father of the Nation… [and the] child” (Perrig 2008, 16).

These role-based frames have to be understood in context. The dominant narrative defined women who worked outside of the domestic sphere as “public,” therefore “available,” which was coding for “prostitute.” Therefore, Evita’s “feminine” power in the public sphere was never legitimised. In addition, Evita fought for women’s rights as voters and workers within the patriarchal politics of Peronism. Those who consider Evita a female icon recognise these narrow parameters and respect her for what she was able to achieve. Argentine feminist politician Diana Maffía, for example, described Evita as “a woman of extraordinary social sensitivity… which gave her empathy for the needs of the poorest… [so much so] that they felt Evita knew what was happening to them…” (2009).

In contrast to her admiration for Evita’s empathetic leadership style, Maffía used the notion of “domesticating leadership” (“liderazgo domesticador”) to criticise Fernández and her main rival Chiche during their 2005 race for senator. Recognising that fifty years had passed since Evita interpellated women through role-based discourses, Maffía complained that Chiche’s use of “domestic” discourses “tranquilises many women who feel that Chiche Duhalde is one of them” (quoted in Walger 2005). Maffía suggested that neither Chiche nor Fernández intended to “transfer” their “accumulation of power” in the political realm (ibid.). Instead, she argued, Chiche comes to power “so that nothing changes” and Fernández “changes, but she does not change anybody else” (ibid). Maffía’s criticism suggests that these candidates used role-based frames to deceive women voters. She attacks both candidates as opportunists hiding behind a masquerade of “sameness.” It makes sense for political candidates to appeal to “familiar” life experiences. However, considering the potential damage that such attacks can have, women politicians take a calculated risk when they rely on role-based frames today.
Fernández is often compared to Argentina’s first female political icon under “the shadow of the Evita Montonera, an Evita who was very close to the people” (Vallejos 2009). Initially, Fernández encouraged this comparison by using imagery of Evita during her 2005 campaign for senator and during the launch of her presidential campaign in July 2007. While the international media interpreted this as an effort “to wear the mantle of Evita” (Rother 2005), other observers such as Spanish historian Marysa Navarro argued that Fernández had so much more political autonomy than would have been possible for earlier generations of political women that she had merely stepped into a political space defined by Evita (quoted in Natason 2005). Recognising the dangers of being associated with the discredited images of Evita, as the wife of Perón, for example, Fernández made frequent references to her identification with the “Eva Perón of (hair)bun and clenched fist in front of the microphone” (quoted in Gualdoni and Prados 2007). My analysis will demonstrate that Fernández’ identification with the Evita luchadora and the Evita militante – also adopted by the Montoneros as a symbol of their revolutionary struggle and by the Madres as continuation of that memory – was no coincidence.

On the other side of the Andes, Bachelet is rarely, if ever, directly compared to Evita. Interestingly, however, Bachelet’s ministerial image was embedded in role-based leadership frames that mirror those used to profile Evita. These frames refer to Bachelet’s “empathetic” leadership style, “emotional intelligence... capacity to listen, and to put herself in your shoes...” (Fernández Ramil 2009). Bachelet’s biographers Elizabeth Subercaseaux and Malú Sierra reinforced this image by describing her management style as non-bureaucratic, directly dealing with people on the ground, and being “accessible to all” (2006, 128-129). Similarly, they endorsed Bachelet’s “eagerness to include people in everything that she does, forming teams, working together” (123). Her biographers applauded the fact that as health minister, Bachelet had proved her ability to “humanise” the institution, through the implementation of work incentives and processes of employee recognition. As defence minister, they praised her for “having the capacity to build a bridge between civilians and the military...” (144).

Essentially, these role-based discourses suggested a “feminine” style of leadership, constructing Bachelet’s political office as an extension of the domestic sphere. They situated her leadership and communication styles within a maternal frame: in the service of others, approachable, and inclusive. Similarly, when interviewed for this thesis, Chilean feminist

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14 In 2011, the Madres constructed a visual homage to Fernández and Evita together for International Women’s Day. The imagery they selected is telling of the link they have made in Bonfini’s words between “Eva [who] gave her life and Cristina [who] is giving hers” (“Un homenaje” 2011)
Carmen Torres likened Bachelet’s presidential image to the “good mother, the mother that sorts things out, the mother that knows that today one must eat even though there isn’t much money, the loving mother, she who worries when you are ill…” (2009). In sum, Torres defines Bachelet as a “mother-president.” However, this figure is clearly paradoxical. While the mother-president reassures a broad range of people that “everything is going to be alright,” she also compromises her agency in the formulation of her own subjectivity and presidential power.  

In contrast to Bachelet, Fernández rarely incorporated her experience as a mother into her political campaign. Yet like Bachelet, Fernández constructed her leadership style (and that of other women politicians) in symbolically feminine terms. For example, during the campaign year, Fernández associated women politicians with “values such as transparency, loyalty, cooperation…” (2007d, 198), and accentuated women’s “difference.” Despite these efforts, her rare and infrequent “maternal” performances had an adverse effect on the media’s perception of her claim to “feminine sensibility” and she confronted media disqualifications of her physical attractiveness as bourgeois elegance (Russo 2007). In response, Fernández lamented that the media simply could not understand her refusal “to renounce the female condition in order to be president” (Presidentes 2010). Soon after Fernández’ election to the presidency in 2007, author and columnist Malele Penshansky used an incredibly sarcastic allegory to describe the form of “feminine sensibility” that Fernández had taken to high political office (2007, 32). Drawing on a mythological story of the founding of Rome, she likened Fernández to “a ferocious-looking she-wolf suckling lost children with her sweet nutritious milk” (ibid.). This strange allegorical representation of motherhood reveals a hidden story, one that has plagued Fernández since she arrived on the political stage.

Apart from Olga Wornat’s biography, Reina Cristina, published in 2005 and on the bookshelves throughout 2007, Fernández was unwilling to talk to local media about her personal life. Until the end of her campaign, she gave no interviews to local media. Biographical accounts were scarce, so much so that a number of media interviewers toward the end of the campaign pressed her to reveal her more intimate side. After being prompted

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15 To understand the term “agency,” I return to feminist accounts of women’s self-determination, autonomy, and resistance of oppression. In order to avoid “romanticising” this concept, however, I endeavour to consider “the constraints and possibilities afforded by particular social structures and practices” throughout this thesis (Lazar 2005, 8). For example, while much of my analysis suggests that these women leaders have some agency when negotiating the “gender factor” in their campaigns, Chapters Four and Five illustrate the extent to which this agency was constrained.

16 In particular, the interview with Rosario Lufrano on Radio Cadena 3 in Córdova, and that which she had with Oscar González Oro and Beto Casella, transmitted on Radio 10.
to discuss her home-life, as the wife of a president and as a mother, she responded in diplomatic fashion, typical of presidential candidates. However, her responses were soon thrown together in a range of media articles rushing to profile the domestic life of the presidential candidates before Election Day. A brief review of a small range of print media headings over the three days leading up to the election reveals, in their distinctly sarcastic tone, the resentment at being made to wait for the juicy details of her personal life: “The Most Boring Campaign in History” (Noticias, 24/10/2007). There was a particular interest in her opinions on the more controversial topics: “In the End, Cristina Talked about Abortion, Marihuana, Gays and Surgery” (Perfil, 25/10/2007); “From Marriage and Children to the Cigarette and Surgery” (Página/12, 26/10/2007); “A Relaxed Cristina Told Intimacies of Her Life” (Diariocrítico de Argentina, 26/10/2007); “Cristina Fernández against Abortion” (La República, 26/10/2007). Argentine audiences seemed to want her to reveal the realities of her daily life. They seemed to crave a sense of sameness.

Later, in May 2009, when she revealed more intimate details of her home life in a televised interview with Soledad Silveira (Solita 2009), her maternal performance was ridiculed as unconvincing, “banal,” “superficial,” and “tragic” (Gherardi 2009). The epithets used to describe candidate Bachelet, such as simpática (nice) and cariñosa (affectionate), did not factor into biographical descriptions of Fernández at any point in her political career. In contrast to Bachelet, there was some confusion as to whether Fernández was running as the “wife of” the president, as or as a woman politician in her own right.

Like Bachelet, Fernández positioned herself as a politician first and a woman second; however, some felt Fernández took this to the extreme, claiming that she presented herself as the president, with a capital “P,” before she had even won the election: “Argentine First Lady Looks Presidential in Campaign” (New York Times, 28/9/ 2007). The perceptive image of a ferocious she-wolf suckling orphaned children, I believe, reveals the grating effect that Fernández’ “feminine” performance had on many Argentines. The wild ferociousness that Penshansky attributes to this surrogate mother figure criticises Fernández’ gender performance. It exaggerates her rasping voice and her defensive posture. It paints the image of the domestic angel’s alter-ego: an undomesticated she-devil, vulnerable and powerful at the same time, and as unpredictable and untrustworthy as a wild animal. Clearly, these gendered discourses require further analysis.

17 Newspaper titles also reviewed in El Clarín and La Nación (24-26 Oct 2007).
THESIS STRUCTURE

Drawing on relevant discourse analysis methodologies and feminist theories, Chapter One demonstrates the strengths of an in-depth critical analysis of discourses by and about political women from a feminist position, namely, feminist critical discourse analysis. This chapter focuses on recent gender-focused studies of women in high political office and pays particular attention to discursive analyses of these same two presidential campaigns. Chapter Two uses this discursive approach to briefly review research on the history of women as political subjects in Argentina and Chile, historicising the range of frames and discourses used to interpret their identities, strategies, and actions. The analytical chapters that follow then elaborate in greater detail a variety of gender constructs made manifest as metaphors and frames that played a role in the electoral campaign and then in policies implemented.

Specifically, Chapters Three, Four, and Five explore discursive exchanges in three interrelated socio-political frameworks: human rights, socio-economic rights, and women’s rights. The first two are strongly interrelated because efforts by traditional human rights groups for social justice through the punishment of the architects of crimes against humanity during dictatorship conflict with struggles against governments’ adherence to the neoliberal model introduced under military rule. These two processes are relevant to all citizens, not only women, in the Southern Cone. However, in order to stay relevant in a climate of transition, these areas of political discourse have shifted. The analyses in these chapters show how these discourses have shifted in ways relevant to gender relations, with specific attention to examples of oppositional feminine and masculine constructs that emphasise historical gender roles, such as the apolitical mother, the domestic angel, and all-sacrificing caregiver, the hypermasculine militaristic overlord or the “caudillo,” the patriarchal father figure, and the neoliberal expert. For this purpose, I analyse the strategic ways in which both leaders incorporated “feminine difference” into their campaigns.

In Chapter Three, I focus on women human rights activists, the AFDD and the Madres, to offer perspectives that are a necessary complement to existing feminist studies on the political leadership of women. Their experiential knowledge, while not recognised as theoretical or feminist, has gender-sensitised political discourse on human rights in a way that will allow me to critically scrutinise the politics of gender within economic and legal frameworks. In Chapter Four, I demonstrate that shared understandings of political leadership are changing in the Southern Cone, and I suggest that this change is facilitated by a new economic narrative of “feminine difference,” which I call the feminised state. Then, I reveal
the opaque forms of gender identification that form a part of this broad narrative, exemplified by the Fernández administration’s attempts to articulate poverty alleviation policies under the rubric of “family assistance.” Finally, in Chapter Five I use feminist discourse analysis to critique these broad gender frames in terms of their costs to women’s rights. This chapter places a special focus on the ways in which Bachelet and Fernández positioned themselves within polemical and ethically-charged debates over emergency contraception and the planned termination of pregnancy. These candidates might have removed the mask of “universal representation” in order to make specific “women’s right-based claims” to strategically advance toward a feminist agenda; instead the thesis concludes by revealing stark contrasts between the two presidents.
CHAPTER I
THE STRENGTHS AND THE CHALLENGES OF FEMINIST CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Feminist approaches have been challenging the purported neutrality of mainstream discourse analyses, particularly within the social sciences and humanities, since the feminist movement went global for the second time in the 1960s. Building on the philosophical and psychoanalytical approaches that introduced discourse theory in the 1960s and 1970s, namely, works by post-structuralist thinkers Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan, feminist scholars made equally significant and innovative contributions to a broadening debate on discourse analysis. The works of French feminist scholars Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva, for example, have long held a central place within critical literary analysis. Despite this long history of “reading against the grain,” however, feminist scholars appear to have made fewer inroads into the discourse analysis of women in politics. Consequently, this sub-field is open for further development of a feminist approach to critical discourse analysis.

In 2005, for example, Karen Beckwith asserted that “we still lack a wide range of knowledge, especially comparative and longitudinal, about women’s political behaviour, political beliefs and attitudes, means of organizing, behaviour in governmental office, experience in campaigning, response to power inequalities, and exclusion from political power…” (2005, 128-29). While existing discursive analyses demonstrate that this approach facilitates our understanding of the behaviour, beliefs and attitudes of political women, this lacuna in political science-based research suggests that feminist approaches continue to face resistant audiences. On the other hand, it may also indicate an emerging approach that can complement those currently established.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) enjoys a mutually beneficial relationship with feminist scholarship. There has been so much collaboration between these approaches that within academia some confusion has arisen as to whether CDA inherently advocates a

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18 Apart from the political science-based studies covered in this chapter, feminist political scientists Sandra Grey (2004) and Judith Squires (2008) have developed sophisticated analyses of women in politics on a discursive level that centre on “discursive influence” and “claims-making,” respectively.

19 For example, two recent major works, not covered in this chapter are Karrin Vasby Anderson and Kristina Horn Sheeler’s book, Governing Codes: Gender, Metaphor, and Political Identity (2005) and Molly Mayhead and Brenda Devoe Marshall’s Women’s Political Discourse: A 21st Century Perspective (2005). Neither of these works is based in political science.
feminist agenda. Like most feminisms, CDA also self-identifies as an emancipatory political project, and it is critical of asymmetrical power relations (Lazar 2005b, 1). Nevertheless, a retrospective CDA review since its 1980s emergence as a methodology reveals a cautious use of the feminist label. It has been confirmed that this is true even when “studies in CDA with a gender focus mostly adopt a critical feminist view…” (2-3). In 2005, Michelle Lazar made the first attempt to compile a bibliography of feminist approaches to CDA “as a body of research” (24). These works, she argued, had “existed for more than a decade…,” the problem was that their existence had “been insufficiently made known” (ibid.). While feminists have conducted a diverse range of critical linguistic analyses, many have done so “under the rubric of CDA without needing to explicitly flag a feminist perspective” (2).

One of the major challenges to advocating a feminist approach is that this scholarship’s overtly political stance has been criticised. One criticism is that feminist interpretative frames impose a political agenda “based on purely ideological criteria…” (Cameron 1999, 122). Brent Preisler, for example, accuses feminist linguistics of being “a ‘feminist enterprise’… first, a sociolinguistic one second, male authors being correspondingly few and far between” (1998, 281). Preisler argues that the feminist outlook prompts researchers to dismiss any empirical findings that do not “fit their world picture” (284).

While advocates of the various feminist positions recognise that their empathy for women challenges them in academia, where “neutrality” equates to “legitimacy,” they are motivated to employ an “activist” approach (DeFrancisco 1997, 40). As feminist political scientist Virginia Sapiro highlights, “a legislative body overwhelmingly dominated by people of one sex,” for example, does not present gendered questions to all analysts but this is one question that “feminist scholars cannot” ignore (2001, 74).

Feminist scholars have described their marginalisation within “the sciences” as an inspiring challenge. Deborah Cameron, for example, thanked those who had told her “that language and gender was an unsuitable topic for serious research” because they convinced her that her work was critical (2003, 10). Likewise, among other feminist political scientists, Sapiro found such arguments useful when breaking into this field (2001, 72). One set of conventions that Sapiro found to have “a double-edged effect on feminist research in political science” was a legacy of criteria that had survived the diminishing positivist tradition (ibid).

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20 There has been much debate over the positivist tradition within the sciences. For an informative article on this debate and on the shift away from positivism to realism see Lane (1996). Not all observers are convinced that this shift has taken place. In 2004, David Marsh and Heather Savigny, for example,
“Chief among these,” she argues, was that which obliged researchers to provide objective, directly observable “value free” evidence (2001, 71). First, Sapiro and other early feminist researchers turned the concept of “objectivity” back against mainstream political science, in their criticism of gender stereotyping (71-72). Further, in response to the criticism that feminist claims are not supported by “value free” empirical evidence, feminist researchers developed the convincing argument that “no research and no set of research procedures can be ‘value free’” (71). In 1998, Joni Lovenduski’s useful summary narrated the ways in which feminist approaches to political research had evolved from an “add women and stir phase” to more sophisticated “gendered” analysis (1998, 334-36). More recently, a series of gender-focused symposia provide evidence of feminist scholars’ collaborative efforts to “synthesize” feminist epistemologies with the mainstream approaches to political study that continue to “neglect” gender as an analytical category and a process (Kenny and Mackay 2009). Nevertheless, the effects of this evolution have not been well received by all. Despite the emergence of “safe space[s]” such as the APSA Women and Politics subsection and the creation of “sympathetic” journals such as Women and Politics, Politics and Gender, and The International Journal of Feminist Politics (Caraway 2010), it has been argued that “positivist gatekeepers” in the US and to a lesser extent in the UK are still judging “the quality of ‘good’ political science using positivist criteria…” (Marsh and Savigny 2004, 165-166). These gatekeepers magnify the already difficult task of publishing an overtly feminist work within the top political science journals. Even within the more broadly pluralist realm of comparative politics, feminist scholarship remains on the margins of mainstream academic activity (Caraway 2010; Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Phillips 2001).

This challenge is further complicated by the economic and structural conditions that have contributed to feminism’s pervasive fragmentation as a political movement. Nancy Fraser’s critique of the current moment traces the development of feminism as a whole “epochal social phenomenon” in relation to “the history of capitalism” (2009, 97). Fraser’s study provides a useful contextual focus on feminists’ three historical interrelated social justice demands for “recognition,” “representation,” and “redistribution” (100). The feminist politics of recognition (feminine/feminist culture) and representation (women in politics)

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21 For example, recent discussions have debated the costs and the benefits of creating new interdisciplinary research frameworks such as “a comparative politics of gender” (Beckwith 2010) and “feminist institutionalism” (Mackay and Waylen 2009).

22 Melissa Harris-Lacewell reports that this is especially the case for African American women working in political science (2005).
under neoliberalism unwittingly redirected struggles for social justice away from the struggle for resource redistribution. In an earlier exchange with Axel Honneth, Fraser highlighted a more conscious disassociation between recognition and redistribution in the intellectual sphere (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 8). Likewise, my review of the current literature on political women in the Southern Cone has found that closer attention is paid to the politics of representation and recognition (stereotypes and frames), than to the politics of redistribution. There is a broad literature on the movements demanding better economic redistribution. However, as Fraser suggested, these two parallel literatures are not often linked because theorists tend to make an “either/or choice between the distributive paradigm and the recognition paradigm” (47). Following Fraser’s suggestions in these two recent analyses (2003; 2009), my thesis conceptualises social justice as three “irreducible dimensions”: recognition, representation, and redistribution.

Second-wave feminism’s separation and fractured reformulation as a political movement under rising neoliberalism paralleled the questioning of identity politics and feminist epistemologies. Given this context, ontological debates within feminism as an academic pursuit deepened and there was a conscious shift away from “feminist studies,” and “women’s studies,” toward the new “gender studies.” The reconceptualised ideas of socially constructed gender identities, gender roles, gender hierarchies, “genderlects” (Wodak 1997, 2), and the like, versus the concept of biologically fixed sexual difference led to a major debate that continues to this day. As Fraser highlights, this “cultural” debate has distracted a large degree of feminist thinking away from “economic” identities (2009). This is especially relevant to any Southern Cone feminist discussion, where a highly stratified class system is firmly rooted. However, since this semantic shift, there have also been calls “for a reappraisal of identity politics and its utility for feminist thought” (Gillman 2010, 19).

Largely informed by Judith Butler’s influential work Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990), much of this debate revolves around ontological questions concerning what constitutes relevant units of analysis for feminist research. According to

23 English-language feminist theorists recognise Robert Stoller’s psychoanalytic theories in the 1960s as coining the foundational terms: gender, sex, gender identity, and gender role. Various feminist conceptualisations of this terminology elaborate on their interpretations of his and Beauvoir’s earlier theories. Gayle Rubin is generally recognised as one of the more influential English-language feminist thinkers to elaborate fully on the sex/gender distinction.

24 Joan Acker (1992), Joni Lovenduski (1998), and Karen Beckwith (2005) have provided useful summaries of this on-going debate.

25 The most comprehensive conceptualisation of the term “gender,” to differentiate between biologically and socially constructed identities: sex versus gender, and female versus feminine, emerged as a result of feminist theory. Since 1949, when Simone de Beauvoir first made the often quoted assertion in The
Mary Dietz (2003), this division is three-fold. The first is “difference feminism,” which holds that there are ontological differences between women and men based on our lived experience, giving women a distinct critical perspective on the world worthy of recognition and celebration. Expanding on this ontological differentiation are the “diversity” feminists, whose key argument against difference feminist theories is their over-articulation of a singular category of analysis. From Bolivia, Domitila Barrios de Chungara (1978) made an early contribution to this international debate in her testimonial *Si me permiten hablar*, which led some to argue that the privileging of “gender as a unitary and homogenous” category fails to recognise other subaltern identities (McCall 2005, 1776). Others argue that the category “women” articulates “a singular monolithic subject” (Mohanty 1991), which presupposes “the lives of white, middle-class, heterosexual women as paradigmatic for the situation of all women” (Dietz 2003, 408). Importantly, the diversity approach stresses that discrimination is intersectional and so constituted by a complex and problematic matrix of gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, political and religious beliefs, among an illimitable number of other “axes of subordination” (Crenshaw 2000). Beyond this debate, the “deconstruction” feminists follow Butler’s lead in denying the autonomous existence of “sex,” “gender,” “women” or any fixed or situated category of analysis, arguing instead that all of the above are fluid, mutable effects of discourse.26 Queer theorists, for example, question the binary logic of male and female as autonomous gender categories, arguing that this is relevant only to a heterosexual social imagination (Wittig 1993). While avoiding criticisms of biological or social essentialism or determinism, feminists soon began to suggest alternative, more flexible notions to blur the distinction between gender and sex. Linda Alcoff posits a similarly contingent idea that she calls “positionality,” where “being a ‘woman’ is to take up a … fluid and mutable position” (1988, 435). However, in contrast to deconstructionist thought, Alcoff suggests that women engage with this fluid context in non-arbitrary ways (ibid.). Likewise, Toril Moi (1999), and Sara Heinämäa (1997), have reconceptualised Simone de Beauvoir’s

26 Quoting Dietz again, deconstruction feminists reject “any notion of an a priori female subject grounded in a presexed body, any concept of ‘woman’ as the foundation of a feminist politics, or any conception of sexual difference that instantiates the feminine or a presumptive heterosexuality as the privileged locus of ethics or existence” (2003, 403).
concept of “becoming a woman” into experiential notions such as “the lived experience” and “the body as situation,” which Iris Young describes as “the lived body” (2005).

Despite these elaborations and alternative terms, “gender,” as a theoretical and political variable, has become omnipresent in both feminist and non-feminist research. Within the English-speaking academic world, many have disguised delegitimised feminist identities under the broad title of “gender.” Therefore, even when an analysis of discourses by and about political women does not openly advocate any particular feminist position, the fact that it addresses questions relating to “doing gender” (Lazar 2005b, 12), particularly when this work demonstrates a critical perspective, leads to the assumption that the agenda is the same. However, in this post-feminist moment, for those reappraising the value of intersectional identity politics (Gillman 2010), and for those advocating an integrated feminist critique of the economic, cultural, and political dimensions of injustice (Fraser 2009), the agenda has become “ambiguous” (Fraser 2009, 108).

An important consequence of this ambiguity for analyses centred on discourses by and about women in politics has been the preference for a more descriptive approach, which tends to limit its analysis to “observable” gender differences. In the political sciences, discourse analyses tend to play a secondary role, supporting primary qualitative conclusions drawn from quantitative evidence. Much scholarly attention has been devoted to gender-quotas, for example, wherein political behaviour and political cultural change is measured and compared on multiple levels. Primarily, however, this sub-field aims to discuss women’s representation in clearly quantifiable terms, as Judith Squires concluded, by “measuring representativeness” in terms of “issue congruence” (2008, 190). To date, she added, this research has paid little attention to the ways in which representatives narrate identities and “constitute gender relations” (ibid.).

27 Judith Squires (1999) offers a comparative summary of typologies that have developed around these feminist ontological debates and demonstrates how they interact with multiple approaches to the study of gender in political theory.

28 Much of this scholarship relies on Hanna Pitkin’s theory of political representation largely conceptualised in terms of “symbolic,” “descriptive,” and “substantive” representation (1967). By most interpretations, the first two of these three concepts ask who the representative is in socio-demographic terms and in what ways does that representative “stand for” a particular section or sections of the population. The third concept asks what the representative does to promote the interests of his or her electorate, and is conceptualised as “acting for.”

29 One clear exception to this statement is Sandra Grey’s PhD thesis in political science (2004). Grey’s discourse analysis of women-centred policy debates in Australia and New Zealand over a thirty year period, 1970-2000, focuses on the narratives that women’s movements introduced and measures the influence that these narratives have had on policy change in regard to childcare and unpaid work. An examination of the ways in which various representative actors narrated and constituted women’s identities in these changing societies forms a crucial part of Grey’s research design.
While reviewing a range of post-2005 gender-quota studies that focus on Chile and/or Argentina, for example, I find that priority is given to measurable variables such as the distribution of women actors in the formal political arena and socio-demographic characteristics, sometimes collected through self-reporting in interview-based studies. The historical contextual conditions that help explain women’s presence or absence is a third variable that is often supported by tabulated responses from national opinion surveys (Alles 2009; Archenti and Johnson 2006; Archenti and Tula 2009; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Fries Monleón 2010; González and Gherardi 2009; Stevenson 2009; Marx, Borner, and Caminotti 2007). In terms of behavioural characteristics, a number of these studies focus on the introduction of bills that will affect women citizens (processes), and the success of those bills in comparison to others (outcomes) (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). A minor number of studies examine the debate of these bills. However, given that discourse analysis in these studies supports other types of empirical data – including survey/interview data that is typically generalised, counted, and tabulated through content analysis – discourse analysis is typically brief. Such studies provide a valuable foundation from which to further explore the degree to which discourses construct, frame, code, reproduce, reinforce and/or weaken negative and positive experiences of political women.

In what follows, I begin with a brief overview of the core definitions and conventions constituting the feminist critical analysis of discourse. That is followed by a critical reading of a small but diverse selection of approaches to the gender-focused study of discourses by and about political women in Argentina and Chile (Franceschet and Thomas 2010; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Gerber 2005; Piscopo 2010; Thomas and Adams 2010; Vera 2009), in New Zealand (Trimble and Treiberg 2010; Trimble 2009), and in France (Ramsay 2003). Broadly, all of these sampled studies are informed by English-language feminist politics and theories. Further, this broad and complex realm of feminist scholarship yields findings that are useful to an understanding of women in Southern Cone politics (detailed below). Two of these discourse analyses used methodologies that are consistent with CDA: Trimble takes a feminist approach to frame analysis and Piscopo bases her reinterpretation of political representation on an emerging body of works that see “representation as a dynamic process of claim-making” and places an important focus on “the constitutive dimension of

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30 To strengthen this claim, I went beyond my own personal four-year search for both English-language and Spanish-language scholarship materials, by searching “Google Scholar,” for post-2005 articles that contain the terms “Argentina” and/or “Chile,” and the phrases “gender quota” and/or “cuota de género,” anywhere in the article. Within the articles concentrating on Argentina and/or Chile, I read only those that explored the impact of gender quotas in up to four countries.
representation” (Saward 2010, 3-9). Of particular interest to my own analysis is Piscopo’s reconceptualisation of descriptive representation as a “rendering” process, and as a claim-making “performance,” in which legislators produce both “complementary [and] competing narratives” about “women’s identities and needs” (2011b). All of the sampled studies address a theoretical and methodological gap in the discourse analysis of political women. My decision to work from an uncommon position is also intended to address that gap. Drawing from a pool of concepts instituted in the practice of CDA, this thesis offers an in-depth analysis of discourses by and about political women from a feminist critical position, namely, feminist critical discourse analysis.

CORE TERMS AND CONVENTIONS DEFINED

Key Feminist Ontologies and Epistemologies

Through my reading and interpretation of various feminist accounts of “subjectivity” (Alcoff 1988; Gill 2007; Young 2005), I have developed a particular understanding of what it means to “interpellate,” “constitute,” or “construct” a gendered subject through discourse. In view of the multiple, problematic and contradictory ways in which these concepts are understood, I reject social difference feminism’s relatively “unproblematic universal” and fixed conceptualisation of “women” as the subject of academic study (Dietz 2003, 408). I accept that having said that, most advocates of feminist theory recognise today that the construction of a collective category like “womanhood” or “motherhood” resonates clearly among many women as a necessary basis for collective political action (Gillman 2010). Further, I am informed by Latin American “knowledges” from other spaces that are not officially recognised as theoretical and feminist about both feminism and theory, and women. From my interviews with women human rights groups leaders, namely, the Madres Hebe de Bonafini and Juana de Pargament along with the AFDD’s Gabriela Zuñiga, together with my analysis

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31 Much of this new theory is consistent with CDA. For further reading, see Celis et al. (2009), Saward (2006), and Squires (2008).

32 I understand the term “interpellate” as a type of social construction. The term is based on Louis Althusser’s proposition that ideology hails individuals in a way that they “recognise” themselves as subjects (1971, 161). While Althusser stressed the constitutive power of ideology in this process, feminist social constructionists, such as Butler (1990, 1993), emphasised the ambivalence of a mutually constitutive process, which actually opens up a space for the resignification of dominant norms. Building on Butler, feminists that further problematise gendered subjectivities such as Alcoff (1998) and Young (2005) allow for a higher degree of agency in this mutually constitutive process by extending social construction to include the “embodiment” of experience.
of how these and other women’s organisations have expanded the boundaries of political knowledge, I establish that role-based collective action frames resonate in the Southern Cone context (Chapters Two and Three). In a related finding, scholarly attention to feminist and women’s movements in the Southern Cone reveals that this collective gender identity does not necessarily incorporate “univocal content in respect to gender relations…” (Ríos Tobar, Godoy Catalán, and Guerrero Caviedes 2003, 28-29). Given this situated idiosyncrasy, I am drawn to a broad range of Latin American feminist orientations that specifically locate gender discrimination in a previously-colonised part of the world, Latin America, where “womanhood” is both constructed and subalternised in ways that differ from the “First World,” in which I am geographically situated. Informed by my interviews with Argentine feminists Diana Maffía, Dora Barrancos, Natalia Gherardi, Monique Altschul, and Chilean feminists Carmen Torres and María de los Ángeles Fernández Ramí (see Appendix), I examine the contradictory and subversive effects of women’s socially, historically, culturally, and materially specific experiences on the ways in which gendered subjectivities such as “political women” and “feminism” are constructed in Southern Cone public discourses.

In regard to ontological and epistemological debates, I have chosen to position myself within political feminist theories written in English. As other advocates of feminism, I too have been influenced by Judith Butler’s conceptualisation of gender as a repeated discursive performance (1990; 1993). In Chapters Four and Five, for example, I reinterpret “the masquerade,” one of Butler’s well-developed concepts (1990). In turn, it is based on her examination of a wide range of feminist literature, Lacanian analysis, and Joan Riviere’s *Womanliness as a Masquerade* (1986). Based on my own interpretation of the masking process, I examine the multiple ways in which a “feminine mask” is used to disguise performance anxiety in complex situations of gender negotiation. In Chapter Four, I examine this concept as an avoidance strategy that stems from a fear of being identified with interrelated economic and/or gendered conflicts of the past, namely socialism, communism, and feminism. In Chapter Five, I focus on the mask as a strategic discourse to counter the tensions women face when they achieve “masculine success” and/or need to avoid the feminist label. In addition, I look for instances where these candidates might have removed the mask of universal representation in order to make specific claims that would strategically advance a feminist agenda in defence of contraception or abortion laws. However, I am not convinced that “there is no gender identity [or agent] behind the expression of gender” (Butler 1990, 25). I choose therefore, to rely on feminist theories that posit non-arbitrary gender identification processes, theories that position women as collective subjects according
to their shared “experiential knowledge” on one hand, and on the other as individual agents who can and do reconstruct and alter their fluid identities (Alcoff 1988; De Lauretis 1986; Gillman 2010; Moi 1999). I also find useful gendered conceptualisations of citizenship and social justice in a range of feminist critiques of the public/private divide (Okin 2001), of “the patriarchal welfare state” (Pateman 2000), and of the institution of marriage and the family (Okin 1989; Pateman 1988). To varying degrees, these epistemologies inform the ways in which I approach the study of discourses by and about political women in the Southern Cone. For example, I explore a range of interpretive frames that categorise and identify Bachelet and Fernández in relation to the nation-state, women’s roles within the family, and women’s rights as citizens. Likewise, I find Nancy Fraser’s gender-differentiated conceptualisation of neoliberal-capitalist economic structures (Fraser 2003; 2009), as well as Maxine Molyneux (2007) and Sylvia Chant’s gender-focused analyses of poverty in Latin America (2003a, 2003b), useful to my analysis of the ways in which Bachelet and Fernández articulated their economic policies (Chapter Four).

Primary Approach to Analysis: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

As a result of the widespread adoption of “discourse analysis” within and across academic disciplines, its definition has greatly diversified. For the purposes of my study, the term “feminist critical discourse analysis” references the examination of discrete utterances to substantiate larger feminist-informed claims. One fundamental aspect of this critical approach is the examination of “who uses language, how, why and when” (van Dijk 1997, 2). This is a line of enquiry in which discourse is understood as a type of social behaviour or as “a form of social practice” (Wodak and Reisigl 2003, 383). The underlying difficulty in defining “discourse” is that, like language, it is not fixed or stable. Nevertheless, there is a general consensus across disciplines that discourse “never exists in a vacuum” (Schiffrin 2003, 66). Hence, most schools of thought find it useful to make a clear distinction between discourse and text. In accordance with others (Cotter 2003; Kress 1988; Schäffner 2004; Titscher et al. 2002; van Dijk 1997; Wodak 2001), I regard discourse as a social process encompassing a more concrete product, the text. Discourse thus acts as a shaping force not only in text construction but also in text interpretation.

Finding inspiration in the earlier works of Habermas and Foucault, CDA analysts consciously broke away from descriptive, text-centred approaches in favour of a more explicit “concern for the (re)production of ideologies...” (van Dijk 1985, 3). For example, in
an openly ideological statement typical of those of CDA analysts who are informed by Marxist theory, Fairclough (1995) states the aim of CDA as being counteractive to abuses of power and manifestations of asymmetries and dominance in capitalist discourse practices. Given CDA’s “interpretative and explanatory” aim (Wodak 1996, 19), analysts tend to problematise discourse as a site of conflict and struggle between in-power groups and out-of-power groups (Wodak and Reisigl 2003; Weiss and Wodak 2003). For example, feminist critical discourse analysts argue that the “central concern is with critiquing discourses which sustain… relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group and disadvantage, exclude and disempower women as a social group” (Lazar 2005b, 5).

Most CDA approaches synthesise the notions of discourse and power, and discourse takes on a more dynamic multidimensional shape. At the same time, it is understood as a political process embodying power relationships. Discourse processes are said to simplify, divide, define and shape the complexities of our world in non-arbitrary ways. Working at the core of CDA, Roger Fowler (1991) analyses the journalistic techniques used to categorise men and women in the British media. Relying on a small corpus of 1980s British newspapers, he outlines interesting examples that illustrate pervasive “ideological paradigms in discourse which assign women special, deviant status…” (97). Fowler asked whether the media’s use of the diminutive “Maggie” for the then prime minister Margaret Thatcher was a discriminatory representation or instead “signifies friendly intimacy…” (99). Similarly, he asked whether Winnie Mandela’s politically active profile is diminished when she is primarily referred to as “the wife of…” (101). As regards the latter, Fowler’s analysis of familial categorisations found a disproportionately high usage of marital and kinship terms “in the case of women” (102). This, he argued, implies that women’s “public identity is felt to depend on…” these familial relationships, while men are usually represented according to their professional relationships, “outside the home and family” (ibid.). To a large extent the linguistic product (the text) is overshadowed in this approach as it calls more attention to text production and the consequences of discourse as a dynamic social process. Analysing discourse for its functional properties in this way implies motive and purpose on behalf of the user. It presumes that discourse is used as a means to an end. In reverse, CDA analysts believe that by making transparent their own socio-political goals they are replacing the opaque neutrality of descriptive approaches to discourse analysis. In other words, they problematise the process of discourse production and they politicise the process of analysis.

Critical discourse analysts work within a network of discourses on the macro level and stress their interconnected relationships, namely, interdiscursivity. For example, feminist
critical discourse analyst Mary Talbot draws an unlikely link between two “politically different” US organisations by examining their campaign strategies (2005, 175). One is the pro-choice campaign of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League. The other is the National Rifle Association’s (NRF) *Refuse to be a Victim* pro-gun campaign directed at women. Her critical analysis documents that the two campaigns “draw on similar themes and share a fund of rhetorical resources” (ibid.). Talbot’s analysis defines discourse in relation to how it communicates a shared ideology, which means that these campaigns “co-exist in the same political order of discourse…” (ibid.).

Norman Fairclough stresses the multidimensionality of discourse in his model of CDA (1992, 1995). For his purposes, discourse can be disaggregated into three interrelated parts: “social practice, discoursal [sic] practice (text production, distribution and consumption), and text...” (1995, 74). Social norms of a given society and culture, on the macro level, are therefore mediated by discourse practices, which Fairclough equates to the production, distribution and consumption of texts. Certain aspects of what occurs during this mediation process are then realised in the text on the micro level. As a consequence, Fairclough redefines the object of analysis as “discourse events” (1) and he analyses them for asymmetries of power, including asymmetries in “how texts are produced, distributed and consumed...” (ibid.).

Similarly, Teun A. van Dijk posits a multidimensional definition of discourse (1985, 1993, 1997, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006). He describes the cognitive interface, a dimension where language users are said to construct “mental *models* – of the events or actions the discourse is *about*” (1997, 18). Drawing on cognitive psychology this mental dimension is split into two levels: 1) individual cognition that accounts for “personal variation of discourse;” and 2) sociocultural cognition that explains how language users make themselves mutually comprehensible (17). Central to this methodology is an analysis of how we perceive, process, and store information. For this purpose, van Dijk incorporates a psychological concept known as scripts and frames (2002, 208). Described as mentally constructed “fixed categories... for the typical setting, events, actions and participants...” (208), scripts and frames are understood as culture-bound phenomena that enable speakers/writers to assume the hearer/reader’s familiarity with certain actions and events.

I find van Dijk’s conceptualisation of mental models useful in understanding how we subjectively construct, script, and frame our perceptions of “taken-for-granted” life experiences such as “reality,” “tradition,” “culture,” “the nation,” “the world,” “the self,” and “the Other.” By positioning individual utterances within these shared socio-cultural
constructs, I am better able to understand the “unobservable” evaluative criteria that shape and constrain individual perceptions: stereotypes, biases, prejudices, sexism, racial intolerance, manipulation, positive-self and negative-Other representations. Such cognitive devices play a vital mediating role in the complex negotiations occurring between shared socio-cultural and political knowledge and personal beliefs. As van Dijk explains, “what discourses signal or index... is not the social context itself, but the subjective mental models of the context as constructed by speech participants” (2002, 214).

Informed by the Gramscian notion of hegemony, “which foregrounds the winning of consent in the exercise of power” (Fairclough 1995, 17), van Dijk sees the cognitive interface as a potential site for the manipulation of public opinion by dominant elites: “Symbolic elites may impose their own beliefs as generally accepted knowledge, marginalise large audience segments by presupposing knowledge that is not generally known, or conversely by infravalorating [undervaluing] non-dominant groups as ignorant” (2005, 96). For example, the Argentine military constructed a discourse frame that defined the Madres as “locas” (crazy women, prostitute). By positioning the Madres within a dominant narrative of “abnormality,” the military attempted to block a positive perception of them as constructors of knowledge.

This manipulation process is reflected in an assertion made in CDA literature: “discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned” (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000, 448; Wodak 2001, 66). According to Fairclough, dominant ideologies and conventions become “naturalized” when they are embodied in discourse and “the hegemony of a class or group... is in part a matter of its capacity to shape discursive practices” (1995, 94-95). In targeting the “opacity” facilitating the naturalisation of hegemonic narratives, and by making opaque power relationships transparent through analysis (97), CDA is conceptualised as an instrument for “denaturalization” (94). Considering this approach’s focus on matters of identity, representation, racism, and sexism, it is unsurprising that CDA analysts’ attentions lean prominently toward the analysis of “political discourse.”

Primary Unit of Analysis: Political Discourse

In this thesis, I analyse a broad range of campaign materials. While these materials are not a neat representative “full set” of any singular communication medium, they do encompass the extended range of communicative options available to political candidates. Given my discursive focus, I have followed the narratives and frames themselves as they guided me
threadlike through the various media in which they appeared. My starting points alternated between discourses by the candidates (televised and radio-recorded speeches, published speeches, mediated interviews, and media articles authored by Fernández) and discourses about the candidates (campaign publications, televised campaign spots, billboards, biographies published during the campaign years). By allowing the threads themselves to guide me, I often looked beyond the campaign periods, to other key political moments. Then, in order to historicise these threads, I reconsidered them in comparison to my primary corpus of women-led social movement discourses (see Appendix), which consisted of my interviews with women leaders of human rights organisations as well as feminist and non-feminist NGO leaders (2009-10), testimonial publications authored by the Madres and the AFDD (when available in archives and bookstores), and my own direct experience of attending women-led events in Chile and Argentina (2007-10). A number of important factors limited the comparability of these two national corpora. On one hand, direct comparison of certain discourse types was complicated by their divergent provenances: for example, Fernández’ speeches are unscripted and Bachelet’s scripts were co-authored with her speechwriter Francisco Javier Díaz. On the other, these two political women addressed national audiences situated within divergent political, economic, and social histories. Furthermore, limited and largely superficial connections between Bachelet and Fernández made it difficult to consider how they might have seen each other or constructed each other relationally. Finally, access to online media articles was limited by embargos and restricted-access policies. Some searches proved fruitless; at other times, I was rewarded with a revealing path. In the aggregate, while highly diverse, this discursive material constitutes a corpus of “political discourse.”

Institutional discourse is viewed by Paul Chilton and Christina Schäffner (2002, 6) as the most obvious object for political discourse analysis. The separation of political and personal life into formal public and informal private spheres, respectively, yields an uncomplicated, common-sense understanding of “political discourse.” However, as most feminist critiques of this common analytical practice point out, everyday discourse is political. For example, it is difficult to distinguish between a politically-oriented family debate over the dinner table and a parliamentary debate, as these two discursive events are interrelated in terms of linguistic/textual behaviour (Wilson 2003, 399). In both contexts, members of a social group take part in a discursive power struggle, express political bias and employ characteristic linguistic devices of the debate genre, such as persuasion. To help my understanding of “political discourse,” therefore, I refer to Susan Okin, who used W.L. Weinstein’s “useful analogy between publicness and privateness and the layers of an onion”
as a way of repositioning these spheres in relation to each other: “something that is public with regard to one sphere of life may be private in relation to another” (2001, 118).

Throughout my analysis, I found that the family was frequently constructed as an allegory the nation, situating the family not as something separate but rather as a synecdoche for it. In situations of national conflict, for example, political division has led to the division of families, even betrayal. Using a feminist lens, the dinner-table debate features feminine and masculine codes that frame the performance of participants in this political discourse. It is not necessarily the case that the actors are each equally free to assume a political position and make a statement that will be equally heard and interpreted, based on individual choice. Instead, the family hierarchy, itself politically structured with codes defined by age and gender, and by rules that regulate who is allowed to present a particular viewpoint will help to frame how the debate takes place at the dinner table.

Finally, I realise that visual discourses form a critical component of the political campaigns under study. The importance of visual discourses is widely recognised in media studies. In examining newspapers, for example, “other semiotic modes” such as page layout and images are analysed as an important component of media discourse (Kress and van Leeuwen 1998, 186). This is particularly relevant in advertising where images, sounds, and words work jointly to persuade a consumer audience. Some comprehensive analyses of visual phenomena are described by feminist critical discourse analyst Michelle Lazar, who clearly acknowledges the usefulness of “a multimodal view of discourse… for a holistic feminist critique of discursive constructions of gender” (2005b, 5). She analysed the Singaporean State’s construction of fatherhood in a 1980s “pro-natalist” advertising campaign. In it, images of “the father protectively wrapping his arms around [the mother’s] shoulders” add to the linguistic representation of the father as the head of the family while connoting “an asymmetrical relationship” between the parents (2005a, 153). Throughout this study, I endeavour to include the visual aspects of campaign materials.

THE CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL WOMEN

As the foregoing review indicates, critical approaches to discourse analysis, especially CDA, employ the principles and conventions commonly found in feminist theory. Conversely, feminist approaches to political discourse analysis benefit from paying attention to cognitive devices, such as scripts and frames, in order to evaluate how gendered beliefs and ideologies are encoded, implied, processed, and consumed in the political arena. One of the strengths of
feminist CDA is that it is consciously “problem-oriented,” and it refuses to be confined to one singular disciplinary approach (Wodak 2001, 69). In principle, feminist CDA analysts do not narrowly limit their theoretical framework to that which is considered appropriate and acceptable for the field in which the discourse analysis is being performed. Instead, they endeavour to “develop a shared space of research” (Martín Rojo and Gómez Esteban 2003, 243), in which different disciplines “flow together and influence each other” (Wodak 2005, 95).

The discourse analyses that follow share two main themes. First, they result from a feminist-informed decision to centre on discourses by and about political women, and they take an overtly gendered perspective. Second, while all of these studies can be positioned somewhere within the diverse realm of feminist theory and praxis, they are also solidly situated within at least one other major discipline. This comparison of discourse analyses demonstrates that the more interdisciplinary a study becomes, as in the case of Raylene Ramsay’s interview-based analysis of French political women’s writings, the more easily identifiable is its advocacy of at least one variant of feminism.33

Of the studies originating from within Comparative Politics and Political Theory, the gender-focused sub-fields show a reliance on feminist political theories. Here, political discourse analyses commonly examine the framing of discourses by and about women, and the effects that such techniques have on elections, policy processes, policy outcomes, and more generally on gender policies. Susan Franceschet and Jennifer Piscopo (2008), for example, use interview data in their empirical study of Argentine law-making processes in the post-quota period (post-1991). In their study, while quantitative and qualitative analysis combine to provide evidence of the degree to which gender quota laws have advanced the substantive representation of women in the area of policy processes, the same conclusion cannot drawn for policy outcomes. The interview data substantiate the more compelling findings but they also help explain “why not just whether sex-differentiated patterns of

33 My choice of wording here is deliberate. I borrow from bell hooks the statement “I advocate feminism” as an alternative to the articulation of “I am a feminist” in order to avoid labelling the researchers in any limited, reductive way (1984, 30). Anticipating criticism, in the preface to her book, French Women in Politics, Ramsay expresses her concerns about examining “texts from different disciplines without established credentials in all of their methodologies...” (2003, xvi). However, she justifies this decision with the belief “that the scope for cross-fertilization across disciplines is increasing and collaboration is now necessary” (xvii). Toward the end of her acknowledgements, Ramsay gives thanks “to bold feminist theorists and to women’s writing as it came to modify the canon and inform my thinking...” (xviii). This finding also relates to Cherie Zalaquett’s interview-based study of Chilean women who assume positions in military or guerrillera organisations, Chilenas en Armas (2009). In her introduction, Zalaquett defines her analytical “strategy” as “crossing oral texts and testimonies with Judith Butler’s key thoughts...” (2009, 17).
representation emerge” (405). By way of discourse analysis, Franceschet and Piscopo reveal distinctly negative perceptions of women whose entrance into formal politics was facilitated by Argentina’s gender quota law (1991). Among the evidence of this negative perception is the derogatory labelling of these women as “mujeres de” (406). This derogatory label, literally translated as “women of,” points specifically to women politicians who are believed to have been nominated because of their relationship or kinship to a male political figure. My thesis explores the counter-strategies that this negative interpretive frame (“male patronage”) has provoked.

As an extension of the aforementioned study, Jennifer Piscopo (2008, 2011b) shifts her focus to how Argentine female legislators frame their remarks during sexual and reproductive health policy debates in the lower house of representatives. Piscopo made two notable decisions in this study. First, she decided to evaluate the “descriptive representation” of women constituents, which is conceptualised in political theory as a process through which women representatives “stand for” as opposed to “act for” women as a group or sub-group (Pitkin 1967, 61). In the second notable decision, she extended her understanding of descriptive representation “beyond numbers and statutes” to analyse the discourse used in the legislative debates, an approach “not commonly found in the empirical literature on women’s representation” (Piscopo 2011b, 449). For example, Piscopo uses discursive evidence to substantiate a claim made in her shared study with Susan Franceschet (above): In it, they claim that substantive representation measured in terms of successful policy outcomes depends on a combination of certain conditions, such as critical mass (defined as the numerical presence of at least 30 percent of a particular sub-group), a woman friendly “policy climate,” and an “institutional culture” that recognises gender equality (Piscopo 2008, 9). Conversely, substantive representation measured in terms of policy processes does not necessarily depend on these same variables. Piscopo’s analysis illustrates that in the processes of bill introduction and especially debate, women legislators are representing Argentine women in diverse and relevant ways. She demonstrates that descriptive representation does not necessarily depend on shared or fixed identities in terms of class, race, and economic status (socio-demographic variables). This is an important finding in view of the articulated concerns about the negligent effects of gender quotas and the stigma attached to “quota women” in Latin America (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008, 395). The latter

34 The debates centred on the 2002 Ley de Salud Sexual y Procreación Responsable (Sexual Health and Responsible Procreation Law) and the 2006 Ley de Anticoncepción Quirúrgica (Surgical Contraception Law).
are based on fears about their co-option by the state and their privileged middle-class detachment from women in lower socio-economic sectors.

Piscopo’s discourse analysis uncovers significant diversity among women representatives in these legislative debates. In part, this was made partly evident in “the deployment of conservative narratives” to frame arguments both in favour of and against the bills in question (Piscopo 2011b, 464). For example, Piscopo shows that some who were supportive of these bills leaned toward “pro-life” frames, in which they claimed that the lives of both women and foetuses can be saved from abortions through measures that prevent pregnancy (2008, 13). Conversely, others framed their supportive arguments in terms of their reproductive right to “choose when to become mothers,” which was underlined by the presumption that becoming a mother was “a natural desire” (2011b, 463). In her examination of the frames used in arguments by a small group of women against the surgical contraception bill, Piscopo reveals references to poor women’s “virtues and morals” and the expression of fears against “inhibiting gender role fulfilment” (2011b, 464). Her discourse analysis also illustrated the diverse ways in which “progressive” legislators framed their support for publicly funded contraception (ibid). For example, while some stressed the benefits to “women’s wellbeing,” others argued in terms of their sexual right to experience pleasure (2011b, 464-465). Revisiting these narratives, Piscopo concludes that “female deputies [representatives] constitute myriad identities for Argentine women” (2011b, 469). The fact that there was so much diversity and disagreement among female legislators both within and across partisan divides “neutralizes [fears about the existence of] essentialist tendencies in representing women: legislators can, and do, present multiple and competing visions of womanhood” (Piscopo 2008, 23). In Chapter Five, my criticism of the broad way in which Bachelet and Fernández constructed “womanhood” contrasts significantly with Piscopo’s findings.

Linda Trimble is another political scientist who takes a multidisciplinary approach to discourses by and about women in politics. One of Trimble’s major forthcoming projects critically analyses “newspaper reporting about male and female first ministers in Australia, Canada and New Zealand” (Trimble 2011). She argues that gender plays a relevant role in political reporting when women enter a political race. Trimble’s analysis of the New Zealand news media’s representation of Helen Clark suggests that gender is a critical factor,

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35 While male legislators were not the primary focus of this study, Piscopo also noted that “male opponents” tended to frame their arguments against the integral publicly-funded provision of sex education and contraception, including surgical methods of contraception, as “abortive” and akin to a “culture of death” (2008, 13).
demonstrated by examples from four prime ministerial election campaigns, three of which Clark won as leader of the contesting party. Beginning with the “overarching frame” for general elections, known as the “game frame,” Trimble acknowledges the claim that political elections are represented in the media as a “masculinist pursuit” that involves the militaristic terms and confrontational vocabulary associated with battles, wars, and boxing matches (2009). Trimble’s analysis illustrates in detail that once Clark entered that frame, as the first woman to run for prime minister in a New Zealand election, her presence provoked an increasingly gender-based, sex-based range of political vocabulary. Trimble’s findings reveal the ways in which three major New Zealand newspapers increasingly categorised Clark as a gender deviant over the four campaign periods studied.

Trimble’s findings point to a bifurcation process, in which dominant narratives separate political candidates into exclusive male and female dichotomies and then critique them for their adherence to or deviance from these gendered models. As Trimble explains, much of the New Zealand media discourse draws on and embraces popular caricatures that facilitate the simplification of a set of “complex events into familiar categories” (2009). In this case study, Trimble focused on four of these categories: “Cinderella Clark,” “The Warrior Princess,” “The Black Widow” and “the political dominatrix.” Trimble uses these four categories to frame her discussion of each of the four election periods – 1996, 1999, 2002, and 2005 – respectively. After a qualitative critical analysis and quantitative content analysis, Trimble concludes that increasing attention to Clark’s deviance from these “gender schedules” tended to qualify her campaign performance and appearance as markedly “manly” (ibid.). This gradual loss of “womanliness,” initially present in the “Cinderella” campaign, reaches the point of no return when accounts of the political candidates’ family histories highlight Clark’s “childlessness” (ibid.). In combination with a “whispering campaign” that Clark was a lesbian, these journalistic processes had managed, by 2005, “to position her as anomalously and dangerously unfeminine” (ibid.). Throughout my analysis, I explore the degree to which over-simplified role-based interpretive frames reinforce “a patriarchal social order” (Lazar 2005b, 5).

Trimble, Piscopo, and Franceschet had another opportunity to critically analyse discourses by and about political women in Rainbow Murry’s *Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling* (2010). Following the central organising framework of this project, all of the participating scholars asked whether “media coverage of female political leaders employ[s] gender stereotypes…” (Trimble and Treiberg 2010, 117). Over nine case studies, attention was focused on the gender stereotypes and media frames reinforcing a series of dichotomous
“double binds” that force political candidates into mutually exclusive gendered constructs (2010, 16). In their analysis of Helen Clark’s five political campaigns, for example, Trimble and Treiburg argue that the New Zealand media “emphatically masculinized” Clark’s public profile to such a degree that they “ultimately fostered negative assessments of Clark’s character and leadership qualities” (126). Similarly, Piscopo’s analysis of Fernández’s 2007 presidential campaign documented the Argentine media’s delegitimization of her candidacy through unfavourable comparisons to other gendered models of political leadership. Apart from comparing her to Eva Perón, Piscopo’s findings suggest that these media frequently compared Fernández with her departing president-husband and with other women senators and “first ladies, such as Marta Sahagán of Mexico and Hillary Clinton of the United States” (Piscopo 2010, 209). Piscopo concludes that “the media penalized her [Fernández] for violating traditional expectations about women as gentle and soft… [and] paid scant attention to her legitimate political credentials” (215). By contrast, Franceschet and Gwyn Thomas, who analysed Bachelet’s presidential campaign, suggested that she managed “to deftly avoid appearing too masculine by highlighting her concern for her fellow citizens and her ability to heal real and symbolic wounds” (189). At the same time, Franceschet and Thomas conclude that Bachelet was able “to combat the perception that she was too ‘soft’ to be president” without reinforcing “perceptions that masculine character traits are those most needed…” (190). The diversity of these conclusions validates the usefulness of this analytical approach to understanding the complex gender negotiations confronting women and the discursive strategies they adopt in political campaigns. In addition, the regional diversity of these nine case studies highlighted at least two comparative findings that differentiate Latin American political culture from North American. The first of these differences refers to the “familiar, sexual, and maternal” stereotypes that are typically used in combination with “nurturing” stereotypes to position left-wing women candidates. Murray concludes that these stereotypes were not as damaging to “women’s electoral prospects” as anticipated in Latin America or Africa (2010, 239). The second differentiating finding references the candidate’s age. I support Murray’s conclusion that the conditions determining whether or not motherhood is “seen as a barrier…” or whether or not age is “seen as an asset” are culturally specific (236). The fact is that “older women will be unpalatable to an electorate that does not value seniority in women” (235). As Murray concludes, “comments on Fernández’s age were limited to remarks about her attempts to preserve her looks, in keeping with evaluations of her as vain” (235), and as Murray highlighted, “in Chile, there is a much broader range of people that represent age and attractiveness on television than in the United States” (236).
While I would add that the latter is also true for Argentina, I learned from this comparative study the value of examining the wider cultural context to the critical discourse analysis of women in politics.

A parallel study (Thomas and Adams 2010) comparing the “influence of gender in the elections of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf” in Liberia and Bachelet in Chile, informs Murray’s findings above. In this study, Gwyn Thomas and Melinda Adams, who both contributed separate chapters to Murray’s anthology, provide further evidence to support the critical analysis of discourse within a cultural context. Johnson-Sirleaf and Bachelet were both elected to the presidency “in contexts often viewed as hostile to women…” (107). Nevertheless, these two distinctly different cultures also shared certain gender-specific “beliefs about women’s unique capabilities and strengths” (105). The discursive analysis of these two presidential campaigns reveals the similar ways in which both candidates successfully appealed to these beliefs: “both women explicitly argued that being a woman meant that they brought unique skills and perspectives to the job” (121). This study also demonstrates the importance of historicising discourses. In addition to the resemblance in gender ideologies, both Liberia and Chile boast strong histories of women’s movements that “had politicized issues of women’s political inclusion, and a desire for change in political leadership” (117). Thomas and Adams conclude that by drawing on these histories, Johnson-Sirleaf and Bachelet succeeded in “challenging and broadening the definition of political leadership in their respective countries” (124). With regard to Bachelet’s campaign, my study provides further evidence to support these two key findings.

Similarly to Thomas and Adams’ study, two separate Spanish-language analyses of Bachelet’s campaign reveal the importance of contextualising and historicising these discourses (Gerber 2005; Vera 2009). After positioning her analysis of Bachelet’s campaign discourses firmly within the context of this candidate’s life trajectory, Elisabet Gerber concludes that there was much more to political communication than the mere marketing of candidates as commercial “products” (2005, 68). In agreement with Bachelet’s speechwriter, who argued that “the candidate is central… it was the candidate who won and we helped” (67), Gerber confirms that Bachelet’s life expressed the “longings and demands that were latent in Chilean society” (17). In addition, Gerber’s analysis of how Bachelet’s campaign discourses responded to these longings and demands, suggests the protagonist role of public opinion “in the configuration of politics and also in the form of leader selection…” (68). I gained two valuable lessons from Gerber’s holistic approach: 1) the significance of asking
who these discourses address and interpellate, and 2) the symbolic power of implicit discourses, such as life trajectories, and invisible taken-for-granted codes.

Also written in the Spanish language, Antonieta Vera’s (2009) analysis of Bachelet’s campaign focuses explicitly on the strategic incorporation of “feminine difference.” By historicising a discursive construct that she names the “Public Mother,” Vera argues that the “encoding” of women candidates, “with ‘specifically feminine’ qualities that would come to ‘humanise,’ ‘renovate’ and ‘clean’ politics,” (117) has a long history in both conservative and progressive ideologies. Vera highlights the “discursive similitude between Bachelet of the twenty-first century and the nineteenth-century [suffragette] Martina Barros…” (123). Further elaborating her understanding of this culturally-specific phenomenon, Vera frames her analysis within Sonia Montecino’s thesis on marianismo (2001). By considering the “Public Mother” figure in a theoretical trajectory that is specific to Latin America, Vera constructs a range of campaign narratives unique to the Chilean culture: 1) Bachelet, the “heroine who suffered like the people and who rose above misfortune, who overcame the obstacles, who redeemed herself and forgave the past”; and 2) Bachelet, the “solo mother and… doctor who promises to heal the nation’s wounds” (122). Vera clarifies her core argument in a concluding statement:

Women will only have ‘permission’ to be ‘political women’ if they remain ‘feminine.’ The deployment of ‘strictly feminine’ qualities in the public space is inoffensive for the masculine domination of politics precisely because… it reaffirms the dichotomous strength of the difference between the sexes (123-124).

The first part of Vera’s statement cites a French study of political women (Dulong and Matonti 2005). This parallel finding suggests that gender injustices transcend national borders. This cross-cultural finding also feeds into the following review of Raylene Ramsay’s discourse analysis of a large body of writing by and about French political women (2003).

Like Vera’s study, Ramsay’s French Women in Politics reflects feminist theory influences. Ramsay situates her study within a range of feminisms with repeated references to the French feminists Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. These three scholars are commonly understood as difference feminists, because of their “commitment to the concept of irreducible sexual difference…” (Dietz 2003, 406). In addition to citing these

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36 For further biographic information on Martina Barros, see (Maza Valenzuela 1997).
French feminists, Ramsay invokes care theory, shaped primarily in the Anglo-American context. Finally, and again in parallel to Vera’s analysis, an interrogation of the deployment of “feminine difference” in pro-parity discourses forms a central theme throughout her book.

Ramsay opens her analysis of political women’s discourse by locating French political history within a global context. The term “French exception” (2003, 1), as she explains in a related publication, references two interrelated debates constituting the recent history of “French political representation” (2008, 45). From the perspective of “pro-parity women’s associations and intellectuals” (ibid.), this term highlights the comparatively late concession of suffrage to women in France in 1944,37 and the French legislature’s late commitment to gender parity in 2001. Compared to other parts of the world, where the right to vote (not necessarily the right to hold political office) was conceded several decades earlier,38 and in specific relation to the European context, where the high descriptive, at times substantive, representation of women in Northern European governments began as early as the 1960s, suffrage and parity debates constitute an important part of French women’s political theory and political history. In examining the growing parity debates of the 1990s, Ramsay’s discursive focus reveals a diverse range of anti-parity arguments. From the perspective of those advocating “the indivisible French Republic, universalism and integration,” pre-parity France was idealised as an “exception” because of a perceived “harmony between the sexes…” in comparison to poorly regarded “American or Anglo-Saxon” cultures (2008, 45). Among a cautiously supportive network of “women’s texts and voices” (67), an interrogation of the pro-parity argument for the benefits of incorporating more “feminine difference” into political life developed. For different reasons, universalists and feminists alike argued that the word “parity” had become a euphemistic Trojan horse. While feminists feared that the term had been misappropriated by advocates of universalism who subverted “the more controversial discourse of gender equality” (2008, 48), the pro-difference universalists feared that “parity” masked a divisive “war of the sexes” (45). In Chapters Four and Five, my analysis of campaign platforms and policies uses a similar feminist argument to distinguish between role-based and rights-based frames and agendas.

37 This date suggests a parallel between France, Argentina and Chile. In fact, France’s concession of the vote to women predates that of Argentina and Chile, in 1947 and 1949, respectively. Inversely, Argentine and Chilean governments made earlier gestures toward gender parity. Argentina first made clear advancements in gender parity in the 1950s under President Juan Perón. Both Argentina and Chile introduced gender quota systems in the 1990s, a legal requirement in Argentina.

38 Ramsay highlights “the new egalitarian frontier states of the U.S… [and] the pioneering colonies such as New Zealand and Australia” (2008, 1).
Within the context of these parity debates, Ramsay foregrounds a diverse body of texts and talk “on the experience of French women in political power” (xiv). Ramsay’s description of these discourses as a “writing on power and [a] re-writing of power” is of particular salience to my analysis of women’s counter-discourses in Chapter Three (2003, 11). Intimately informed by constructivist thought, this concept references Foucault’s discussion of “fictioning power,” a concept that Ramsay defines as “the capacity of creative language to capture or manufacture something that does not yet exist” (ibid.). With this in mind, Ramsay suggests that much of the theory developed in these political narratives, the hybrid fictional-autobiographical “(auto)fictions,” in particular, are filling a gap in “[mainstream] political theory… [which] has, until recently, given little place to the specificity of women and has largely ignored questions of emotion, sexuality, and private life…” (ibid.).

Ramsay’s analysis of this body of women-centred works lies within the two key concepts, “paternal authority and maternal legacy” (248). By pairing “paternal” and “authority,” she indicates a feminist-influenced criticism of gendered power relationships within the political sphere, which are not always clearly articulated or even consciously experienced. For example, she identifies a range of hegemonic discourses and codes that quietly undermine women’s prospects in high political office. In turn, the fictional genres examined in Ramsay’s study are believed to provide women with a less inhibited discursive space, where they can express the anxieties, vulnerabilities, and counter-strategies associated with these gendered power negotiations, in particular, “a conscious affirming of emotional, personal, maternal values” (254). My analysis of the Madres and the AFDD in Chapter Three explores these creative discursive spaces further and finds numerous parallels.

While Ramsay found that fiction allowed French women politicians to comment from this position on matters that are silenced in authoritative and publicly mediated political discourses, I found that Bachelet and Fernández lacked access to this fictional space. In addition, I believe that Latin American political women have to be understood within a context complicated by layers of subalternity not found in Europe. First, Latin American governments suffer from a sense of regional marginality vis-à-vis world super powers and multilateral institutions such as the UN, which enforce international norms and practices from what they construct as the “centre” onto the “periphery.” Second, as a result of a widely felt

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39 The range of genres explored in this study distinguishes it as multidisciplinary. Ramsay explores a wide range of narrative strategies via interviews, surveys, media debates, biographies, autobiographies, and finally, in a hybrid fictional genre that largely explores the self in an autobiographical way, namely, “(auto)fiction.”
sense of mistrust toward “parties and politicians” in Latin America, anyone fulfilling this role – be they male or female – expects to be automatically discredited upon entering the political arena (Ríos Tobar 2009). As privileged political elites and as Latin American women, Bachelet and Fernández had to negotiate a contradictory position of power defined in distinctly Southern Cone gender terms. I examine the compromises they made in terms of masking strategies in Chapters Four and Five.

Ramsay’s conceptualisation of writing power as a two-way process that seeks “paternal legitimization” and creates “maternal legacies” (2003), elaborates recurring themes shared by women in positions of high political office across diverse cultures and political spheres. For example, Ramsay links a masculinist range of French political and media discourses to “longstanding French traditions.” These include galanterie, a display of “medieval… chivalry toward the idealized lady,” and gauloiserie “locker-room humor that reduces a woman to her sexual function” (Ramsay 2003, 4). A ritual of conquest known as galantería also exists in Latin American culture and can be linked through its eroticisation of women to marianismo and machismo. The most contradictory of these oppositional practices is marianismo (Chant and Craske 2003; Montecino 2001). Depending upon age, social class, religious beliefs, and ethnic background, this cultural norm places conflictive expectations on women to live up to the standards set by the Virgin Mary. Given the impossibility of being sexual and having children while at the same time remaining virginal and being as perfect as the Holy Mother, this particular construction is profoundly problematic for gender relations. The more widely known term, machismo references a series of behaviours that degrade women in order to enhance male pride. It is typically exemplified by the refusal to share in domestic duties such as child rearing, cooking, and cleaning. Latin American galantería is machismo disguised in a masquerade of respect and care toward a woman: opening the car door for her or waiting for her to enter the lift - “ladies first.” When extended into the political realm, these male traditions confine women within “deeply entrenched paternalist and sexualized frames of reference…” (Ramsay 2003, 4).

The possibility that such traditions might undermine women’s achievements in the political realm is worth exploring in detail. Ramsay suggests that these hegemonic ideologies mark political roles in starkly gendered ways, as can be observed, for example, in the “lack of any provision for political husbands as opposed to the place of honor reserved for political wives” (2003, 4). Filling the strongly gendered support role of the First Lady with a male figure presents a problem beyond the comprehension of some. This was made evident in the New Zealand context during Helen Clark’s nine years as the prime minister. In contrast to
Clark’s very public life, her husband’s activities as a university lecturer remained very much in the background and out of the media. As Trimble’s analyses have shown (Trimble 2009; Trimble and Treiberg 2010), this added to speculation about the legitimacy of their marriage and Clark’s sexuality. In addition, many of the politically successful women in Ramsay’s study expressed feelings of guilt when husbands found themselves in “less powerful positions…” and the same apologies are made for time spent away from children (2003, 152).

Across the culturally varied literature sampled in this chapter, successful political women have expressed the difficulty of balancing family life with work. This is exemplified in Ramsay’s study when women politicians make specific criticisms of “partisanization, phrase-making rituals, the bubble… separating the powerful politician from the common mortal… [and leaving] no room for family obligations” (2003, 10). In Chile, Bachelet, a mother of three children, expressed similar feelings of sacrifice during her presidential campaign and lamented not being able “to do everything well at the same time” (Wood 2006). Likewise, parallel themes emerged from Franceschet and Piscopo’s interviews with female legislators in Argentina, who expressed “their discomfort with attending night time meetings, which are often held off-site in bars” (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008, 417). Franceschet and Piscopo explain how such practices form part of a system of “informal norms” in Argentine political institutions, which “create a double standard for women” (ibid.). In reference to these night meetings, one of their interviewees argues that when women “skip a meeting, they are treated as uncommitted to their work and thus lose professional respect. If they attend, however, they are considered more sexually freewheeling, and thus lose personal respect” (ibid.).

Examining the cultural expectation that French women politicians represent “physical attractiveness and elegance…,” Ramsay identifies another double standard (2003, 4). When physical attractiveness is interpreted in relation to the figure of the “coquette,” characterised as the “seductive, devouring and dangerous woman…” this image becomes attractive and “fatal” at the same time (159). Trimble’s analysis of the 2002 election campaign in New Zealand revealed a similar interpretive frame with very different implications. In this election, Helen Clark was categorised as the “Black Widow… as lethal to men [in that] she mates and then she kills…” (Trimble 2009). While the implications may vary, I believe that this frame references a set of conflictive double binds that also affect political women in Latin America: while women’s “power [is seen as] inseparable from sexuality and the body” (Ramsay 2003, 6), “the ‘correct’ image for political women is a maternal or non-sexual image” (159). As Murray’s analysis of double binds shows (2010), these expectations do
seem to transcend a range of cultures and historical periods. Further, Ramsay suggested that such physical, sexual descriptions of political women indicated that their “seduction” skills were being assessed as “opposed to competence” (2003, 105).

My findings suggest that double binds entrap political women in situations where gender-type “deviance” is inevitable. The media analyses undertaken by Fowler (1991), Ramsay (2003), and Trimble (2009) produce similar findings. Ramsey found the media “trivializing or gender-typing women” and delegitimising women’s political action by defining them as deviants (2003, 4). Several examples reveal women’s anxieties about gaining higher positions of political power due to the increased likelihood of being “suspected of being abnormal… of lesbianism, careerism, [and] hardness” (151). In other examples, Ramsay observes the stereotyping of political women through caricature-type figures: the too-soft “queen of hearts” or the too-hard “iron lady” (106). Notably, these epithets reduce women to easily recognisable categories that identify them as deviant. Parallels can be found in case studies from around the world. For example, the “Iron Lady” image became permanently attached to Margaret Thatcher after she sent troops into war with Argentina over the Malvinas (Falklands) Islands (Nunn 2002, 14). Further, it resembles the New Zealand media’s definition of Helen Clark as a “political dominatrix” during her 2005 campaign (Trimble 2009). Likewise, during the month preceding the 2007 Argentine presidential elections, a range of media sources published ex-president Raúl Alfonsín’s criticism of candidate Fernández for being “irascible” (iracunda) and for “infuriating society” (Clarín 2007).

The unconscious desire for “paternal legitimization” that Ramsay discusses has to be understood within French women’s post-suffrage history: while between 1945 and 1968, most women voters favoured “a paternal figure,” or a “father of the Nation” figure, the number of women who entered “public office with male patronage” was considered significant up until the nineties (Ramsay 2003, 5; 2012).40 Similar to Franceschet and Piscopo’s Argentine case study, which suggested that the stigmatised construction of women politicians with male patronage as “mujeres de” negatively shaped “perceptions about their capabilities” (2008, 403), French male patronage led to criticisms of their gaining only “delegated power” by way of the “widow track” or “father-daughter succession” (Ramsay

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40 French woman politician Hugette Bouchardeau wrote about this in her book *Un Coin dans leur monde* (1979) and again in 1987 in an unpublished manuscript on women and power that she gave Ramsay to consult.
In either case, these political women were viewed as non-threatening due to perceived obedience to the party “or the president who had proposed them for office…” (92).

In direct relation to male patronage, Ramsay finds women politicians shying away from behaviour, agendas, and policies that might threaten men’s “virility” (2003, 139). The difficulty of negotiating “deep feelings of illegitimacy and unease about assuming masculine power despite their own public success,” Ramsay adds, is heightened by the political realm’s lack of “sisterhood,” understood as “legitimacy conferred by other women” (5-6). Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) observe similar perceptions of illegitimacy among Argentine women legislators, who experience “a lack of respect for women who promote feminist initiatives” resulting in a lack of support and difficulty in “finding allies” (420). This is often accompanied by “demeaning characterizations” of women politicians as “las locas del 50-50, [the] 50-50 crazies” (ibid.). For Franceschet and Piscopo this absence of sisterhood helps explain the comparatively low success rate of bills relating to women’s rights in Argentina.

In addition, women who successfully reach high political office face “the problem of remaining ‘feminine’” (Ramsay 2003, 9). For example, Ramsay finds that French political women are expected to observe “rituals of seduction that regulate the ‘normal’ relations between the sexes…” (139). Although in a more recent study, Ramsay finds evidence of discursive shifts in this “long historical dualism” (2008, 58), this misconception might underlie the ways in which these highly successful political women were initially constructed as “women of influence” rather than “women of power” (4). The latter, Ramsay explained, would be considered “virile and threatening to… [a] ‘femininity’ so vital to the unconscious of French culture” (ibid.). Referring to this “collective unconscious,” Ramsay criticises “the incorporation of traditional feminine essentialism… [as] a major impediment to the acceptance of women holding power” (9). To exemplify this obstacle, Ramsay highlights the successful degree to which paternalist parties drew on “family programs and ideas of order, security, and nation…” to appeal to voters while political women were put to the “test of being ‘real’ women – feminine women, mothers, non-feminist” (ibid.).

Paraphrasing Jenny Chapman’s conceptualisation of “the ‘scissors’ problem” (1993), Ramsay identifies a double

41 Ramsay also asks if these biologically essentialist constructions might help explain why in France “many women do not vote for or accept other women in positions of high power…” (9). This point is mildly comparable with Bachelet’s election in 2006, where gendered voting statistics indicate that slightly more men (53.7%) than women (53.3%) voted for her in the second round. On the other hand, Thomas and Franceschet argue that Bachelet’s “highly gendered campaign [spoke] directly to many of the unrealised goals of women” (2010, 181). As a result, “the size of her victory compared to [Lagos]… was almost entirely based on her support among women voters, particularly among young women and working-class women” (192).
bind that traps French women politicians in-between their assigned roles “and their aspirations in the world” (2003, 164). Across all domains of activity, she argues, “feminism remains controversial, perhaps because it has such profound implications for women’s lives” (ibid.).

In Chapter Three, I concentrate on the legitimising power of “maternal legacies,” understood as an interpretive frame for a range of survival strategies. Within the unfavourable political context in which women encounter the need to prove their legitimacy, Ramsay identifies a counter-discourse that recognises “the power of the maternal legacy, of their need to change politics if they wish to successfully accommodate their difference” (2003, 87). Many of Ramsay’s observations suggest identification among these women politicians with elements of social difference feminism. One such element may be “a different voice,” which Carol Gilligan defined as women’s care-oriented morality and sensitivity for interpersonal relationships (1997). Within difference feminism, this celebration of the maternal is seen as a form of “resistance politics” (Ruddick 1989), even subversion, subverting the paternal norms described above.

I return to this theme in Chapter Three when I explore a range of counter-discourses created by women who transcended the public/private divide while at the same time espousing a maternal politics. Suffice it to say that this argument presupposes that such a divide has been constructed and is worthy of further discussion. To exemplify the separation of these spheres, Ramsay highlights the moment when “Mitterrand’s second secret family” was exposed by a media outlet (2003, 8). In response, there was “an outcry of protest in the reputable press,” as if to say that a (male) president’s private life is just that, private, and has no implication on “his” public function (ibid.). A parallel example can be drawn from the US in the Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky scandal, when the impact of Clinton’s private life on his performance in public life was furiously debated in the media. In parallel to my analysis of women’s counter-discourses in Chapter Three is Ramsay’s assertion that these separate spheres become “intertwined” or “deeply connected” (ibid.). Across a broad spectrum of political women’s autobiographies, for example, Ramsay observes a general pattern in which “personal memories” are intertwined with “a critique of the political system… and a policy manifesto…” (161). There is an emphasis on “personal responsibility,” “family demands” and “personal relationships” (8). This is contrasted with the memoirs of a former male president, which “centred on a public self with clearly drawn ego boundaries” (ibid.).

Of importance to my analysis are Ramsay’s observations suggesting that “difference” arguments resonate among supporters of “the parity movement” (2003, 5). Basing much of
this interpretation on women’s claims to having a “pragmatic sense of everyday realities…” to having a “greater concern for morality… future generations… and for the public good…” (6-7), Ramsay cites discursive evidence of a call “for a new kind of political practice…” (9). Quoting French politician Simone Veil, who claims to prefer “pragmatics” to “speech-making,” and who rejects “ego-flashing and antler-crashing words…” in preference for “a political morality less isolated from affect and more directly concerned with experience” (ibid.), Ramsay drums her point home by citing these women’s assertions of “pragmatism, honesty, moral purpose, and lack of careerism…” and their claims to hold the “creative power… to humanize the old political world and its systems” (153-160).

Like Ramsay, I also draw on social difference theory articulated by Sara Ruddick (1989, 1997) and Joan Tronto (1996). This argument calls for the resignification as “political concepts” of neglected constructs such as “care,” “interpersonal relationships,” and “interdependency” (Tronto 1996; Ruddick 1997, 1989). While Tronto sees their introduction into the formal political democratic institutions as a way to radically transform the public/private boundaries that “benefit some and not others” (1996, 145), Ruddick views the incorporation of “maternal thinking” into public policy as a means toward a more peaceful politics (1989). Ramsay, too, suggests that resignification was deemed necessary in “a system of power and a democracy that has been established without women…” (2003, 10). Following this argument, French political women reconceptualised political power in terms that are historically associated with “feminine difference”: “cooperative and practical, civic-minded, non-personally ambitious, and, in a sense, non-political”; conceive power and success “in terms of empowerment…” as having “the ‘power to’… exercise civic responsibilities or change society…” as opposed to having “power over”; and having “the ability to relate in meaningful ways to events and to others” as opposed to “winning political power in order to exercise control…” (ibid.). Drawing on these arguments in Chapter Two, my analysis of Southern Cone women’s movements explores a “feminine” construction of “power” in 1970s Chile. In addition, I make a case for the development of “care politics” in Chapter Four.

CONCLUSION

Bachelet and Fernández’ rhetoric of “newness” enabled them to legitimise their bid to be the first elected women presidents of Chile and Argentina, and their presidential campaigns represented a more inclusive phase of democracy in a post-dictatorship context where several
women candidates ran for political office. This expansion of democracy suggests shifts in gender ideologies. In asking how gender ideologies were negotiated during this moment, this chapter described CDA as a valuable methodology for locating political discourse within its larger social context, and feminist CDA as particularly useful in drawing out the gendered nature of these discourses. The chapter then reviewed the strengths and challenges of feminist CDA and proposed that Alcoff, Gill, and Young offer feminist approaches to the study of “subjectivity” that allow for a more fluid conceptualisation of gender, necessary in studying the positionality of political women in the Southern Cone.

Reviewing the current research on political women in the Southern Cone, I noted that several studies have focused on the politics of representation (describing voting patterns and outcomes for women), and recognition (critiquing stereotypes and frames). Much scholarly research into the significance of gender in defining political representation has shown that quota systems and the “widow-track” may reach a critical mass of women in government without 1) achieving substantive outcomes for women or 2) legitimising women as political leaders. Therefore these two means by which women come into power are discredited because they are seen as relying on paternal authority. I introduced Ramsay’s notion of “paternal authority and maternal legacy” in order to explore how both Fernández and Bachelet responded to existing gender ideologies. I posit that there are other means by which women achieve legitimacy in political leadership. In doing so, my thesis responds to Thomas and Adam’s call for more detailed attention to “how past and present women’s movements might provide particular openings for women presidential candidates” (2010, 127). Following Ramsay, I examine a rich resource of female leadership models, frames, and political discourses that “create a female genealogy and set up political mothers as role models to compete with founding fathers” (252).

In Chapter Two, I will review the history of women’s and feminist movements in the Southern Cone during the two major periods when collective action was most visible in the pro-suffrage (early to mid-twentieth century) and pro-democracy struggles (1970s-1980s). While this history attests to women’s power to act as citizens in altering their unfavourable conditions through collective action, these acts are not viewed as political according to patriarchal frames. Therefore, no model for women’s leadership in the public arena is made visible. According to this analysis, these movements fractured under pressure from the mainstream political parties. However, as I will show in Chapter Three, human rights groups in the Southern Cone expanded the definition of citizenship by linking human rights to socio-economic rights. I suggest that these parallel research areas (studies of women in terms of
representation and recognition, and movements for redistribution) are not often linked and my thesis responds to this disassociation by bringing these three areas of interest together in a three-dimensional concept of social justice (Fraser 2003; 2009).
CHAPTER II
WOMEN AS POLITICAL SUBJECTS AND AGENTS IN CHILE AND ARGENTINA

Similarly to women’s movements worldwide, those in the Southern Cone have attracted much academic attention only in recent decades. Following the 1960s and 1970s feminist consciousness-raising movements, academic studies of Latin American women’s political participation emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, as most countries in the region moved from dictatorship to competitive electoral politics. Some of these studies focus on the Southern Cone, particularly throughout the 1990s, when political observers began to show a growing interest in the institutional or state-level participation of women.\(^{42}\) Similarly focused studies have continued to emerge since 2000.\(^{43}\) Political events of 2005 and 2007 in Chile and Argentina, respectively, heightened the interest of those observers who favour a gendered analysis of women’s representation in politics.\(^{44}\) These referenced studies provide a comprehensive historical and socio-political background for a discourse analysis about these political actors.

Largely, I rely on Chilean and Argentine academics for insight into the history of Southern Cone women. I value the local knowledge, within and across various academic disciplines, especially the works of Cherie Zalaquett, Clarisa Hardy, Olga Grau, Sonia Montecino Aguirre, and Teresa Valdés in Chile, and Dora Barrancos, Elizabeth Jelin, Fernanda Gil Lozano, and Lily Sosa de Newton in Argentina. I recognise that historical recall is subjective and that academic texts are shaped by a political context in which these authors self-identify. This is particularly true of the history of authoritarian rule in Chile and Argentina, where it has been argued that the representation of turbulent memories challenges


traumatised societies, particularly in terms of the remembered and the forgotten (Jelin 2003, 154).

In addition, I include North American and European political studies focusing on Southern Cone women. While some might view analyses by Susan Franceschet, Donna Guy, and Georgina Waylen – based in Canada, the US, and Britain respectively – as “outsider” positions, such research is based on extensive interviews and testimonies of women and men who have lived through the experiences described, and offer a comparative perspective. I find these texts as comprehensive, well informed, and useful, for the purposes of this historical overview, as those written from an “insider” position.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN AS POLITICAL SUBJECTS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Recent research has clarified how the Latin American nation-state emerged from its colonial status by constituting nationhood based on similar patriarchal and liberal hierarchies as those that ordered late colonial society. Citizenship defined the individual political subject as a literate and propertied Euro-descendent adult male. In terms of political rights, all women were denied the right to vote and to run for political office until midway through the twentieth century. As constitutions were drawn up and the state increasingly regulated property law, the exclusion of women – as well as indigenous, Afro-descendent, mixed race, young and illiterate men – from citizenship was invisible in Enlightenment language that defined the freedoms and protections of the “people” from the tyranny of the monarchical state. Therefore, with regard to nineteenth-century Southern Cone women as political subjects, it is important to acknowledge that most men and women had no political or property rights before the introduction of legal constitutions in the early to mid-1800s; these rights were granted exclusively to propertied adult males and some women.45

Importantly, recent research on women as political subjects has clarified that although the liberal republican constitutions were designed to reduce the repressive influence of the Catholic Church, this process affected men and women differently. Elizabeth Dore has

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45 Dore explains that in “contrast to the the Anglo-Saxon legal tradition, where until the late-nineteenth century women were virtually denied juricial personhood, the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns granted women extensive privileges. Women could sign contracts, ratify official documents, make wills, and appear in court” (2000, 12). For further information on the Argentine Constitution, see Keen and Haynes (2000, 203). For a comprehensive account of Chile’s political history see, http://historiapolitica.bcn.cl/hitos_periodo/index_html, last accessed October 2011.
argued that “Latin American historians have tended to view the long nineteenth century as an era in which the state gradually dismantled major structural inequalities in gender relations” emphasising the “emancipatory effects of secularization” (2000, 4-5). Providing evidence to the contrary, Dore proposes that as legislation increasingly regulated life, “the general direction of change was regressive rather than progressive” for women because some aspects of the colonial religious legal tradition permitted greater equality between men and women than the legal status conferred by the liberal state on women (5). Hence, women, like indigenous peoples, lost some protections they had previously enjoyed in an increasingly secularised and market-oriented public sphere where the state assumed no responsibility for those who were not able to compete. In this context, new laws privileged literate, propertied, adult, Euro-descendent males.

The civil codes adopted subsequently reverted women’s legal status to that of minors upon marriage. Under the legal “protection” of their husbands, married women were deemed “incapable” of controlling their own finances, and of giving testimony in courts of law. In Argentina, for example, the 1869 Civil Code denied married women the right to receive an education and to manage a business without the husband’s consent. Of equal importance to the majority of men and women, there were no socio-economic rights, such as the right to fair wages and working conditions. Therefore rural, poor, indigenous, and Afro-descendent women worked in the domestic and public spheres without any form of legal protection but as a responsibility of propertied landowners or elder males. The substantial limitations that existed for women as legal and political subjects throughout the nineteenth century explain the challenges they faced in changing the dominant ideologies, codes, and laws that discriminated against them as women.

THE EARLIEST RECORDS OF WOMEN ORGANISING COLLECTIVELY AS WOMEN

Most observers of Latin American social movements would agree that by the early part of the twentieth century, those women who signalled an intention to “organise collectively as women” were elite and urban professionals, along with middle or working class women engaged in careers and waged occupations previously reserved exclusively for men. This self-identified group used terminology almost exclusively identified with women, and which distinguished them based on their differences from their male peers, i.e., urban middle,

46 Chile promulgated its first Civil Code in 1855 under President Manuel Montt. Argentina’s Civil Code was established in 1869 under Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s presidency.
working class, professional, and elite men. Thus, while diversity certainly existed among these women’s organisations, “womanhood” is one of the broad parameters that can be identified as a common denominator. How womanhood itself was defined varied according to ideologies and socio-economic strata; however, it has been broadly asserted that the early activists tended to organise themselves around the ideals associated with the domestic angel, rarely stepping outside the norm in terms of gender definitions (Deutsch 2001; Franceschet 2005; Valdés 2000). Largely in nineteenth-century organising, women chose to differentiate themselves from men by stressing that which was considered “feminine” – placing particular emphasis on motherhood as the purest expression of womanhood.

Despite this common thread, the literature stresses the movement’s heterogeneity, which in the early women’s movements was social-class based. According to Teresa Valdés (2000), women organising in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries divide into three class-specific groups: “middle class women [who] organised themselves principally in cultural spaces” (19); women from the popular classes, especially working-class women, who “had a systematic link with other organisations tied to the labour movements and popular movements” (20); and upper-class women, who were “strongly influenced by Catholic discourse on women’s role and the importance of assisting those who are more defenceless…” (20). Contrasting social aspects, particularly religious creed, and the distinct political structures of Argentina and Chile led to divergent goals within organisations of the same class. However, the strategies of each group reflected with “certain regularity” (19) the class-based specificities of their participants.

Middle Classes: Print Media

During most of the nineteenth century, middle and upper-class women, particularly those formally educated overseas, gathered in literary circles and intellectual associations. Somewhat informed by early European and North American women’s movements, women brought to these cultural circles a more visible concern for the “social, economic, juridical, and political subordination” of women (Valdés 2000, 22). Therefore, it was largely through

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47 There was nowhere for women in Argentina to get a university education before the 1880s, when Cecilia Grierson (1889), Elvira Rawson (1892), and Petrona Eyle (1893) graduated from medical school (Barrancos 2010, 118-119). Likewise, in Chile, university education was advanced to women in 1877 by the famous Amunátegui decree (Miguel Luis Amunátegui). Ten years later in 1887, Eloísa Días and Ernesta Pérez Barahona became the first women to graduate with professional titles in Chile and South America, as medical surgeons (Valdés 2000, 18).
these women that a growing concern for all women’s social, civil, and political rights found its voice. Middle-class women, in particular, publicly channelled their voices in women’s journals, magazines, and newspapers.

Among the earliest examples, three periodicals appeared in Argentina during the first half of the nineteenth century.\footnote{Drawing on statistics presented at “the Seminar on Feminism and Culture in Latin America, Women, Culture, and Politics in Latin America (Berkeley, 1990)” Mariano Plotkin asserts that compared to other parts of Latin America, Argentina had “the greatest number of women’s periodicals published between 1800 and 1988: 73 in total” (2003, 239).} However, not all were quite what they seemed. While La Aljaba (1830-31) distinguished itself as the first Argentine periodical to be written by women for women, it suffered stiff opposition and published just 18 issues. The hardest blow reportedly came from another “women’s” periodical, La Argentina, viewed by some as “dedicated to the dissemination of women’s rights” (Valdés 2000, 22). According to Argentine historian Lily Sosa de Newton, however, this periodical was designed to oppose La Aljaba “by way of mockery” and was in fact written by a man posing as a woman (2007, 213). The third Argentine publication is La Camelia, published in 1852. Indisputably feminist in its intentions, its slogan was, “Liberty, not licence. Equality between both sexes” (Sosa de Newton 2007, 213-214). Similarly, only 14 issues were published.

One of the most iconic nineteenth-century Argentine women writer-publicists was Juana Manso (1819-75), admired by feminists today for her contribution to the “feminisms” of her time. Born in Buenos Aires, Manso was exiled to Brazil in 1841 and travelled from there to the US and Cuba, returning to live in Brazil from 1850 to 1859, where she founded the first “feminist newspaper” of the region O Journal das Senhoras (1852-54) (Southwell 2005). After returning to Buenos Aires, she committed her professional life to women’s education, within a broader movement led by liberal Presidents Bartolomé Mitre (1862-68) and Domingo Sarmiento (1868-74) for a popular education system that was free of Catholic dogma. In 1869, she became the first woman to hold a civil service position of decision-making authority, when Sarmiento appointed her to the Board of Public Instruction (Peard 2008, 469).

In a context of women’s improving educational opportunities and literacy rates, women’s publications in the Southern Cone region increased toward the end of the nineteenth century. One of the earliest examples from this period in Chile is La Mujer, founded in 1877 by Lucrecia Undurraga (Maza Valenzuela 1997). The all-woman editorial team centred their efforts on reforming Chile’s Civil Code and its education system, arguing that civil and social matters should take precedence over women’s suffrage. In a frame that would further delay
women’s suffrage until well-into the twentieth century, these women gave priority to civil over political rights, reflecting their support for the anticlerical parties which actively campaigned to increase state control of education. Hence, Chilean middle and upper-class women aligned with the Liberal and Radical parties (Maza Valenzuela 1997).

Despite the fact that literate middle-class women’s strategies provoked antagonism in the male-dominated world of publishing, it was through such publications that women-centred, occasionally openly feminist, ideas found a platform from which to enter into public debate. Lacking access to the formal political sphere where decisions were made on behalf of women, they nevertheless found an alternative channel to express their opinions on policy to those men who were in control.

Working Classes: Unionisation

Women first organised among Latin America’s urban-centred working classes. In the rural sectors, early women’s organisations were linked to popular struggles for land, for the rights of indigenous peoples, and for better living conditions. However, as Latin American states had little labour legislation at this time, the initial union-type organisations lacked “legal recognition” (Valdés 2000, 23). Early women’s unionisation efforts took place amidst industrialisation, rapid urbanisation, poor living conditions, and “precarious working conditions…” (24). Two gender-based factors characterise these organisations: the gender specificity of women’s demands, and their early protest actions. Apart from supporting commonly held demands for a shorter working day, fair pay, and better working conditions, women specifically demanded pay and working conditions equal to those of men and reportedly, maternity leave. In 1818, a group of Venezuelan women laundry workers made history by stopping work in protest of payment owing for work done.

Greater industrialisation, a larger labour movement, and large numbers of women entering the workforce explain why Argentina preceded Chile with examples of women’s protest action. Argentine strike action was first recorded in 1888; notably, a group of women domestic workers. Subsequently, women headed pressure group strategies in 1900, when “garment and textile industry employees started to use protests… as a form of political pressure” and in 1901, women were among the first to establish “resistance societies” with factory and service industry employees (25). Chilean women followed closely in 1907, when

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49 I am indebted to Valdés for all information in the following discussion on women’s unionising in Latin America unless otherwise indicated.
“seamstress, weaver, and window dresser’ societies… carried out their first strikes” (ibid.).

The twentieth century also saw the development of workers’ federations that recognised the importance of “women’s participation in labour struggles,” with all-women federations or women’s sections within mixed federations (ibid). One of the earliest all-woman federations to emerge in the region was the Women’s Union Workers Federation, (Federación Unión Obrera Femenina), established in Chile, 1920.

Working women’s protest action was channelled through “conferences and the women workers’ press” (Valdés 2000, 25-26), which had a unifying effect on the women’s movement, calling on other women to form unions, to demand equality in the workplace, and in most instances, to further extend these to the home. A well-documented archive of working women’s media arose in the urbanised centres of Chile, particularly Santiago and Valparaíso. There, the women editors of two successive publications had strong ties to the socialist led labour movement. Carmela Jeria Gómez, the editor of La Alborada (1905-07), collaborated with Luis Emilio Recabarren, leader of “the pro-worker faction of the Partido Demócrata” (Hutchison 1992). Esther Valdés de Díaz, founder of a garment workers’ resistance society in Santiago, edited La Palanca (1908) and was one of La Alborada’s key contributors. Both publications were committed to voicing women’s demands as workers. Socialist feminists largely self-identified by social class in the initial stages but by the second year, they proclaimed feminism as their primary goal (Lavrin 1995, 23). Broader feminist goals were explicit in the short-lived La Palanca, when it began to publish demands for working-women’s civil rights, “in the home, in the street, and in the workplace (los talleres),” and feminist discourses were clearly evidenced in their demands for contraception “to end compulsory motherhood among working women” (ibid.). However, historians such as Asunción Lavrin (1995) and Elizabeth Hutchison (1992) argue that these early feminist writers failed to bridge the contradictory nature of their actions: the irony of denouncing female oppression in the workplace and in the home, when the same practices were evident within the male-centred socialist movement.

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50 This example follows the establishment in 1916 of the Federación de Vendedoras del Mercado Uno in Paraguay (Valdés 2000, 25).
51 La Asociación de Costureras de Santiago
52 Women workers were often blamed for worsening the conditions of their male counterparts, either through their replacing men or their “passivity in the face of capitalist exploitation” (Hutchison 1992).
Aside from their protagonist role in the better-known struggles for women’s suffrage, upper-class women did not engage in what observers consider as “collective action” in the modern feminist sense. Nevertheless, there are numerous examples of women from the privileged classes organising collectively as women, for the recognition of women’s basic social, civil, and political rights. Charity work required them “to get in touch with social reality” and “develop skills in areas such as management and social action” (Valdés 2000, 29). In some cases, exposure to the extreme levels of inequality faced by poor women increased upper-class women’s sensitivity to their own lack of rights, and thus “heightened their feminist outlook…” (Maza Valenzuela 1995, 5).

Indeed, some upper-class women’s organisations demonstrated some feminist interests. According to Valdés, an Uruguayan philanthropic society, established in 1843, the Sociedad Filantrópica de Damas Orientales, is viewed as a “precursor to feminism” (2000, 28). A network of working-women’s unions in Argentina, administered by upper-class Catholic women, had “feminist goals,” according to Sandra McGee Deutsch (2001, 227). Here, “feminist” refers to this group’s reluctant endorsement of women’s right to vote and their diplomatic defence toward the end of the century of “equal pay for equal work” (ibid.), providing that such rights did not interfere with women’s work at home or their adherence to Catholicism (Deutsch 1991a, 316).

The most persistent characterisations of upper-class women’s charitable efforts concern their reinforcement of conservative gender ideologies, particularly the value of “femininity.” Valdés provides us with this example:

> [they] organise themselves formally to the point of institutionalising a type of collective action that provides welfare specific to domestic society. This function was and continues to be assumed feminine, in that it corresponds to the mariano stereotype of women at the service of others, in this case, of the needy (2000, 28-29, my emphasis).

Both their actions and moral teachings responded to ideological demands that “decent” women, following the values of marianismo, play a nurturing role in society.

Thus, for upper-class women, working outside the home necessarily conformed to the traditional perception of women’s “inherent” altruism. They fulfilled these nurturing roles as
providers of educational facilities, housing projects, hospitals, and unions, reaching out to poor women, and becoming responsible for the care and protection of poor children, particularly orphans. Two examples are the Beneficence Society of Buenos Aires (Sociedad de Beneficiencia de Buenos Aires), established in 1823 as part of President Bernardino Rivadavia’s social, educational, and economic reform programme, and the Ladies’ Beneficence Society (Sociedad Benéfica de Señoras), founded in 1852 by Antonia Salas de Errázuriz, daughter of Manuel de Salas, patriot in the Chilean Wars of Independence (Valdés 2000, 27-28). While neither of these societies challenged women’s roles, they filled a gap in providing social welfare to women and children over long periods – 100 years in the Argentine case – and the women became personally aware of social class differences.

A shared sense of clearly defined gender roles enabled Chilean and Argentine women to see themselves transcend, albeit for strategic reasons, the highly polarised class division between rich and poor. Upper-class women may be distinguished from the emerging middle class in Argentina in their link to the popular classes through beneficence societies. In Chile, women of the elite and middle classes were more likely to split along politically-based lines, affiliating themselves with either the secular policies of the Liberal-Radical alliance or the clerical policies of the Conservative party.

An extraordinary example of cross-class organisation is found among women acting under the auspices of Social Catholicism, who were regarded, by the Catholic Church at least, as “guardians of purity…” (Deutsch 2001, 225). These exemplary figures were endowed with “substantial influence in the moral realm” (226). With these philanthropic activities, upper-class women maintained their self-sacrificing image and disguised the principal driving forces behind their work with the poor: the fear of rising trade unionism, which threatened their privileged status. Indeed, women’s role in countering the perceived trade unionist threat was particularly evident toward the end of the nineteenth century, when poorer women began to enter the increasingly industrialised workforce in larger numbers, reaching “about 24 percent in Argentina in 1909, [and] 28 percent in Chile in 1907…” (Deutsch 2001, 225-226).

In Chile, upper-class Catholic women were strongly provoked into defending their faith by the threat of rising anticlericalism, particularly in the Conservative party’s race against an anticlerical Liberal and Radical party alliance. After witnessing upper-class Catholic women’s capacity to organise and rally in support of the Church, conservative political religious elites adopted these women as powerful allies. Their key strategy was two-fold: to indoctrinate poor women into Catholic teachings, and to enfranchise them. By indoctrinating women, they hoped to reach whole families, particularly men, thereby
reinforcing the religious impact on electoral outcomes. While unsuccessful in enfranchising women until 1934, they recognised much earlier that enfranchised Catholic women could significantly enhance the Conservative party’s electoral base (Maza Valenzuela 1995, 1997).

In Argentina, religiously activist upper-class women were mobilised into defending the moral realm by a growing sex industry. Donna Guy’s (1990) study of prostitution in Buenos Aires informs us that increased urbanisation, mass European immigration, and the legalisation of prostitution in 1875 made the port cities in Argentina attractive destinations for women fleeing socio-economic problems in pre-WWI Europe. Between the 1860s and the outbreak of WWI in 1914, working-class Europeans flooded into Buenos Aires, increasing the official population from “180,000 to more than 1.4 million” (38). Immigration and migration patterns created an uneven urban ratio of men to women and a highly competitive labour market. To survive in this social climate, women found that prostitution or working for lower wages than men were essential. Given the miserable conditions of the alternatives to prostitution – domestic service and the textile industry – (Guy 1990, 42), working-class women were said to have chosen “the promises of a better life, parties, dresses, dances and breaks” offered by the sex industry (Juan Lazarte, quoted in Sosa de Newton 2007, 295).

While prostitution was legal and viewed by Catholic Argentine leaders as a “necessary evil,” many moral, criminal, medical, and philanthropic authorities endeavoured to control and eliminate it (Guy 1990, 29). Thus, alongside representatives from other philanthropic organisations, women working for the Beneficence Society of Buenos Aires and the Catholic International Association boarded incoming ships in search of immigrant women headed for the legal bordellos of Buenos Aires (Guy 1990); on interception, they provided needy immigrant women with shelter and attempted to find them more socially acceptable employment. For working prostitutes suffering venereal disease, the Beneficence Society ran the only public women’s hospital in Buenos Aires; it housed a prostitution clinic, staffed by legally-empowered public physicians known as higienistas, who also administered a public registry of prostitutes.

FEMINISMS AND THE FIRST WAVE

Valdés’ use of the term feminisms rather than feminism or the feminist movement is an attempt to “highlight the heterogeneity and complexity of the wide universe of women and groups that self-identify as such” (2000, 29). The early twentieth century is marked by a rapid expansion of feminisms throughout Latin America. Most observers see this period as the
feminist movement’s defining moment because, for the most part, this movement was led “by women who self-defined as feminists… [through] conferences that were declared as feminist… [where] the organising theme was the defence of women’s rights, in general, the right to suffrage, in particular” (ibid.).

Argentina provides one of the earliest examples of recognisable feminisms, especially for its “international character” (Valdés 2000, 30). In 1906, the International Congress of Free Thought (Congreso Internacional de Libre Pensamiento) was organised by Elvira Rawson’s Feminist Centre, established in 1905. In harmony with the Feminist Centre’s goals, this conference broached the topic of women’s liberation, formulating a list of demands for gender equality in education, employment opportunities, pay, property law, and “the freedom for married women to choose an independent lifestyle” (ibid.).

This conference led to the National League of Freethinking Women (Liga Nacional de Mujeres Librepensadoras) in 1909, established by a team of women’s rights activists, among them, Julieta Lanteri, who in 1911 earned the reputation as Argentina’s first suffragist. The First International Feminist Congress (Primer Congreso Feminista Internacional) followed in 1910. The Feminist Congress was organised by the Argentine Association of University Women (Asociación de Universitarias Argentinas), headed by Petrona Eyle. The Congress was initiated by Cecilia Grierson whose middle-class feminist and secular outlook contrasted with her contemporaries in the more conservative upper-class National Council of Women. A key founding member of the internationally linked National Council, Grierson broke away it in 1904. Their conflicting ideologies were clearly expressed in an opening speech made at the Women’s Congress, which was sponsored by the National Council in 1910, the same year as The First International Feminist Congress. According to Sosa de Newton, the National Council’s president Albina van Praet made it clear “that the Council had nothing to do with feminism, and highlighted the Catholic orientation of its members” (2007, 147).

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53 The list was entitled the Plan Mínimo de Demandas Femeninas.
54 In 1911, Lanteri was able to register for the electoral roll and later vote in the Buenos Aires municipal elections. For this achievement, some view her as the first woman to have voted in Latin America (Barrancos 2002, 53).
55 The Second International Feminist Congress took place exactly one hundred years later, in 2010, in Buenos Aires.
56 In addition to its international links, the National Council was linked to the Beneficence Society of Buenos Aires through its president, Albina van Praet de Sala.
57 Alongside other discontented members of the National Council, Grierson founded the Argentine Association of University Women in 1904 to “provide moral support for professional women, and to preach rational feminism” (Carlson 1988, 102). In 1910, after several years of conflicting interests, both Grierson and this organisation officially separated from the National Council. Their separation was marked in the same year by the organisation of a women’s conference with a more explicitly feminist agenda.
Although the feminist label was sometimes directly rejected, the struggle – implicitly for political rights, explicitly expressed as women’s suffrage – reveals the influence of a broad international movement of feminist thinkers involved in the denunciation of women’s subordination and gender-based inequalities, and who in some parts of the world had won the right to vote. In the Chilean mining sector, the Belén de Sárraga Women’s Centres, founded in 1913, emerged as a milestone for Chilean feminism’s consolidation as a movement (Antivilo Peña 2008, 99; Carrasco 2008, 141; Franceschet 2005, 41). Named after the Spanish feminist, these centres adopted de Sarraga’s free-thinking dogma, rejection of clericalism, and ideas on fighting the oppression of working-class women from the base, through education, popular theatre, conferences, and a network of centres for women, especially those connected to the mining sector. Their supportive work in the labour movements recognised the dual layers of exploitation of women as workers, and they fought on both levels for “women’s emancipation” (Kirkwood 1990, 105).

Susan Franceschet (2005) defines the rise and fall of first-wave feminisms in Chile according to the strategies employed, namely, the politics of difference and autonomy. As stated earlier, women’s movements in Latin America demonstrated a preference for a politics of difference, and for emphasising “femininity.” Franceschet asserts that early feminists in Chile never challenged existing gender ideologies. Instead, she claims, the first-wave of feminists used these very divisions to mobilise women into supporting their struggle for “political and social rights” (2005, 35).

This paradoxical decision, according to Franceschet, is best explained by Chile’s political and economic context, which was dominated by “democratization, intensifying partisan and class competition, and state-led industrialization...” (2005, 35). Baldez (2002) explains this competition as a consequence of a collapsing economy: prompted by the 1910 economic crisis, political parties began to realign themselves in class-based ways, which translated into a shift away from “the religious-secular cleavage” (2002, 22). Increasingly competitive behaviour, as parties jockeyed for dominance, gave political men a bad reputation. The emergence of MEMCh, (Movimiento Pro-Emancipación de Mujeres de Chile), and this group’s official rejection of party affiliations demonstrate the negative view of class-based partisan politics in the 1930s (see below). Julieta Kirkwood conceptualises this negative perception as a loss of “social legitimacy...” and as a result of political irresponsibility (1990, 162). Thus, politically active women, seeking public support,

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58 For example, women suffragettes in New Zealand won the right to vote in 1893, Danish women were granted the vote in 1915, and women in the United States and Germany gained the vote in 1919.
differentiated themselves from political men, framing their gendered position as autonomous and apolitical. Interestingly, we will see an echo of this gendered differentiation in the campaigns of Bachelet and Fernández.

Paradoxically, even after the first woman was elected to the Chilean Senate, (Maria de la Cruz of the Chilean Women’s Party, Partido Femenino Chileno) in 1953, women were still constrained ideologically to the social domain by feminine role-based discourses. Motherhood was seen as woman’s primary role in Chilean society, followed closely by caretaking roles. In practice, men controlled the formal political arena even after women had ruptured the gender barrier into public life on multiple levels.

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY: ATTAINING THE RIGHT TO VOTE

It was not until the 1920s and 1930s that “women’s rights” became a common objective in Latin American women’s organising. This meant that women’s demands for gender equality in this period developed into a movement, or a “unified struggle” (Valdés 2000, 32). Of the Chilean case in particular, Franceschet asserts that besides differing class-based and ideological demands, “most organised women wanted civil code reform, especially greater control over marital assets for married women” (2005, 41). The struggle for women’s suffrage had a strongly mobilising effect, becoming just one example of a much broader fight for equal civil, social, and political rights, as equal citizens.

With good reason, women’s suffrage struggles opened further debate about their subordination as second-class citizens. Legal discourses played a significant role in reinforcing the gender inequalities of the early twentieth century in the Southern Cone. The canonical foundations of the Argentine and the Chilean Civil Codes, and the fact that most family laws were not significantly reformed until 1926 in Argentina and 1934 in Chile, meant that married women were still legally subordinated to their husbands, despite changing economic realities. Even after these significant reforms, however, women’s subordination was retained in the family law known as patria potestad (father’s authority). In Chile, for example, the 1934 reform law preserved the husband’s complete legal and administrative control over family finances, property, and children (Franceschet 2005, 37-38). As increasing industrialisation and economic challenges welcomed larger numbers of lower-paid women into the urban workforce, these legal codes reinforced the socially entrenched nineteenth-century discourses and gender ideologies that now contradicted women’s participation in society as workers and/or professionals.
Nevertheless, arguing the benefits of family law reform posed less of a challenge than justifying women’s full suffrage in Chile and Argentina (Lavrin 1995, 207). In broad terms, increasing women’s access to political life implied ceding women access to the public sphere, which in turn led to questions about the traditional public/private dichotomy. However, given women’s important role in the “reproductive economy” (unpaid domestic labour), those who opposed greater access argued that absent mothers would neglect their maternal duties in the home.\(^{59}\) In addition, legally reinforced definitions of women’s roles suggested that they “were simply not prepared for assuming such responsibility…” (Valdés 2000, 35). Facing such resistant, deeply embedded ideologies, women in Argentina and Chile could only hope to achieve gradual political change. In Argentina, where municipal suffrage was conceded briefly to women in two provinces during the 1920s,\(^{60}\) the battle for women’s political participation was delayed by an exclusionary, conservative Senate. As a result, “Argentine women would have to wait until 1951 to participate in the national elections” (Navarro 2001, 6). Similarly, the 1941 Chilean women’s suffrage bill was delayed for eight years in its Congress.\(^{61}\) With the exception of municipal suffrage, conceded in 1934, women did not attain full legal suffrage until 1949.

Despite and because of these ideological barriers, the number of women’s pro-suffrage groups in Chile and Argentina increased rapidly during the early part of the twentieth century. In Chile, an elite beneficence organisation known as the League of Chilean Ladies (Liga de Damas Chilenas) emerged in 1912. In the face of rising anticlericalism, particularly within the leftist labour unions of Chile’s important mining sector, the League expressed a strong moral obligation to educate poor and working-class women through the formation of, “Catholic women’s labor ‘unions’…” (Deutsch 2001, 226-227). Sharing allegiances with the Catholic Church, this organisation aligned itself with the Conservative

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\(^{59}\) Liberal politician José Maza Fernández provided a pertinent example of this kind of argument in 1913: “[a] woman in society, in the home, and in the family, principally, has most important functions to perform in which she cannot be replaced by man, the same way that he cannot be replaced by her in those which are proper to his sex or his constitution” (quoted in Maza Valenzuela 1997). In the later context of 1930s Argentina, Barrancos called attention to “the most serious opposing voice…” of “Francisco Uriburu, who said that to grant women’s suffrage is ‘to encourage the dissolution of the family with anarchic germs, to diminish marital power already undermined by women’s economic action, [and] to lean toward the diminishment of marriage” (quoted in Barrancos 2010, 162).

\(^{60}\) Practice municipal and provincial elections were held in the province of Santa Fe in 1921. The same occurred in San Juan in 1927 where women were briefly allowed the municipal vote until 1930, when it was abolished under President Hipólito Yrigoyen’s second mandate (1928-1930).

\(^{61}\) Conservative Party diputado Luis Undurraga sent the first suffrage bill to Congress in 1917. The second was sent in 1939 by another Conservative Party diputado Oscar Gajardo. Radical Party President Pedro Aguirre Cerda presented the third bill in 1941. In 1945, this last bill was revisited and re-presented by Radical Party senator Rudecindo Ortega.
party, which in turn promoted women’s suffrage for its own political gains.\footnote{The political effects of nineteenth century anticlericalism were evident in the 1876 national elections, when a newly formed alliance between the Radical and Liberal parties threatened the balance of power held by what had previously been a Liberal/Conservative coalition government.} In 1918, one of the league members, Adela Edwards de Salas, formed the White Cross (Cruz Blanca), providing housing, education, hospital care and re-integration services to young women who had become pregnant or entered into prostitution. Edwards’ work with young prostitutes strengthened her advocacy of “religious and moral education… [as well as] legislation to establish a minimum wage and to require equality of wages between men and women,” the lack of which she considered to be the cause of their turning to the sex industry as a means of survival (Edwards, quoted in Maza Valenzuela 1995, 28).

Two similarly elite organisations emerged in Chile with links to the anticlerical Radical-Liberal alliance through their founding members (Maza Valenzuela 1997). These were Amanda Labarca’s Ladies’ Reading Circle (Círculo de Lectura de Señoras), and Delia Matte’s Ladies’ Club (Club de Señoras), both founded in 1915. These organisations are notable for rejecting the subordination of women’s education and family law to the Catholic Church. Displaying certain inconsistencies with the secular aspirations of the Ladies’ Reading Circle, however, the Ladies Club is said to have “maintain[ed] relations with the Church hierarchy…” (Maza Valenzuela 1997). Much scholarly research has suggested that these organisations feared that women’s predilection for conservative politics would jeopardise their goal of separating women’s education from the Church (Lavrin 1995; Maza Valenzuela 1997; Pernet 2000). As a result, their position on women’s suffrage was compromised by their political alignments, and both organisations cautiously advocated the gradual concession of voting rights to women.

Although she initially advocated the delayed concession of full suffrage, Amanda Labarca (1886–1975) established an international reputation as a provocative feminist, a prolific writer, and as a prominent advocate of state education for women. Today she is a feminist icon, whose professional trajectory is representative of the shifting socio-political context in Chile throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Throughout her life, Labarca pursued a robust career in education, interlaced with a defence of women’s rights through the formation and leadership of multiple women’s organisations. In 1919, after returning from a prolonged research trip to the US, Labarca formed the internationally linked National Council of Women. In 1922, she became the first Latin American woman to be appointed to a university professorship (University of Chile, Santiago). However, when her
husband, a Radical Party member, was exiled by the military dictatorship of Carlos Ibáñez del Campo in 1927, Labarca lost this prestigious appointment. In exile until 1931, she returned to public life as the General Director of Secondary Education, and formed the Association of University Women (*Asociación de Mujeres Universitarias*).

In Argentina, Alicia Moreau’s pro-women’s suffrage National Feminist Union (*Unión Feminista Nacional*) emerged in 1918, and Elvira Rawson’s Women’s Rights Association (*Asociación Pro Derechos de la Mujer*) in 1919, both middle and upper-class organisations. The former voiced political and cultural opinions through *Nuestra Causa*, the feminist outlook of which is reflected in its contributors: Alicia Moreau, Cecilia Grierson, Alfonsina Storni, Petrona Eyle, and Elvira Rawson (Sosa de Newton 2007, 150). It was a relatively successful monthly, published between May 10, 1919 and October 10, 1921 (ibid.).

Although not officially registered as a political party, the Feminist National Party (*Partido Feminista Nacional*) was an autonomous political initiative that began in 1920 in Argentina. This organisation strongly challenged women’s exclusion from political participation when its leader Julieta Lanteri presented herself as an unofficial candidate and called on women to vote for her in the mock elections that she, Alicia Moreau, and Elvira Rawson had organised for the same day as the official municipal elections of 1920. In addition, Chile hosted two staunchly autonomous women’s “parties” that had women’s civil and political rights as their primary goal. These were the National Women’s Progressive Party (*Partido Femenino Progresista Nacional*), founded in 1921, and the Women’s Civic Party (*Partido Cívico Femenino*) in 1922.

Parallel to the formation of women’s organisations and simulated political parties, both Argentina and Chile hosted a number of international conferences in the 1920s. In Chile, the IV Pan-American Conference of Women of 1923 appealed to the US-based Pan-American Union to “find the means to grant women the same political and civil rights as enjoyed by men” (Valdés 2000, 34). In the same year, women’s groups in Buenos Aires held an International Week for Proletarian Women’s Activism (*Semana Internacional para la Agitación Femenina Proletaria*). In 1928, Buenos Aires hosted the Third International Feminist Conference (*Tercer Congreso Feminista Internacional*).

This surge continued into the 1930s, a period marked by the worldwide economic depression and growing Fascism in Europe, culminating in the outbreak of WWII in 1939. These global events threatened economic, political and social stability in the Southern Cone. Nationalist sentiment intensified, fuelling the emergence of fascist-influenced groups, with rigid patriarchal ideologies that “opposed women’s activity outside the home, … [and]
female suffrage” (Deutsch 2001, 236). Over this decade, the Southern Cone was defined by increasing tension and polarisation between those who identified with either the political Left or Right, which overshadowed women’s struggle for gender-specific rights. Despite the intense pressure that these broader issues placed on the democratic systems, suffragist women continued to push for their rights as equal citizens, especially their right to vote.

In Chile, following Ibáñez del Campo’s military dictatorship (1927-31), “a succession of military coups,” the return to electoral democracy in 1932, and “in the depths of the Depression” (Keen and Haynes 2000, 341), public debate shifted toward democratisation of the vote. Chile witnessed the emergence of various pro-suffrage groups, such as the National Women’s Party (Partido Femenino Nacional) in 1932, and a year later, the Committee for Women’s Rights (Comité pro Derechos de la Mujer), co-founded by Labarca with Elena Caffarena. By 1935, Elena Caffarena was leading the new umbrella group MEMCh, staunchly challenging the reigning conservative dominant ideologies. While keeping open the debate on women’s suffrage, MEMCh came out as an openly feminist pressure group, advocating “contraception, divorce, equal rights and equal salaries for men and women…” (Deutsch 2001, 240).

Despite this surge in strong autonomous organisations in Chile, several socio-political factors combined to stall women’s success in obtaining the right to vote. To buy time, the concession process was “gradual and partialised” (Valdés 2000, 35). Women were first granted voting rights in the municipal elections as a kind of trial run for the day when they would be granted the right to vote in the national elections. This preliminary right was granted by decree in 1931 but only extended to “women of means” (Valdés 2000, 23). Women’s groups still had to lobby the government for this restricted right, for the removal of “the property clause” in particular (Baldez 2002, 24); it was not until 1934 that literate women were granted the right to vote in the 1935 municipal elections.

When the 1938 and 1941 elections demonstrated women’s growing political diversity, the Radicals’ fears about women’s conservatism were dispelled. One measure of the political climate change was the election of Labarca to the presidency of the Chilean Federation of Women’s Institutions (Federación Chilena de Instituciones Femeninas), in 1944. Given that

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63 In September 1930, the democratically elected president of Argentina, Hipólito Yrigoyen, was ousted in a military coup and replaced by a series of military dictators or fraudulently-elected conservative presidents. Chile also started the decade with a series of military coups until 1932, when the Arturo Alessandri began his second presidential term (1932-37). However, due to the brutal repression of labour strikes and exile of oppositional media, a strong left-wing opposition group emerged under the Alessandri administration. Left-wing parties went on to form the Chilean Popular Front, which challenged and replaced Alessandri in the 1938 elections.
the primary organisational goal was to pressure the Chilean government to legislate full suffrage. Labarca’s position had clearly evolved into one of unconditional support.

Reflecting the instability of this period – 1930 to 1943 – in Argentina, it came to be known as “the Infamous Decade” or “the Era of Patriotic Fraud,” a specific criticism of political processes (Bonner 2007, 49). To the detriment of men’s democratic rights and women’s struggle for civil and political rights, Argentina’s political system experienced fraudulent elections and military interventions. Despite or because of such political and social unrest, a proliferation of women’s organisations emerged, including two explicitly suffragist groups in the year 1930: Alicia Moreau’s Socialist Committee for Women’s Suffrage (Comité Socialista Pro-Sufragio Femenino) and Carmela Horne’s Committee for Women’s Vote (Comité Pro-Voto de la Mujer), renamed in 1932 as the Argentina Association for Suffrage (Asociación Argentina para el Sufragio). The latter would become the Argentine Feminist Party (Partido Feminista Argentino) in 1935 and continue the uphill struggle for women’s suffrage.

Irrespective of the political climate, actors on both the Left and the Right came to see the potential in winning the support of women as voters. Gradually, male political support for women’s right to vote and participate in the political arena evolved with expressions ranging from the opening of women’s divisions in mainstream political parties, in which women gained non-decision-making roles, through to sending suffrage bills to congress. Nevertheless, repressive gender ideologies about women’s place in the home, including those upheld by some women, limited women’s success in attaining access to political life in the second half of the twentieth century.

Even when finally sanctioned, full suffrage did not extend to all women. As Valdés points out, in almost all of Latin America, only literate women could vote (2000, 41). This not only implies a class distinction but also an ethnic one, privileging urban educated women to the exclusion of many indigenous and rural women “for many decades” (47). Post-

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64 Previously introduce in 1941, this bill had died along with its sponsor, then-president Pedro Aguirre Cerda of the Radical Party.

65 Among other women’s organisations to emerge in this turbulent era were the Women’s National Group (Agrupación Nacional Femenina) in 1933, the Argentine Women’s Confederation (Confederación Femenina Argentina) in 1933, the Association of Women Radicals (Asociación de Mujeres Radicales) in 1933, and Victoria Ocampo’s Argentine Women’s Union (Unión Argentina de Mujeres) in 1936 (Valdés 2000, 33).

66 Chile provides a particularly early example of this type of gesture in 1888, when the Radical Party opened a theoretical space for women. Nevertheless, this space would not come into concrete practice for another fifty years (Valdés 2000, 40)

67 In Argentina, Barrancos highlights the contributions and support of a number of politicians from a wide range of politically progressive parties during the 1930s (2010, 161-162).
suffrage, this meant that gaining nominal access into partisan politics did not translate into having matters of gender inequality addressed. Instead, as Franceschet (2005) argues, women both inside and outside the formal political arena reinforced tradition by centring women’s struggle for civil reform on their apolitical roles as mothers. Even as women’s political parties began to emerge, these activist women continued to construct maternal discursive frames and use them as the basis of their claims to an apolitical “moral voice” (Franceschet 2005, 45).

In summarising the main events that followed the concession of women’s right to vote in the national elections –1949 in Chile and 1947 in Argentina – most historians observe a decline in autonomous women’s organisations and first-wave feminisms (Franceschet 2005; Guy 2009; Valdés 2000). This decline, Valdés explains, was due to a fragmentation of efforts to attain women’s equal citizenship once “the movement’s principal demand, that is, suffrage, had been obtained” (2000, 33). While focusing on this common cause, women’s movements were largely able to transcend their ideological, political, and class-based differences. After attaining the vote, they fragmented over these same conflicting interests (Franceschet 2005, 46-47). Hence, contradictory official claims to “apolitical” activism and class-free principles could not prevent MEMCh’s demise in 1949. This internal conflict over member groups differing class and indeed political interests (MEMCh was in fact strongly linked to the Communist Party) weakened the coalition’s internal bonds. For Chilean feminists, the following twenty odd years (1949-1973) would come to be known as an era of “feminist silence” (Kirkwood 1990, 83). The parallel for Argentina lies in Peronism, which explicitly opposed feminist ideologies while at the same time appropriating feminist goals such as women’s suffrage as its own.

ERAS OF FEMINIST SILENCE IN ARGENTINA AND CHILE

Women undoubtedly gained social and civil status as voters. However, the question remained as to how much women had gained in terms of substantive representation in the political arena. This new context would remain relatively unchallenged for almost two decades as feminist and non-feminist actors alike re-negotiated their positions in relation to the state apparatus.

The first Peronist era in Argentina (1946-1955) brought a dramatic increase in women’s political participation. Despite the efforts of the first-wave feminists to bring about women’s suffrage in Argentina, they would see their goals appropriated by Eva and Juan
Perón, who are credited with bringing women the vote in 1947. Moreover, Eva (Evita) Perón’s political party the Women’s Peronist Party (*Partido Peronista Femenino*) would later provide the national elections in 1951 with a phenomenal number of women candidates for the Senate and the Chamber of Diputados, all of whom won. In 1952, Peronist women held 16.88 percent of the Chamber of Diputados and 25 percent of the Senate (Navarro 2007, 231). Just as women were entering the political arena as voters, *diputadas*, and senators, the Eva Perón Foundation incorporated previously ignored women’s organisations, especially working-class organisations, into the state apparatus.

However, by the 1950s, the Peronist machine had become increasingly centralised and authoritarian. The success of women’s fully-fledged incorporation into the formal political realm was tempered by a highly selective process that disempowered feminism, along with other ideological perspectives. Like other institutionalised groups, women’s organisations found that government support was given in exchange for state intervention in their day-to-day management. State incorporation came at the cost of autonomy and it narrowly defined the ways in which these organising women could self-identify. Peronism’s outright rejection of the “feminist” identity meant that an equally selective range of women’s rights issues, those “consistent with women’s traditional role as mothers…” were incorporated into the state agenda (Bonner 2007, 54). Revisiting the ways in which the state and women themselves had legitimised women’s claims to civil, social, and political rights historically, Peronism dictated the construction of women’s political participation in terms of “their role as representatives of the family, defenders of public morality, and defenders of the nation” (52). The only difference in definition in Peronist discourse was the introduction of identity constructs around women as workers and as Peronists. In fact, women who did not fit into this socio-political identity were marginalised by the Peronist state.

Those worst affected by this new framework were upper and middle-class women, particularly the first-wave elite-class feminists. Previously confident in their privileged social position, many middle and upper-class women’s organisations found their tenuous links to state funding and support eliminated. In a historic move that was consistent with Perón’s plans to centralise the welfare system, the state took over the administration of the Beneficence Society in 1946. Some observers view this move as part of Evita’s personal “vendetta against the Argentine elites,” who apparently dismissed her role as First Lady because of her “illegitimate birth, her seamy background and her position in a crude, brash

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68 As a result of this phenomenon, Argentina had more women in the Chamber of Diputados than anywhere in the Western Hemisphere (Deutsch 1991b, 273).
government” (Carlson 1988, 192). Others argue that the demise of the Society’s authority
began before Perón became president, in 1943, when “the military governments began the
confrontation with the formidable Society of Beneficence” (Guy 2009, 157). Whatever the
motivation, Evita’s autobiography made the Peronist government’s disdain of the old
oligarchic social order manifest in its public criticisms of the “lady of leisure.” Her story, La
razón de mi vida, scorns “women of that class, who live empty and easy… [a life] full of
appearances, pettiness, mediocrities and lies…” (Perón 1951, 303-04). While this publication
open criticised upper-class women, who largely administered the philanthropic organisations
such as the Beneficence Society, Evita silenced their long history, and that of most feminist
organisations, in “the Peronist version of suffrage” (Navarro 2007). This and her often-
quoted rejection of upper-class feminism were equally consistent with the Peronist political
machine. Earlier, upper-class women had already expressed their opposition to Perón’s
“presidential ambitions” when they protested his 1945 petition to the previous government
for women’s suffrage by decree was a political ploy to garner support from women voters for
his candidacy in the next elections (Carlson 1988, 187). Although he won the election in
1946 without the female vote, non-Peronist feminists, in principal, remained hostile to the
idea of Perón’s paternal “superiority,” an idea that was strongly touted by Evita (Bonner
2007, 55).

During the post-suffrage period, generalised perceptions of Chilean women’s cultural
behaviour suggested that centrist and rightist parties had a favourable relationship with a
large percentage of women voters (Kyle and Francis 1978). Although there was no solid
empirical evidence to support this claim, “conventional wisdom” suggested that women’s
superior religiosity gave the politically conservative candidates an advantage over their leftist
or progressive challengers (Baldez 2002, 52). Although demographic variables such as
urbanisation and literacy, and global contexts such as the Cold War, are known to influence
voting patterns, the first three presidential elections in which women voted were won by
centre-right or right-wing candidates. In contrast, Salvador Allende’s narrow victory in
1970, “received only 30 percent of the vote among women overall, compared to 41.6 percent
of men’s votes” (ibid.). This perception increased competition for the female vote,

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69 In chronological order, these were centre-right candidate Carlos Ibáñez del Campo in 1952; the
Conservative Party’s presidential candidate Jorge Alessandri in 1958; and Eduardo Frei Montalva,
representing a centre-right coalition in 1964.

70 This statement has also been made in reference to the post-dictatorship moment. Up until 2005, when
the statistics show a dramatic shift of women voter support to the political Left, it was the candidates of
especially the popular vote. Sensing their political capital, multiple parties began to take an interest in women’s intermediary role in the community. However, political party interest was deeply ingrained with a limited view of women’s role in society and largely ignored women’s rights as individuals.

During the two decades following the concession of the women’s vote in 1949, this role-based construction of women fed into the process of state centralisation. As a result, Chilean society witnessed the institutionalisation of a range of social welfare programmes, employing mostly politically conservative middle and upper-class women, as the gatekeepers of social services. An important example of this centralised welfare system was the establishment of the Mothers’ Centres (Centros de Madres) in 1964. At the time, The Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC), under the leadership of Chile’s then-president Eduardo Frei Montalva, was keen to demonstrate its incorporation of marginalised sectors, in this case women, through which this party hoped to garner a stronger support base. Thus, while appearing to engage in poverty relief, the PDC was in fact putting itself into a position from where it would be able to organise and indeed mobilise a large sector of civil society “from above…” (Franceschet 2005, 55). It was from these centres that the women’s collective action frame known as “mobilised mothers” would later emerge. However, this maternalist identity construct would contribute toward keeping “women on the margins of Chile’s class-based politics” (35). For those women who did enter the formal political arena, as Franceschet’s (2005) criticism of the Chilean case highlights, claims to the apolitical nature of women’s participation proved to be contradictory, and women’s own high-minded claims to moral purity were unsustainable in the highly competitive Chilean political arena. Subsequently, women’s parties collapsed and women politicians were absorbed into existing male-dominated parties.

Women-led social and political movements in both of these Southern Cone countries took a back seat to those led by men throughout the 1950s and 1960s. While Chilean feminists lost autonomy and voice through their incorporation into various political parties, the Peronist movement discredited Argentine feminists. Even though Argentina witnessed an unprecedented increase in women’s political participation, this was numerically rather than substantively significant. After all, political women were required, in return for their political rights, to show “loyalty to Perón and the Peronist movement” (Bonner 2007, 52). After the
overthrow of Perón, the sequence of military dictatorships that followed intensified the patriarchal attack on women by removing suffrage.

Argentine and Chilean women found their “interests” co-opted by the state, and regulated under a centralised urban welfare system that was ruled by male elites. This came at a huge cost to equal rights legislation for women, in particular rural and indigenous women, who fell outside the newly-constructed urban centres.\(^{71}\) In Chile, the negative conditions created by the oppressive powers of a “patriarchal welfare state” (Pateman 2000, 238),\(^{72}\) remained relatively unchallenged during what came to be known as Chile’s era of feminist silence (1949-1970). Neither Chile nor Argentina would witness the return of a strong feminist consciousness until the late 1970s, alongside the struggle for democracy and human rights.

**MILITANT WOMEN FROM THE CHILEAN RIGHT AND THE ARGENTINE LEFT**

By 1970, the Cold War and the Cuban Revolution of 1959 had divided much of the world into two clearly defined camps, capitalist and communist. As women’s organisations began to re-emerge in the Southern Cone, they did so with more clearly defined political distinctions that reflected this international division. In addition, two important movements in the Southern Cone, namely, Peronism in Argentina, and Socialism in Chile, had begun to force the initial movements of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries to diverge from one another into distinguishably different initiatives.

The election of Salvador Allende to the presidency in 1970 marks a turning point in Chilean women’s militancy, for this was also the moment when right-wing women broke away from a long era of silence. Representing the Unidad Popular (UP) coalition government’s agenda as a “pathway to socialism” (1970-73), President Allende became both a symbolic and real threat to the anti-communist sectors of political, economic, and civic society. None made their discontent more explicit than women of the middle and upper classes, who felt “that they, not the men, were at the forefront of the struggle against the UP”

\(^{71}\) Maxine Molyneux adds that indigenous women lacked identity cards, which “would be sufficient to bar them from their entitlements” (2007, 7).

\(^{72}\) As regards Britain, Australia and the US, Carole Pateman uses this title to discuss the implications of “sexual divisions in the welfare state” (2000, 243). She explores a range of historical dichotomies that define women as economically dependent private beings and men as independent public beings, leading to corresponding divisions in labour, such as the construction of “men’s and women’s occupations” and to the generalised conceptions of women “workers,” such as married working-women providing only a supplementary income to that of the male-breadwinner husband (246).
(Power 2002, 165). On December 1, 1971, in the first significant expression of anti-Allende sentiment, right-wing women marched through the streets of Santiago in the Cacerolazo (March of the Empty Pots). A conscious use of domestic symbols, such as the cooking pot, clearly signified the fact that these women were using a domestic frame to justify this very public demand to exercise their political rights. Beyond the anti-Allende message, women were publicly expressing their demand to participate in shaping the nation. However, political resistance was couched in frames that upheld the image of women’s protective role, in defence of family and of nation as family (Power 2000, 297).

Under the same banners – anti-Allende, anti-communist, pro-nation and family – and avoiding any class-based or political identification, women formed an umbrella group and named it Poder Femenino (Feminine Power). As in the Cacerolazo, these women created a homogeneous mask of multi-class, non-partisan unity. Likewise, through strategic incorporation of the terms “feminine” alongside the term “power,” constructed at that time as hypermasculine, this group of activist women reinforced the tradition of defining themselves and their activities as a powerful maternal force of women acting as women. An interesting aspect of this masking strategy was that by cancelling class and political associations, feminist associations were also cancelled. By giving absolute centrality to their “roles” as women in the family, as opposed to their “rights” as citizens, women’s involvement in these anti-Allende events not only never challenged the status quo in regard to gender relations, it reinforced it (Baldez 2002; Franceschet 2005). Similarly, they did not overtly challenge women’s limited participation in the formal political arena. In parallel to disguising their class-based identities in role-based frames, these women disguised their political identities in claims to their autonomy from the “corrupt” world of partisan politics (Franceschet 2005, 53-54).

In addition, although claiming moral superiority over male leaders of the anti-Allende movement at the time, they posed little threat to the rigid patriarchal social order. Underwritten by false dichotomies and narrative constructions of the ideal man as virile and strong and women reduced to femininity and physical weakness, it was secure. Instead, they relied on the patriarchal discourse, urging their male counterparts to fulfil their manly duty. According to interviewed leaders of the Cacerolazo and Poder Femenino,73 their intention was to awaken that which, as one media outlet described it, “remains dormant” in men (La

Tribuna quoted in Baldez 2002, 91). They did this through provocation and manipulation, constituted by a range of humiliation techniques. Baldez’s interviews with these women provide such examples as taunting soldiers by throwing chicken feed at them, sending them chicken feathers to imply that they were cowards, to writing letters to military generals, demanding that they respond to this “gendered code of honor” (2002, 82-91). And, as history now tells us, the generals did respond, on September 11, 1973.

Alongside the precedent set by early women activists, the military states in Chile and Argentina fully agreed with and militarily reinforced role-based gender constructions of women’s difference and of their symbiotic relationship to the family. In Chile, for example, the apolitical myth promoted by women’s early collective action was later appropriated by the Pinochet’s authoritarian regime as part of a larger plan to “depoliticize Chilean society…” (Power 2001, 306). Pinochet’s wife, Lucía Hiriart, who defined herself as “the most apolitical woman in Chile” (309), headed a strictly conservative volunteer movement of women connected through the Centros de Madres, and the Secretaria Nacional de la Mujer. Under the banners of abnegation and defence of the family, gender constructions historically associated with women, thousands extended reproductive labour in the home to providing unpaid labour, indirectly “in the service of the dictatorship” (302). Franceschet (2005) observes the ways in which these essentialist myths were affirmed in her analysis of Pinochet’s discursive construction of women:

The discourse of the regime and of Pinochet in particular, illustrates that women had a crucial role to play in healing a society that had become ‘sick’ due to an excess of politics. Women were depicted as models of apolitical passivity, one of the highest virtues in the national project of reconstruction (60).

In more ways than one, the Cacerolazo was a sign of things to come. In one respect, the impact of this march on the events that followed had a significant effect on both women and men’s attitude toward the nature and strength of women’s gender-based mobilisation. In another respect, the gendered aspect of this protest form would mutate and reappear in 1983, as the Caupolicanazo (discussed later in this chapter) and again in the 2008 Pildorazo (discussed in Chapter Five). Likewise, domestic symbols, originating in the empty pot, would reappear in future protests, particularly in the human rights struggles of Chile and Argentina.
Moreover, the empty pot continues to be used across Latin America in various forms of protest action, across both political and class spectrums.\(^\text{74}\)

In a parallel timeframe (1970-1973), Argentina experienced the emergence of an urban guerrilla struggle led primarily by armed left-wing Peronist organisations.\(^\text{75}\) Their primary goals were to counter the actions of the military regime that had ruled Argentina since Peron’s forced departure in 1955, and especially, those following the violent repression of workers’ protests in 1969 (the Cordobazo). The many young women who joined the armed guerrilla groups, particularly those in the pro-Peronist Montoneros, were as equally divorced from feminist ideals as the women who formed Feminine Power in Chile, but for very different reasons. For those women devoted to the cult of Evita, and the anti-oligarchy mentality that this cult embodied, there was little room on their agenda for the feminist ideas of the bourgeoisie, especially given Evita’s rejection of the label “feminism.” Moreover, for women in the Guevarist groups, who were strongly influenced by Marxist and Leninist teachings, feminism was a “bourgeois conception” that had to take a back seat to the revolution of the time (Barrancos 2008, 146). For the Montoneros and their allies, the revolution at the time centred on bringing Perón back from forced exile, and the repatriation of Evita’s remains.

Women who constituted these armed groups were usually held back from positions of leadership (Barrancos 2008, 146), fulfilling instead intermediary and supportive roles to their male “compañeros” (colleagues),\(^\text{76}\) who were oftentimes their partners or husbands as well (Andújar 2009). Andújar believes this was conditioned by their own limited understandings of sexuality, love relationships, and reproduction. While “free-love” was the buzz word of the post-pill era, some militant groups rejected this sexual revolution as a “bourgeois” import from the US (Andújar 2009, 166). In addition to this class-based opposition to sexual liberation, questions of security demanded that matters concerning relationships among

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\(^{74}\) While the empty pot is regularly seen in popular and student protests in Buenos Aires. Interestingly, it was once again the urban middle-classes that banged empty pots as they marched through the middle-class suburbs of Buenos Aires in a show of protest against Fernández’ proposal to place a floating tax rate on agricultural exports in 2008.

\(^{75}\) Three dominant Peronist groups were the Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas, formed in 1968; the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, formed in 1966; and the Montoneros originally formed in 1968. A fourth group, the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo, formed in 1970, was Guevarist (Gillespie 1982, 106). However, this last group was equally involved in the urban warfare of this period.

\(^{76}\) This is a highly politicised term. When it is used in the context of the Southern Cone, this term marks the speaker for leftist political ideologies and typically references the countercultures of the 1960s and 1970s and their struggles against “el sistema” (the system), in all its possible manifestations: “the state, the capitalist relations of production, imperialism or the operation of a political system in which military dictatorships and repression of dissidence were a common occurrence” (Andújar 2009, 150).
militants be negotiated between the “cell” leaders. In their testimonial accounts of these negotiations, women describe their place in their partner’s affections as secondary to his “love for the revolution” (159), and the difficulty in seeking a separation, without being accused of “petit-bourgeois class weaknesses,” was ever present (166). Nevertheless, while questions relating to women’s sexuality and love relationships were raised within the ranks of these militant organisations, questions relating to women’s reproductive rights were not. The idea of abortion went against Catholic, not to mention Peronist, ideals or was a physical impossibility given the clandestine living conditions; it was a non-issue. By some ex-Montonero accounts, it was generally understood that if a woman became pregnant, she had the child (Gorbato 1999, 126). This understanding was confirmed when the one-time Montoneros’ leader Mario Firmenich urged the members of the feminine branch, Agrupación Evita, to declare their opposition to birth control programmes (127). They refused to do this in their own name, but offered to release the statement in his (ibid.).

However, considering the harsh living conditions in clandestine safe houses, the risk of torture and disappearance if caught by the anti-Peronist forces, both before and during the military dictatorship that followed Perón’s second term in office, motherhood for these women militants was perilous. In addition to the dangers that these circumstances posed to pregnant women, all children born into the ranks of these guerrilla groups automatically became the children of this revolution-turned-struggle. Testimonial accounts describe a collective philosophy surrounding the care of these children, who would be taken in by sympathisers whenever their parents were killed or forced into hiding. There was an unwritten understanding that these children were “everyone’s children” (los hijos de todos) (Gorbato 1999, 129). Before it turned into a struggle for survival during the brutal Dirty War (1976-1983), it was anticipated that this next generation of revolutionaries would continue the fight. Indeed, Firmenich has been quoted describing Montonero children as the “rear guard” (123). Some use this philosophy to explain the escalation in birth-rates among militant women and, sadly, the large numbers of women militants who were either pregnant, with young children, or both, at the point of being disappeared into concentration camps during some of the most severely repressive years of the Dirty War (125).

There were exceptions to women’s subordinate position in the hierarchies of these militant groups. One prominent example is the protagonist role played by Norma Arrostito,

77 This was confirmed on a national level as well. While there was “no specific policy” (Gorbato 1999, 126), Perón enforced, by decree, a ban on the free sale of contraceptives after his return to the presidency, in 1973.
one of the Montoneros’ founding members. In 1970, she was the only woman in a group of five militants responsible for the abduction and execution of ex-military general Pedro Eugenio Aramburu. As such, she found it extremely hard to hide from the repression that followed. Nevertheless, she continued her militancy within the Montoneros in southern Argentina until December 1976, when she was disappeared. Pronounced dead by all major media at the time, she was actually taken to the Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada concentration camp (ESMA), where she remained until her execution on January 15, 1978. While she was inside ESMA, Arrostito became an emblem of the resistance movement publicised by several militants who met her for the first time during their own detention there. These ESMA survivors testify to her being brought to them during torture sessions. Elisa Tokar, for example, describes how the ESMA interrogators exhibited Arrostito as if she were their “trophy of war” (quoted in Bertoia 2008).

There were exceptions within Chile’s militant Left as well. No historical account would be complete without recognising the militancy and leadership of one woman in particular: Gladys Marín. By 1965, the young Marín was already an exceptional figure. At the age of 23, “at a moment when all political spaces were overwhelmingly masculine” (Marín, quoted in Kendall Lecourt 2005), she was elected secretary general of the Communist Youth and dipudata for Santiago’s Second District. After the military coup, she spent two years in political exile and returned to Chile in 1978 to live in clandestine conditions, from where she coordinated the popular resistance struggles against the Pinochet regime. As the resistance movement regrouped and strengthened, she became the Partido Comunista’s (PC) undersecretary and then in 1994, after the return to electoral democracy, she was named the PC’s secretary general. After running for the Senate in 1997 and becoming the first Chilean woman to bid for the presidency a year later, Marín was named President of the PC in 2002, at the age of 61. Following her death on March 6, 2004, Marín became an iconic representative of the PC’s best and worst years. Some remember her as “the most prominent figure of the clandestine resistance to the military regime” (Zalaquett 2009, 187). For others, Marín will always be a key representative of Chile’s socio-political vanguard: “she embodies the values of consecuencia (integrity), perseverance and bravery…” (Kendall Lecourt 2005, 74).

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78 For a comprehensive analysis of gender and power relations within the Chilean Communist Party, including special reference to Gladys Marín, see (Kendall Lecourt 2005).
79 The armed branch of the Política de Rebelión Popular resistance movement was led by the Frente Patriótico Manual Rodríguez.
WOMEN’S ROLE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DURING THE DICTATORSHIP AND THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

Long periods of brutal repression in Chile (1973-90) and Argentina (1976-83) forced women to re-think old ideologies in view of their absence from the public realm. The repression of a predominantly male political opposition motivated activist women to re-strategise. Even though most women continued to shy away from the feminist label throughout the dictatorship years, a small number of women’s organisations clearly demonstrated that they identified with some features of the international feminist agenda. By the time the women’s movement had re-emerged, in the 1980s, it had evolved into a more diverse force than before. Maternal identities had become explicitly politicised: while motherhood was still used as a mobilising tool, these second-wave feminists addressed the subordinating issues that were attached to this role. More critical of gender inequalities than ever before, feminists brought issues of abortion, divorce and gender quotas to public attention. As the transition years reached their defining point, questions about the feminine difference frame shaping demands for a return to electoral politics “with women” emerged. On one hand, this gender-based identity helped to strengthen a number of successful unification attempts by women-led umbrella associations. However, on the other, this broad identification process created conditions for division, as some feminists began to interrogate its tendency to subsume rather than include women’s diverse specific interests. Debate in this period split Southern Cone women’s movements into two polarised camps that Kirkwood defined as “políticas,” for whom the primary goal was the return to electoral democracy, and “feministas,” for whom there could be “no democracy without feminism” (1984, 6).

Summarising the main developments in the women’s movement under Pinochet’s 16-year dictatorship, most political observers point to one particular contextual factor generating the right conditions for women’s mobilisation: the repression and demonisation of traditional political parties (Franceschet 2005; Ríos Tobar, Godoy Catalán, and Guerrero Caviedes 2003). As Pinochet’s authoritarian regime devastated the formal political arena, it pushed opposition politics into an informal arena where women gained some control (Franceschet 2005, 58). Franceschet (2005) and Waylen (1998) share the view that this created a political atmosphere in which “women often found it easier to participate” (Waylen 1998, 147). As all political opposition to the Pinochet regime was forced into subversity, age-old distinctions between the public and private sphere were also blurred. Waylen believes many women took advantage of a long history of apolitical discourses to cloak oppositional activity in the early
years of the dictatorship, as this perception of women allowed them “room for manoeuvre unavailable to men” (ibid.).

In this context of subversive political activity, Chile experienced the emergence of an important association of human rights organisations, constituted primarily by the female relatives of those who were detained and disappeared, the AFDD.80 Growing out of a small group that began to denounce the military dictatorship in 1974, a larger association had formed by 1976 under the leadership of a core group of women and the auspices of the Vicaría de la Solidaridad.81 In contrast to the political turmoil from which they emerged, the AFDD adopted “apolitical” discourses. Further discussed in Chapter Three, most accounts describe this apolitical discourse in two interrelated ways. First, Waylen states that these organisations “argued that they were not primarily politically motivated nor were they feminists...” (1998, 149). Second, she notes how these women used “the military’s very traditional notions of women’s proper role... as the pivot of their protest” (ibid.). Considering the extreme brutality of the regime, this was a necessary move since these women were placing “their concern for their families over and above the concern for their own well-being...” (Franceschet 2005, 65). Nevertheless, a strategic emphasis on women’s roles in the family, primarily as mothers and care-takers, led to the politicisation of these gender-specific constructs, “as women entered the public sphere on the basis of these roles” (Waylen 1998, 148).

Parallels are obvious between the emergence of the Chilean AFDD and the Argentine Madres de Plaza de Mayo. The Madres also emerged in the face of severe repression and the very real threat of being disappeared as their sons and daughters had been. As with other human rights organisations to emerge after 1976, these women “dared [to] raise their voices” (Navarro 2001, 11). One of the distinguishing factors, for which both the Madres and the

80 As will be discussed further in Chapter Three, one of the main difficulties faced by the AFDD, was the Concertación government’s policy of reconciliation, itself a direct result of the negotiated terms of the transition. This policy, Waylen argues, was what underlined the state’s prudent approach to handling alleged crimes against humanity. Under the successive Concertación governments, all military personnel accused of human rights abuses that fell into the amnesty period between 1973 and 1978 were shielded from prosecution under the observation of a law “proclaimed by the Pinochet regime in 1978...” (Waylen 1998, 161). In all other cases, the search for truth often took precedence over the AFDD’s demands for justice. Here, Waylen makes an interesting statement regarding the socio-political climate against which the AFDD was struggling: “there is little chance of their demands being met by a government determined to put the issue of human rights abuses to rest and a populace (except for those on the Left) largely in sympathy with this aim” (162).

81 By 1989, there were approximately 150 members, “of whom between forty-five and fifty could be considered active members” (Chuchryk 1989b, 134). In 2003, Lorena Pizarro, daughter of ex-president Sola Sierra, took over leadership of the group alongside Vice-President Mireya Garcia. In March 2009, Pizarro and Garcia were re-elected to preside over a new directive board constituted by Marta Vega, Gaby Rivera, Gabriela Zuñiga, Marta Rocco and Rosa Cubillos (AFDD 2009a).
Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo) gained international recognition, is that they took their demands to “the most public, political, and powerful spaces of Buenos Aires” (ibid.). The evidence of just how real a threat their public denouncements posed to the ruling junta is found in the disappearance of the group’s first leader Azucena Villaflor in 1977. Nevertheless, this group’s use of apolitical discourse, most clearly symbolised in naming these associations Madres (Mothers) and Abuelas (Grandmothers), did initially facilitate their transition from the anonymous “house-wife” frame into the “public actor” frame, contextualised by the Plaza de Mayo.

Feminist interpretations of this unique form of public protest ask whether the politicised notion of motherhood should be viewed as “regressive” or “transformative” (Waylen 1998, 149). Some observers believe that it is “transformative in that it challenges dominant discourses about motherhood and womanhood, as passive and private, through the use of public space in protests” (ibid.). For Dora Barrancos, the degree of resistance that the Madres and the Abuelas showed to the threat of torture and disappearance in Argentina dealt a crushing blow to “any conjecture about the docility of women… [or] myth about the ease with which they bow and obey… [this combination of] domestic rituals and public settings gave new meaning to the passage between home and plaza” (2008, 153-154). While Southern Cone feminism as a movement largely conflicted with broader issues during the dictatorship years, such as the struggle for social justice, women were certainly beginning to re-shape the moulds of domesticity and motherhood in the name of human rights.

A few explicitly feminist organisations formed in response to the issues of the 1960s and the early 1970s and faced high levels of resistance from various sectors of society. In her discussion of goals and strategies, in post dictatorship Argentina, Waylen finds the Madres main driving force to be of greater relevance during the dictatorship years, in the face of human rights violations. The Madres’ tactics, Waylen observes, were so specific to the dictatorship context that they became “inappropriate for the new political conditions” (2000, 772). This was particularly true in the Madres’ case: “the symbolic, ethical and non-negotiable nature of the Madres’ demands was effective in a political environment in which bargaining was impossible” (ibid.). This was especially so when the Madres stood against the amnesty laws implemented and continued by successive administrations until 2005. Néstor Kirchner instigated the Supreme Court’s nullification of the infamous amnesty laws, namely, Final Point (Punto Final) and Due Obedience (Obediencia Debida), in 2005. This ruling has had a significant impact on the relationship between the human rights groups and the state, as it enabled Argentine courts to take over from the international courts in bringing to trial all those who have been accused of crimes against humanity. However, before that, such opposition to state actions pushed the Madres further away from any form of negotiation with the early governments. Thus, although they were a direct factor in the breakdown of the authoritarian regime, the Madres’ level of influence took on a form, during and after transition to electoral politics, that Waylen describes as “indirect” (2000, 775).

In Argentina, the Peronist regime clearly expressed its continued rejection of feminism even after Perón’s death, when the first woman president, Isabel Perón (1974-76), infamously vetoed a bill to
While feminist groups in Argentina “were accused of raising false issues, appropriate for capitalist countries…” (Navarro 2001, 9), Chilean feminists were accused of ignoring class issues. Initially, in the early 1970s, the emergence of second-wave feminism as a movement was paralysed by two contextual factors: brutal repression during the initial years of these dictatorships and the introduction of the neoliberal economic model. When the dictatorship demolished the state’s social responsibility for welfare, many sectors of society suffered economically. The idea of claiming a special agenda when all were suffering went against women’s historically prescribed ethical convictions and caretaking identity. According to a “process subsuming the needs and problems of women in the needs and problems of the ‘family’… a ‘normal’ woman should never entertain desires or aspirations different from those of her family” (Feijoó and Gogna 1990, 84). Moreover, during the dictatorship years, many feminist women were forced into exile, where they had little influence over the state of women’s rights back in their respective homelands.

Feminist groups began to re-emerge in the late 1970s, and more so during the 1980s. Given the dire socio-economic and political context, fighting for justice, freedom, and better economic living conditions was still critical. However, these explicitly feminist groups integrated more gender-based conflicts into their struggle for democracy and peace. Among the conflicts that women were facing at this time, domestic violence against women, divorce law, and the infamous patria potestad law were primary. Considering these conflicts, emerging feminists, such as Kirkwood in Chile, began to develop studies that linked authoritarianism to everyday life, particularly home life. The slogan “democracy in the country and in the home” was adopted across the Southern Cone region by feminists and non-feminist women’s organisations alike (Chuchryk 1989a, 182). Despite on-going criticism of feminism as a bourgeois, middle-class distraction, the political and class parameters were actually quite diverse.

“Around 1979-1980…” after the initial shock, brutality, and terror of the 1976 military coup, Argentine feminism “became revitalised…” (Feijoó and Gogna 1990, 84). Women’s rights began to form a part of the broader movement for a return to democracy. One of the few feminist organisations that managed to continue their activities throughout the

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84 Among the groups that suspended action after 1976, studies feature the multi-class Unión Feminista Argentina, formed in 1970; the Movimiento de Liberación Femenina, formed in 1972; and the Asociación por la Liberación de la Mujer Argentina (Barrancos 2008; Feijoó and Gogna 1990; Navarro 2001).
dictatorship was the *Centro de Estudios Sociales de la Mujer Argentina* (CESMA), formed in 1974. Politically aligned to the Left, these women were among the first to adopt a double-militancy strategy by meeting “outside the party to discuss their situation as women within it” (Feijoó and Gogna 1990, 100). After political parties were dismantled, they continued to work toward raising feminist consciousness and feminist politics. Of the feminist organisations that emerged during Argentina’s dictatorship years, studies highlight the activities of the *Asociación de Mujeres Argentinas*, formed in 1977, which later adopted the name of the feminist poet as the *Asociación de Mujeres Alfonsina Storni*; the *Asociación Juana Manso*, formed in 1978; the *Unión de Mujeres Socialistas*, which formed in 1979 and was presided over by Alicia Moreau; the *Movimiento de Liberación Femenina*, which re-emerged in 1981 under a new name, the *Organización Feminista Argentina*; the *Derechos Iguales para la Mujer*, which formed in the same year; and the activities of the *Asociación para el Trabajo y el Estudio de la Mujer Noviembre 25*, formed in 1982 (Feijoó and Gogna 1990; Feijoó and Nari 1994; Navarro 2001).

By the 1980s, women’s groups in Argentina were again beginning to transcend political, class, and ideological differences. This was especially the case when they found themselves agreeing over the social injustice that was the Malvinas War (1982). Marking the rapid decline of the dictatorship, the Malvinas War provoked considerable numbers of women to unite under cross-sectional organisations based on their traditional and maternal roles in the home. This was a period in which various “housewives” organisations mobilised publicly against the “high cost of living” and compulsory conscription into military service. Among the most visible of these groups were the Argentine Women’s Union (UMA), the Housewives League (LAC), the General Union of Housewives (UGAC), and the newly formed National Housewives Movement, *(Movimiento de Amas de Casa del País, MACP)*.

In 1984, after the return to electoral democracy in Argentina, the *Multisectorial de la Mujer*, a unified group constituted by thirty six women’s organisations, formed and organised “the first-ever public celebration of 8 March, International Women’s Day…” (Feijoó and Gogna 1990, 85). In a show of gender-based unity, both the *Madres* and the National Housewives Movement attended this event. Later, this association agreed on, and presented to Congress, an agenda that pushed, among other demands, for the amendment of the *patria potestad* law, so as to give mothers authority over their children equal to that of fathers.
Aided by the politically transformative moment, many of these changes were sanctioned by the democratically-elected administration in 1985.\textsuperscript{85}

Observers of Chile’s dictatorship years note that women’s movements and feminist movements formed a crucial part of the political opposition movement. In 1979, “the first explicitly feminist organisation” to emerge as a part of Chile’s second wave was the Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer (Ríos Tobar, Godoy Catalán, and Guerrero Caviedes 2003, 45). Primarily, this was a consciousness-raising organisation made up of the “intellectuals and academics [who had been] displaced by the dictatorship…” (46). However, on losing the Catholic Church’s sponsorship in 1983, this organisation split into two parallel groups, the research-focused Centro de Estudios de la Mujer (CEM), and the politically activist space Casa de la Mujer La Morada (47). In the same year, members of the Círculo formed another explicitly feminist organisation called the Movimiento Feminista, which held “the first public demonstration of feminists” ever seen in Chile (Franceschet 2005, 72). Together, these three organisations formed a part of the “autonomous feminist” strain that refused to identify or “engage with mainstream politics” (Waylen 1998, 152).

The context of “a failed socialist project and the imposition of a military dictatorship” had given Kirkwood and other Chilean feminists cause to reflect on the intersection of class as well as gender oppression (Ríos Tobar 2003). As a result of this strong class-consciousness, many other feminist organisations that emerged in this period were closely identified with the political Left (Ríos Tobar, Godoy Catalán, and Guerrero Caviedes 2003). Among others, CODEM (Comité de Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer) was linked to the Marxist-Leninist Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario (MIR), MUDECHI (Mujeres de Chile) was “formed by women tied to the Communist Party” (Franceschet 2005, 67), and the Mujeres por el Socialismo (MMS), proposed a critical analysis of both capitalism and patriarchy (49-50). According to Waylen’s summary of this period, the Pinochet regime was subjected to a three-pronged attack from women’s movements:

The human rights organisations, the Agrupaciones, highlighted disappearances and other abuses...; popular movements, active around social and economic issues, grew rapidly...; and feminist movements, including ‘popular feminist’ groups, campaigning

\textsuperscript{85} Apart from an amendment to patria potestad, the new government ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985; “all legitimate and illegitimate children were declared legally equal; the sale of birth control devices was decriminalized; and a new divorce law permitting the remarriage was adopted” (Navarro 2001, 12).
around gender inequality (re)emerged onto the public scene (1998, 154, my emphasis).

The neoliberal economy is believed to have played a formative role in the re-emerging feminist movement in Chile (Franceschet 2005; Ríos Tobar, Godoy Catalán, and Guerrero Caviedes 2003). Given that Chile’s feminist movement began to take visible shape in 1983, around the time that Chile’s failing economy had reached its lowest point, observers define the economic crisis period as one of significant social mobilisation marked by the re-emergence of political parties and increasingly visible women’s organisations. For women, the neoliberal model and the 1982-83 economic crisis translated into high unemployment and increasing marital pressures, which left many women as the sole providers for the family. In the poor sectors, where women had to manage on low incomes from their participation in government employment programmes, the economic situation was particularly severe. Given the dire economic conditions, more and more popular organisations took their demands to the streets. Women organising in the popular sectors thus centred on survival needs and there were a number of “urban popular organisations” in which women’s commitment to socio-economic justice overshadowed a feminist agenda (Waylen 1998, 150).

In the same collective spaces where Pinochet had attempted to depoliticise popular sectors of Chilean society, such resistance emerged. Known collectively as OEPs (Organizaciones Económicas Populares), the two main spaces were the soup-kitchen style ollas comunes and the employment-providing workshops known in Spanish as the organizaciones laboral-productivas. Given that women based their activities on “their roles as mothers, household providers and managers...,” some observers locate a certain denial of political identities in the earlier discourses of these politically active women (Waylen 1998, 151). Nevertheless, the politicisation of women’s traditional roles was also evident and the necessary infrastructure for the mass mobilisation of poor and working-class women had previously been built into the Centros de Madres. Having experienced collective political organisation in these community-based centres under Allende, economically marginalised women broadened the anti-Pinochet movement at the base in these OEPs. In these popular sectors of urban society, class was a defining factor and collective organising was a key element.

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Waylen divides the decline of the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile into two distinct periods: “the breakdown of authoritarianism and period of social mobilisation 1983-6” and the transition period in which, she argues, “political parties regain hegemony 1987-9” (1998, 154-155). As she points out, these two contexts had differing effects on the various women’s movements.
However, gender was another important variable. In urban centres such as Santiago, women constituted at least “90 per cent of those participating in” a variety of economic support groups to replace diminishing welfare services (Waylen 1998, 150). Therefore, these same socio-economic collectives created the conditions for a feminist consciousness to emerge in which women shared a “common outlook... the particularities of their condition as women” (Franceschet 2005, 68). The Catholic Church was a major sponsor of these OEPs, which suggests limitations on the range of conflicts these women could address. Nevertheless, due in part to the military regime’s classification of all organised collective groups “as subversive” a political consciousness did emerge (Waylen 1998, 151). This was followed by an emerging feminist consciousness as these “working-class and poor women organising and campaigning self-consciously as women” began to adopt the name “popular feminism” (153).

Popular feminism tended to be an autonomous movement, embodied by groups such as the Domitilas and MOMUPO, (Movimiento de Mujeres Populares) which combined economic (class) as well as consciousness-raising (gender) issues (Franceschet 2005, 67). The intersection of class and gender-based demands, Waylen points out, motivated these popular feminists to differentiate themselves from what was viewed negatively as an imported “middle-class feminism” (1998, 153). From this perspective, middle-class feminism was poorly perceived “as primarily made up of educated affluent professional women, who despite the influence of the left, campaigned narrowly around gender issues” (ibid.). Popular feminists chose to organise in a unique way. Drawing a contrast to parallel developments of second-wave feminism in the US and the UK, most Chilean feminists claimed to “work together with men... to try and help and preserve the family...” (ibid.). Considering this point of differentiation, fear of associations to the “anti-male” stereotype (Franceschet 2005, 67), may explain why MOMUPO existed as an organisation for three years before accepting the feminist label in 1985.

Chilean feminism and the women’s movement reached its peak in 1983, when Chilean society witnessed the emergence of two key unified umbrella groups, namely, MEMCh’83 (Movimiento Pro-emancipación de Mujeres de Chile ’83), and Mujeres por la Vida. Reviving the name created for the suffragette association of 1930s, MEMCh’83 was made up of politically-aligned leaders from “the leftist parties” (Franceschet 2005, 72). This umbrella association coordinated a large membership of twenty-six women’s organisations opposed to the dictatorship and opened a space to express gender-based demands. Later that year, on December 29, a 10,000 strong all women protest rally at the Caupolicán Theatre
again raised the spectre of “feminine difference” by framing this event in terms of women’s unique potential for cross-sectional social mobilisation. A landmark in Chilean women’s protest history, recalling the Cacerolazo and Poder Femenino, now women’s voices arose out of a leftist socio-political space. Named the Caupolicanazo, this rally led to the creation of Mujeres por la Vida, a pro-democracy umbrella group, formed by political women “responding to the inability of the opposition to overcome partisan divisions and struggle effectively for democracy” (Franceschet 2005, 71). Numerous events corresponded to public statements demanding gender equality for women in all areas of life, including the family, working life, and the political arena. For example, MEMCh’83 created a document for the UN-organised Nairobi Conference in 1985, and Mujeres por la Vida had their demands form part of a cross-sectional petition charter that was presented to Pinochet’s authoritarian government in 1986. In this final phase, women accomplished a great deal in regard to the public expression of their equal rights as citizens. However, the unity achieved by the women’s movement in this period was short-lived.

Most observers believe these re-emerging groups, both the political parties and the women’s movements, began to divide “under pressure to decide on a strategy” (Waylen 1998, 154). Within the context of one of the most conflictive debates ever faced by Latin American women’s movements, Chilean women’s organisations debated the strengths and limitations of either remaining autonomous or integrating themselves “into the unfolding political process” (ibid.). In Chile, this feminist debate corresponded to a difficult question that oppositional political parties were facing: of whether to seek “ruptura – the violent overthrow of the military dictatorship” or negotiation (155). At times, these two debates intersected, as was demonstrated when MEMCh’83 leaders’ decision to align themselves with the more radical (ruptura) strategies of the political Left lost the majority of its member organisations (ibid.).

Following the 1988 Plebiscite, most social movements were back-grounded under increasing pressure on the political parties to negotiate the terms of electoral democracy with the departing regime. Wanting to appear pro-women, or more accurately, pro-family, re-emerging political parties increasingly courted women politicians “to use their ‘moral voice’ to persuade Chileans to vote to put an end to a regime that violated human rights, and therefore threatened the integrity of the family” (Franceschet 2005, 78). Within this shift, however, definitions of women’s citizenship again reinforced their roles in the family. In addition, the suppression of women’s specific interests to a broader struggle for the recuperation of electoral democracy served to sharpen internal divisions within the women’s
movement. At this juncture, many Chilean feminists entered the political process, and from there, began to develop a strategy known as “double-militancy,” where they planned to strategically campaign for gender parity “within the party structures” from inside “the unfolding political process” (Waylen 2000, 773-774). A large group of these double-militants joined the coalition of centre-left parties, \textit{Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia}. In contrast to the right-wing coalition, three of the parties constituting the Concertación coalition established voluntary gender quotas. After the \textit{Partido Socialista} (PS) formed a women’s section, called the \textit{Federación de Mujeres Socialistas}, and introduced a 25 percent internal party quota, the \textit{Partido por la Democracia} (PPD) and the \textit{Partido Demócrata Cristiano} (PDC) followed their lead by introducing a 20 percent internal quota.\footnote{Since it was first established in 1986, the PS voluntary quota has been modified. Article 40 of the current statute, dated November 2003, limits electoral candidates of either sex to a maximum of 60 percent and stipulates that neither sex shall occupy more than 70 percent of the internal party positions. For details, see http://www.pschile.cl/docs/Estatuto_PartidoSocialista_de_Chile.pdf. The PPD has also modified its original gender quota for party positions and electoral lists to a maximum of 60 percent and a minimum of 40 percent. To read the most recent statute, dated January 2008, see http://www.ppd.cl/wp-content/files_mf/nuevosestatutosyreglamentoeleccionesppd2008.pdf. According to Article 105 of the PDC’s 2005 statute, this party continues to apply a maximum 80 percent gender quota. For details, see http://www.pdc.cl/sites/default/files/Estatuto%20Vigentes%202005.pdf, all documents last accessed December 2011. Neither of the two centre-right parties has ever implemented gender quotas.} What followed in 1988 was a women’s pressure group called the \textit{Concertación de Mujeres por la Democracia} (CMD). Intended to counterbalance women’s lack of influence within the male-dominated party structures, the CMD feminists used their political links with the parties in the Concertación to campaign for the implementation of a women’s state-level agency during the lead up to the 1989 election. However, the moderating effects of co-opting these once autonomous feminist voices and the blurring effects of the party leaders’ demand for multi-sector unity became clearer as the 1989 general elections drew nearer. Reproductive rights and divorce did not form part of the coalition’s election platform, few women were nominated for parliamentary candidacy, and political women did not have enough decision-making power to change these conditions. If the CMD’s success is measured in improvements for women as citizens, a key argument of support stresses that at least they “endeavoured to place feminist demands on the transition’s agenda... [and] they included some of women’s demands, most notably, the demand to create women’s policy machinery within the state” (Franceschet 2005, 81). As feminist observers have since argued, this group was certainly successful in ensuring the implementation of SERNAM (\textit{Servicio Nacional de la Mujer}) “by law rather than presidential decree” (Waylen 1998, 159). To its disadvantage,
conservative opposition from the political Right and the Catholic Church prevented this “state body charged with designing, proposing and coordinating policies, plans, measures and legal reforms leading to equal rights and opportunities between women and men” (SERNAM 2007, 48), from becoming a decision-making ministry. Nevertheless, its leader is appointed to the senate and this links SERNAM to the executive, from which it has managed to “present bills to Congress that have subsequently become law” (Waylen 2000, 786). Despite its policy successes in areas such as poverty alleviation and domestic violence, however, many have been critical of SERNAM’s poor relationship with “popular women’s movements” (787). In contrast, SERNAM’s access to international funding and state-resources and its officially legitimised intermediary role have meant that some observers perceive it to be asymmetrically “clientelist” (Waylen 2000; Schild 1998).

Returning to the transition to electoral democracy, analyses reveal a number of contrasts between Chile and Argentina. To begin with, there is a general consensus that the Chilean military regime walked away from “a position of strength” (Waylen 2000, 770). In contrast to the Argentine military regime’s sudden collapse in 1983, Chile’s transition was a carefully drawn-out negotiation between the departing authoritarian regime and the political elites. This context afforded Pinochet’s regime a degree of control not seen in the Argentine case. His level of influence over the transition resulted in the prolongation of Pinochet’s conservative legacy. Of particular significance to this analysis, one of the departing regime’s “last acts” in 1989, “was to outlaw therapeutic abortions that had been legal since 1931” (Waylen 2000, 773). In addition, extreme conservatism was written into the design of Chile’s new political, economic, and justice systems by way of the renegotiated 1980 Constitution. This Constitution diluted presidential authority over ideologically conservative autonomous institutions such as “the Constitutional Tribunal, the Armed Forces, and the Central Bank” (Castiglioni 2006, 81). In addition, the power of these institutions was initially reinforced by a number of nondemocratic conservative enclaves: nine seats in the senate were appointed, as opposed to democratically elected; Pinochet retained his post as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces until 1998, after which he automatically became a “senator-for-life”; and the binomial electoral system protected the disproportionate legislative power of right-wing parties for as long as they retained their minority stake in the electorate. In 2005,

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88 As will be discussed in Chapter Five, Chile is one of the world’s few countries “where there is no legal exceptions to the ban on abortion to save the women’s life” (Shepard and Casas Becerra 2007).

89 While 30 percent of the vote share wins a party one of the two electoral seats in a given district (50%), the party needs to more than double the vote share secured by the second runner-up to win both of these
Ricardo Lagos’ constitutional amendments eliminated the designated seats, restored presidential authority over the Armed Forces, and eliminated the “senator-for life” position. However, the surviving binomial electoral system continues to keep two dominant coalition parties in power to the exclusion of smaller independent parties that struggle to cross the one-third minimum threshold to win legislative seats.\textsuperscript{90}

Given these conservative enclaves, it is unsurprising that the post-1990 period was primarily defined as “the resurrection of a conventional party political system and the return to a rather restricted form of electoral politics...” (Waylen 1998, 158). Few Chilean women took seats in the newly elected parliament and the majority of those who did were in the lower Chamber of Diputados. Looking at the gender balance in this lower chamber, only 5.8 percent of the total number of deputado seats went to women in 1990. It is not surprising, then, that many feminist observers have described Chile’s early post-Pinochet parliaments, the Alwyn administration (1990-1994) and the Frei administration (1994-2000), in particular, as a male-dominated arena where parties merely paid “lip-service to the need for greater participation by women in formal politics” (Baldez 2002; Waylen 1998, 159). Apart from the head of SERNAM, Alwyn appointed no women to his cabinet and Frei’s cabinet contained only three women, including the head of SERNAM. In further contrast to Argentina, Chile’s lack of a quota law meant a slow rate of change in women’s political representation. Women diputada numbers rose slightly to 7.5 percent in 1994, to 11.6 percent in 1998, and to 12.5 percent in 2002 (Hardy 2005). Here, many observers emphasise the limiting effect that Chile’s binomial electoral system has had on women being able to compete for legislative seats (Concluding Comments 2006; Fernández Ramil 2007; Franceschet 2001). Because this system creates the conditions in which the ruling party may lack “a secure majority in the congress,” it is forced into building coalitions with ideologically different parties, and into negotiating with the opposition in order to gain support for policy implementation (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2008, 350). In addition, the competitive electoral climate compels parties to strengthen their chances of gaining a majority by re-nominating [male] incumbents, who have a proven electoral success rate (Navia 2008). These electoral conditions have proven unfavourable to the implementation of gender quota legislation and by default, unfavourable for women hoping to be placed in electable positions on electoral lists.

\textsuperscript{90}Given that the Chilean government swung to the Centre-Right in 2010, it could be argued that this binomial system now protects the weakened centre-left coalition.
Finally, given that Chile’s transition and early consolidation periods corresponded with its restructuring into a neoliberal state, cuts to state-funded services and corresponding “self-help” policies were commonplace. This economic climate was particularly unfavourable to women organising outside of the state. Feminist observers have named two interrelated processes that compromised these groups: 1) the necessary “institutionalisation,” “professionalisation,” and eventual “NGOization” of women’s organisations in order to survive in a climate that favoured “experts” over informally organised collectives, and 2) the subsequent “marginalisation” of those organisations that chose not to migrate into the newly formed state (Alvarez 1999; Waylen 1998). Popular organisations suffered financially under this new system when they were “deemed to be insufficiently ‘professional’ to receive resources” and when international funding began to be re-directed through the newly institutionalised state machineries, such as SERNAM (Waylen 2000, 787). At this point, any ties that had previously developed between feminist groups and women in the popular classes were severed. Corresponding with increased privatisation, many OEPs were converted into small businesses and as a result, “activity levels both in terms of the numbers participating within [popular] groups and the number of groups in existence… declined” (ibid).

In Argentina, an economic crisis that coincided with the military defeat in the Malvinas War reduced the military regime’s ability to negotiate the terms of the transition from military rule to competitive electoral politics. Hence, this transition is often described as “free” (Waylen 2000, 771). The departing military regime is reported to have had little influence on the shaping of the new state apparatus, which was instead dominated by the re-emerging political parties. Here, Waylen makes an important point regarding women’s role in the transition period: “despite the relative openness of the transition, the influence of women’s groups was limited” (ibid.). Even though the presidential candidates appropriated feminist demands for reforms to the divorce law and shared patria potestad during their campaigns, most observers have interpreted these discourses within the context of an election year that marked the end of a church-supported dictatorship (Htun 2003). Given this context, it would have been politically advantageous to present a secular agenda. The successful presidential candidate, Raúl Alfonsín (1983-89), went as far as to use “women-sensitive language… [that] openly criticized machismo” (Feijoó and Nari 1994, 117). Shared patria potestad (1985), the liberalised distribution and use of contraceptive devices (1986), and legal divorce (1987) were implemented under Alfonsín. By the 1990s, alongside a broader process of modernisation under Carlos Menem (1989-99), institutionally-aligned women began to push for women’s representation in the executive and for increasing their decision-
making role in relation to public policy. Two of the most significant mechanisms to emerge were the quota law and a women’s state-level agency, namely the *Consejo Nacional de la Mujer*. Since they were established in 1991, these two mechanisms have introduced significant improvements for women. Nevertheless, neither of these mechanisms fared well under Argentina’s increasingly presidential political system within which “congress lacks power” (Waylen 2000, 782). Feminists who are critical of this era have attributed Alfonsín’s woman-less cabinet and the fragility of women’s state mechanisms under the subsequent governments to the marginal impact that women’s pressure groups had in the transition process, “the weakness of women’s discourse,” and the political elites’ appropriation of role-based discourses on women (Feijoó and Nari 1994, 121).

Intended as a means to improve the gender balance in Congress, the quota law was responsible for a dramatic increase in the numbers of women elected into the Argentine Chamber of *Diputados*. According to this law, all political parties had to ensure that no less than 30 percent of their candidates nominated for parliamentary seats were women. Thus, in 1993, the number of women *diputadas* jumped to 13.2 percent, from a mere 3.6 percent in the first series of competitive national elections in 1983, 1985, and 1987 (Waylen 2000, 775-777). This figure reached 27.7 percent in 1995 and 1997, but the significance of this triumph is tempered when we question the level of substantive representation during the 1990s. In regard to the executive level of politics, for example, there were “still very few women in positions of power within party hierarchies... [and] very few women in the executive...” (2000, 778). Although it represented a huge leap from zero cabinet ministers during Menem’s first mandate (1989-95), only 10 percent of his second cabinet (1995-1999) were women (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2008, 362). Argentine politics throughout the 1980s and 1990s was a masculine affair, wherein men held all positions of real decision-making power and prestige, posts which would have given them the necessary visibility as future presidential candidates (354).

As with the quota law, the circumstances within which Argentina’s *Consejo Nacional de la Mujer* was established undermined its power. Waylen suggested that the main cause of the Consejo’s fragility was that it “was established by decree as part of the presidential office and as part of the government of the day and not as a permanent part of the state apparatus” (2000, 778-779). For this reason, the Consejo’s capabilities in regard to “the implementation of ‘women friendly’ policies” were always going to be dependent on the willingness of the
Menem demonstrated this fact during the lead-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, when the Consejo’s feminist leader Virginia Franganillo clashed with the President over his conservative position on the matter of reproductive rights. Menem backed down in the face of strong public opposition to his anti-abortion agenda, but he nevertheless forced Franganillo to resign. The official Argentine delegation to the Beijing conference was devoid of Consejo members, and this body “was completely reorganised and staffed with women known not to be feminists” (Htun 2003, 163), losing links with many feminist actors and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the process.

CONCLUSION

Reading the history of women’s social movements from a chronological perspective reveals two broad periods when diverse groups of women struggled together for a common cause: the pro-suffrage period up to the mid-twentieth century and the pro-democracy period that worked against dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s. Ignoring for a moment the nationally-specific differences between these two countries, the cross-cultural similarities of these two struggles are striking.

In the pro-suffrage struggles, prevailing ideologies such as marianismo and machismo, the sexual division of labour, and the separation of public and private spheres were less contested than in the second wave; thus suffrage brought women together to fight for citizenship yet limited their roles in society the domestic sphere. In the same years, leading up to WWII and through the Cold War, women’s groups formed part of larger nation-popular movements which responded to and contained worker demands for redistribution of wealth. After suffrage was achieved, however, feminist groups faded and women’s work remained restricted to the domestic space as “natural” and “apolitical,” a period which Kirkwood called the “era of feminist silence.”

When Allende proposed to lead Chile on a peaceful path to socialism, right-wing women organised to perform the first Cacerolazo to oppose social change and support conservative ideals. Demands for redistribution of wealth were abruptly repressed under dictatorship in 1973-90 (Chile) and 1976-83 (Argentina) when all citizens found their rights

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91 As is further discussed in Chapter Five, the Consejo is not protected as a formal institution and observers began to see the results of a budget deficit soon after the financial crisis in 2001.

92 To be specific, Menem lobbied furiously for the insertion of a clause into the new Constitution, “granting the right to life ‘at conception in the maternal womb until natural death’” (Htun 2003, 162).
denied and the regimes introduced an extreme form of marianismo and hypermachismo strongly associated with death. Some women participated in armed struggle against dictatorship in Argentina but even in those spaces their participation was limited and invisibilised.

The second phase began when women’s movements re-emerged during dictatorship empowered to struggle against multiple forms of oppression and repression as part of the pro-democracy movement to bring down the dictatorships. In Argentina, second-wave feminists struggled against role-based discourses while groups such as the Madres adopted this identity to legitimise their public presence.

Throughout this history, broader political and economic pressures have prevented diverse women’s groups from uniting to have their gender-specific interests addressed. Following the return to democracy, women’s groups faced the NGO processes of the 1990s, where they found it increasingly hard to broaden their social base and to convince competing political parties of the legitimacy of their women’s rights demands. Further, the appropriation of their agendas by neo-populist Peronist leaders (Menem and others), who have traditionally led the masses from their powerful position in the executive, and the politics of consensus in Chile continue to shape dominant political narratives that exclude a feminist agenda.

In spite of this, women were appointed to important posts and achieved critical mass in Argentina, yet women citizens did not have substantive representation because these political women were viewed as having been co-opted by the state.

In short, despite the substantial and continuous participation of organised groups of women in the political sphere over the twentieth-century, few individual women, apart from Evita in Argentina, occupied a visible position of political leadership. However, a unique model of female leadership emerged when the two most thought-provoking women-led social movements, the AFDD in Chile and the Madres in Argentina, were empowered by their socially revered roles in the family, and they led truly fearless campaigns in the defence of human life. In stark contrast to the “hypermasculine” identities of the dictatorship eras – such as military institutions, “uniforms, parades, weaponry,” torturers, and repression – the AFDD and the Madres embodied “the ‘human’ side of the dictatorships…” (Jelin 2003, 76-78). Today, they continue to represent a memory of dictatorship that functions to maintain democracy and to keep the state accountable for its actions in regard to social and economic rights. While largely rejecting a feminist agenda, the AFDD and the Madres nevertheless redefined women’s social role and also contested the historical separation of the public and private spheres to such a degree that they “unintentionally became a new feminist paradigm,
sustaining the need for a feminine perspective in the world of patriarchal and masculine politics…” (Feijoó and Nari 1994, 113). This new role politicised the mother’s traditional roles.

In Chapter Three, I propose to demonstrate how they not only politicised traditional roles and spheres but feminised political discourse itself by expanding the definition of democracy to include: the care of children (the continuation of life), the family (the strengthening of community), and the ethic of care (care politics or well-being). Specifically, I provide evidence to show that the development of a feminised political discourse on human rights under dictatorship (using bodily discourse) expanded over thirty years to encompass broader democratic ideals. These feminised political discourses provided a model of political leadership for Bachelet and Fernández, which was used in their campaigns and administrations.
CHAPTER III
HUMAN RIGHTS ICONS: FEMINISED POLITICAL LEADERSHIP FRAMES

Two of the most visible branches of human rights organisations (HROs) are led and largely constituted by women: the AFDD in Chile, and the Madres in Argentina. The Chilean and Argentine people are accustomed to AFDD and Madres’ leadership of human rights struggles in the Southern Cone, and their supporters have come to trust that these iconic women represent what they call the three pillars of that struggle: memory, truth, and justice. I believe they have created a legacy of women’s indomitable leadership in a highly visual public arena and have demonstrated women’s ability to organise collectively amidst a divided public sphere in order to challenge the state effectively. Furthermore, I posit that in addition to becoming human rights icons, these women leaders have sensitised societies to embrace women leading as women. By locating themselves always in the family, never separate from this identity, they have relied on kinship roles that conform to historically patriarchal expectations of women in these societies. While the Madres created an instantly recognisable “maternal” image, foregrounding the mother, the ADFF’s performative constructions of womanhood tended to foreground the absence of men from the family. Correspondingly, a reliance on discourses that defined these women as defenders of the family followed a maternal ethic of caring and a doctrine of non-violence. Scholarly attention has provided examples of the ways that the AFDD and the Madres consciously used family-role-based discourses to position themselves as political actors and frame their actions.

Two factors determined the basis of their organisations around “family and kinship roles...”: the necessity of positioning themselves in opposition to the hypermasculine political discourses of the respective military regimes, and their collateral damage roles, as indirect “relatives of victims...” (Jelin 2003, 80). In the face of dictatorship, these women publically expressed kinship to those who had suffered at the hands of the state in ways

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93 Having split in 1986 into two major fractions, namely, the Hebe de Bonafini line and the Linea Fundadora, any discussion about the Madres must recognise that they are not a singular cohesive entity. Their separation into two groups corresponds to significant differences in their participation in public debate. I have chosen to spend more time on the Bonafini line because the Linea Fundadora has not participated in government initiatives to the same degree.
ranging from imprisonment and torture to disappearance. In fact, male victims were doubly humiliated: first, physically by torture techniques that feminised the victim, and second, discursively, often causing them to experience a crisis in their masculinity. Accustomed to observing the abuse of women under patriarchal power, men were more “shocked” than women to find themselves also abused by the military’s hypermasculine techniques. Building on a foundational narrative of kinship and acting in defence of family relationships, women, albeit unexpectedly, benefited from an inversion of power: women became defenders of male victims. These discourses effectively legitimised the “radical” (public-political) actions of these women by suggesting that they were acting within organisations held together by “traditional” (domestic-apolitical) non-threatening forms of gender solidarity, in their shared roles, either as mothers, grandmothers, wives, daughters, or sisters.

During the transition periods and throughout the last twenty or more years of electoral democratic consolidation, this kinship narrative continued to provide both of these groups with a legitimate position from which to act politically. However, these two iconic groups have experienced this legitimacy unevenly. Over recent decades, the military regimes’ introduction of neoliberalism, the 1982 Argentina-UK Malvinas War, Argentina’s 2001 economic collapse, and Chile’s notably high levels of wealth inequality under neoliberalism and consensus politics have generated political, economic and cultural changes in these two countries. These profound societal changes provided the women leaders of the AFDD and the Madres with good reason to revisit areas of their public discourse. Informed by these evolving contexts, they continually debate and renegotiate historical definitions of human rights. At these junctures, another discursive element in their achievement of public visibility and empathy materialised: in moments of political and economic crises, the AFDD and the Madres came to the defence of leftist politics, the working-classes, and other marginalised groups.

Over time, these discourses developed into three key “collective action frames” (Bonner 2007, 8), which I identify as 1) metamorphosing into agents of memory, truth, and justice who promise to lead and strengthen the community; 2) politicising the mother’s powerful defence of life; and 3) publicly defending the well-being of marginalised peoples.

94 Human rights groups have estimated that some 30,000 Argentines and at least 3,000 Chileans were disappeared, thousands more were imprisoned and tortured. Official estimates are more conservative. For details, see Chile’s Informe Retrít (1991), Informe Valech (2004-2005), and Argentina’s Informe Nunca Más (1984).

95 In Chile, the AFDD have also supported growing indigenous protest movements, the feminist-led morning-after pill debate, and more recently, they supported the massive student movement for constitutional reform of education.
with an ethic of care that was destroyed under dictatorship. I suggest in this chapter that these frames feminised political discourses by expanding the dominant definition of “political” to include the strengthening of the community, the continuation of life, and the ethic of care, making the AFDD and the Madres an attractive resource of symbolic capital to other potential women leaders.

In her resonant 2003 study, Raylene Ramsay demonstrated how political women in France found a reliance on “maternal legacies” useful in moving beyond more traditional patterns of “paternal legitimisation” (see Chapter One). I suggest that by drawing on a legacy of strong women icons, whose significant actions created and legitimised a rich pool of feminised political discourses, Bachelet and Fernández were able to move beyond paternal legitimisation strategies to justify their presidential aspirations. To clearly demonstrate the correspondence between these maternal legacies and the two political campaigns studied, I organise my findings into four new frames: 1) a “feminine sensibility” frame that drew on positive stereotypes historically associated with “feminine difference,” which helped Bachelet and Fernández to position themselves in opposition to discredited masculine leaders; 2) an experiential knowledge frame that positioned women at the heart of the historical family-as-nation metaphor; 3) a non-threatening luchadora frame that presented women as non-confictive and responded to calls for a politics of care; and 4) a second experiential knowledge frame that influenced the different ways in which Bachelet and Fernández represented social trauma.

My analysis uses this theoretical framework to recontextualise the institutional mechanisms that served as both pathways and obstacles to their respective presidential victories. Varying measures of positive discrimination through gender quotas as well as family connections previously had helped speed Bachelet’s and Fernández’ entrance into public office. Nevertheless, once in office, these selection systems are known to generate serious barriers to women’s legitimisation as autonomous political actors. Summarising points raised in earlier chapters, these mechanisms are largely disputed because they are controlled by men (“male patronage”); they encourage party obedience rather than substantive representation; and they are not participatory, as power is delegated. One heavily disputed system of candidate selection in Latin America is derogatorily termed “el dedo” and dedocracia (Alexandra Benado, quoted in Zalaquett 2009, 163). Crudely translated as “the point” and “pointocracy,” these terms suggest that institutional arrangements allow an existing powerful political figure to assure the electoral victory of men and women politicians by “pointing to” and “appointing” them to that political office. In Fernández’ case, many of
those interviewed for this thesis referenced “el dedo de Kirchner” or “Kirchner’s pointing” (Gherardi 2009; Maffia 2009; Vallejos 2009). Despite the obstacles, both Bachelet and Fernández garnered confident voter support in the pre-election opinion polls, which practically assured their electoral victory.\(^{96}\) These candidates, then, appealed to a popular majority even before the actual vote confirmed them.

In this chapter, I shift the focus of attention away from these paternal mechanisms that delegitimise women and concentrate instead on the legitimising power of “maternal legacies.” After exploring how these two women-led social movements helped create a gender-sensitised socio-political context for Bachelet’s and Fernández’ success, I make these legacies visible through an examination of how their human and socio-economic rights campaign pledges were shaped by the interpretive frames constructed by the AFDD and the Madres in their struggles for the protection of human rights.

**DEFINING HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHILE AND ARGENTINA**

Although historical parallels exist, there are fundamental differences between the strategies of the AFDD and the Madres in defining human rights in the post-dictatorship moment.\(^{97}\) A key explanatory factor of these differences is that in Chile, the AFDD confronted greater obstacles to being brought into the state as a major actor. As discussed in Chapter Two, all political and community-based organisations that refused to negotiate “the tactical pact,” which characterised Chile’s transition into electoral democracy, were left “outside” the formal political realm. One example of the AFDD’s refusal to negotiate in this “pacted” transition is evident in its discourses around a continued legal struggle for the nullification of the infamous Amnesty Law 2191 that predominates today.\(^{98}\) For the first twenty years of

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\(^{96}\) Even though Bachelet’s popularity rating decreased after the first round, she remained the favourite to win the election. For example, the Tercera-DataVoz poll reported that Bachelet was 11 points ahead of Sebastián Piñera five days before the second round (“Bachelet evita triunfalismo” 2006). Fernández “was consistently 20 to 30 percentage points ahead of the other presidential candidates in the polls” during her presidential campaign year (Dunn 2008). Surveys conducted by four well-known pollsters four weeks before the elections predicted that Fernández would win in the first round with “between 45 and 55 percent of the votes…” (Kollmann 2007). Fernández secured her second mandate by a wide margin (54.11%) in the 2011 presidential elections, in which her husband could no longer be perceived as directly responsible for her victory.

\(^{97}\) For a broad comparative analysis of Argentine HROs including organisations “that do not frame their demands in terms of gender,” see Michelle Bonner (2007).

\(^{98}\) The Pinochet regime declared the Amnesty Law (2191) by decree in 1978, which protected all people from being convicted of crimes committed between the day of the military coup, September 11, 1973, and March 10, 1978, the day that state of siege was lifted. While many public figures have pointed out the ways in which the Amnesty Law was designed to protect military personnel from being convicted
electoral politics in Argentina (1983-2003), the same was true for the more prominent line of the *Madres*, who, as their president Hebe de Bonafini explains, had no relationship with the state before Kirchner: “to us, they never opened the doors to the *Casa de Gobierno*, never, not under any head of state” (2009a). However, unlike the Bonafini line of the *Madres* in Argentina, this climate of non-negotiation has not changed for the AFDD in Chile. Alongside several other autonomous protest movements, such as the recently emerged student movement, led by the Confederation of Chilean University Students (CONFECH), the AFDD continue to operate from the political margins, in the non-Concertación left.

These significant differences are highlighted in the human rights discourses examined in this chapter, including more recent examples surrounding the major political events that followed the presidential elections of Bachelet and Fernández. These differences also help to explain the divergences between Bachelet and Fernández in their stress on the human rights agendas being defined by the AFDD and the *Madres* during their respective presidential campaigns.

**SHARED RESISTANCE FRAMES: FAMILY METAPHORS AND BODILY DISCOURSE**

This is an organisation of women. [However]… it is difficult for us to do politics and to do leadership as *women*… We resort to a fairly masculine form [of action]… because… everything is built with them [men] in mind, and not us (Zuñiga 2009).

In this citation, Gabriela Zuñiga, the AFDD’s communications manager, highlights a familiar site of gender struggle, the public sphere. Politics and leadership, she suggests, are male-ascribed roles that men and women experience differently. This context, she adds, limits the extent to which “an organisation of women” feels it can act as *women* and creates an environment in which women leaders feel forced to adopt “masculine” codes of action. While Zuñiga’s references to “masculinisation” have to be understood within the specific circumstances affecting women leaders of the AFDD in Chile, she touches on a commonly recognised experience: a discursive junction at which political women continue to face obstacles in their struggle for public legitimacy. This battle for legitimacy aids in understanding the reliance of both the AFDD and the *Madres* on love, life, and nature of crimes against humanity, and despite that fact that it has been publicly denounced by the United Nations General Assembly and the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, powerful opposition in Congress blocked all of the Concertación governments’ attempts to repeal or even modify this law.
discourses, and their shared use of interpretive frames that conceptualise women’s resistance as family-based, using bodily discourse. Considering that political women feel forced to speak from the margins of a “masculine” public sphere, my analysis traces how their discourses express this constant battle for legitimisation in gendered ways.

As Chapter Two demonstrated, observers of the AFDD and the Madres conceptualised this legitimisation process in interrelated ways: a) as a reinforcement of the “feminine,” b) as a “politicisation” of the private sphere as well as of women’s traditional gender roles and discourses, and c) as a transcendence of the public/private divide. I incorporate these interrelated perceptions into what I define as the “feminisation” of political discourse. Within the historical context of dictatorship, I believe that the feminisation process worked in two interrelated ways: as a counter-discourse and as a legitimising discourse.

In 1970s authoritarian Chile and Argentina, as elsewhere, women were not defined as the “natural occupant of the public sphere” (Aldaraca 1982, 65). Instead, a master narrative dominating Chile and Argentina during the dictatorship eras affirmed the hypermasculine military machine as primary among a few legitimate public actors. As Diana Taylor asserts in her gendered analysis of the staging of the Argentine military coup, the military’s “total occupation of the public space, and the mechanical display of rigid, controlled male bodies against which the leaders(s) stood tall” contrasted sharply with their projection of the departing ex-president “Isabelita,”99 as “female, hysterical, unqualified, and out of control” (2005, 61-66). After totally de-legitimising Isabel Perón’s presidency and then outlawing any references to the Evita legacy, pre-existing models of women’s political leadership in Argentina were severely discredited. The residue was a narrowly confined, rigid conservative national script, which redefined women’s corporal presence in Argentina’s public zones in a contradiction of hegemonic terms and norms. In simple terms, this master narrative constructed these women as “abnormal.” Thus, women entering into the public sphere to protest against military violence in Chile and Argentina had to find a way to legitimise their presence in that space. They found an opening in discourses that articulated the actions of these women leaders “despite their strong political character, as an emotional defense of the family, not as a threat to military rule” (Valenzuela 1991, 167).

First, the feminisation process worked as a counter-discourse when women turned these conservative national scripts back against the hypermasculine military states like a mirror so that these aggressors could be seen destroying the “family” they “claimed to be

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99 María Estela Martínez de Perón, the first woman president of Argentina, was also known as “Isabelita” or Isabel Perón.
defending…” (ibid). In contesting dominant discourses with a family frame, women leaders defined themselves according to stereotypical roles. Paradoxically, these role-based discourses compensated for taking “masculine” actions to contest the authoritarian state and transcend the artificially imposed public/private divide. In order to undercut the military governments’ character attacks, women activists consciously drew on a source of positive gender stereotypes, which were largely carried forward from the nineteenth century. For survival, they immersed themselves in an iconography of women as nurturing and self-abnegating, of being closely linked to nature, of being physically and emotionally sensitive, de-eroticised, morally pure, and therefore, apolitical.

However, these historical constructions carried inherent long-term challenges. While assertively contesting the state, the AFDD and the Madres gave a certain level of credibility to claims that women have a symbiotic relationship to the family. Some Chilean specialists of women’s activism during the military era suggest that women leaders who utilised a frame of feminine difference, employed “practices and rhetoric that effectively placed them outside of politics…” (Baldez 2002, 197). Many have argued that this passive archetype would seriously inhibit women’s access to decision-making roles after transition to electoral politics in Chile. Franceschet, for example, explains that as a consequence women’s activism in the Pinochet era “was not... viewed as a regular expression of political citizenship... [which] stands out as a key feature of gendered citizenship in Chile” (2005, 54). My thesis, however, supports the other side of this debate, arguing that while both the AFDD and the Madres chose to operate within the limitations of a role-based frame, they politicised this frame by taking it into the public sphere (Barrancos 2009).

Another complicating factor in basing their counter-discourses on these nineteenth century ideals of womanhood is that the AFDD and the Madres ran the risk of excluding important ethnic and economic communities from their struggle for human rights. Chile and Argentina are no exception to processes of exclusion and disempowerment, wherein gender generally intersects with ethnic and economic identities. The nineteenth-century construction of femininity and masculinity in the Southern Cone, as elsewhere, has had a strong influence well into the present. Bridget Aldaraca (1982) was one of the first to theorise on the projection in nineteenth and twentieth-century Spanish narratives of a “feminine” image that tied women to the home through a “cult of domesticity” (62). As her study argues, the necessary “material preconditions” for the construction of this icon meant that “the domestic angel” ideal was restricted to those women who could afford to work in the home rather than work outside to support the family (69). When transported to the Latin American context
through Spanish colonialism, these material preconditions were overlaid with racial differences. By default, the idea of being “white” was added to the matrix of the socially privileged construction of “women.” Within this racialised class-based construction of “femininity,” women of colour and women servants, who are tied to the domestic space through their work, are typically excluded in discussions about contemporary women. In reappropriating these domestic and maternal frames, women leaders non-threateningly suggested that the desperate search for disappeared loved ones fell “naturally” onto women because they were incomplete without the family that symbiotically defined their existence. With regard to identity, the women leading both the AFDD and the Madres never self-identified in any particular ethnic terms, so by default, they are perceived as “white.”

Nevertheless, the AFDD and the Madres memberships were diverse. A substantial number were either working-class or, as a result of disappearance, in deprived material circumstances. Others came to adopt the Marxist, socialist, and communist ideological values that linked them to their disappeared relatives and to the working classes. When these political and economic identities merged with their social “outsider” positionality, the Madres and the AFDD leaders found themselves sharing social spaces with a broad base of marginalised peoples. As a result, both organisations have been drawn into a wider range of struggles that better represent the Southern Cone’s diverse populations. This shift positively influenced their public identity constructions after the return to electoral democracy. In Argentina, the Madres developed a close relationship with class-based struggles, which in turn, opened political spaces of major relevance to Fernández’ 2007 presidential campaign. Similarly, after the Vicaría de la Solidaridad was dissolved in late 1992, the AFDD continued to operate within a political culture of solidarity and social justice, of major importance to Bachelet’s 2005 campaign.

The early 1970s Chilean Anti-Allende campaign more prominently constructed a gendered identity that excluded racial and economic identities. In Chapter Two, the key right-wing mobilisations, the Cacerolazo (March of the Empty Pots), in 1971, followed by Poder Femenino in 1972, which consciously excluded economic, racial, and political identities from

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100 Evidence of these political links are located in testimonial accounts and victim profiles such as Chile’s Informe Rettig (1991) and Informe Valech (2004-2005), and among the archives preserved by the Vicaría de Solidaridad. In Argentina, the Informe Nunca Más (1984) provides a wealth of information on the victims’ gender, ages, and political leanings. According to Taylor, 54 percent of the 150 Madres who formed the Association in 1979 were working class (2005, 187). In Chile, the women who founded and constituted the arpillería workshops, under dictatorship, were united by two interrelated factors, “the precariousness of solitary domestic life,” supposedly, after the loss of a loved one, and “economic and nutritional shortages” (Agosín 2008, 26).
their discourses, were documented. In a skilful sleight of hand, the evidently domestic cooking pot was used to stage their political action in feminine terms, while many of these middle and upper-class women would have returned home to pots tended by domestic servants. The conscious feminisation of these political acts strategically masked the fact that they were defending their racial and class privileges.

This construction of a “women’s politics of resistance” (Ruddick 1989), through a strong reliance on family metaphors, which located these women as inseparable from the family, was non-arbitrary and prevailed over political and economic differences. The AFDD and the Madres of the working-class Left and the oppositional “militant mothers” of the anti-Allende movement of the middle and upper-class right were able to use this family frame, reinforced by legal and religious discourses, to act politically. Scholars considering the cultural context in the debate about the political costs of domestic, family-based, and maternal frames of activism generally recognise that this strategy: 1) provided women leaders with “an important source of leverage” (Baldez 2002, 197); 2) increased “the moral authority of the demands” (Thomas 2005, 25); and 3) gave numerous women-led protest groups a level of legitimacy because it stressed a “role for which they are most respected” (Fabj 1993).

In addition, decisions of the AFDD and the Madres to position themselves publicly as non-violent and non-threatening women, acting in defence of their family relationships, are generally rationalised on the grounds that these interpretive frames afforded them a certain protection from the repression being experienced by others who were contesting the state (Fabj 1993, 7; Taylor 2005, 195; Thomas 2005, 24-25; Waylen 2007, 56). Some observers argue that the level of protection afforded to the Madres in Argentina was merely symbolic (Feijoó and Nari 1994, 113). What began as non-violent verbal intimidation, such as ignoring their protests, labelling them as “loca” – historically constructed to mean both “mad women” and “prostitutes” – and blaming these mothers for their “subversive” or “terrorist” children, soon shifted toward physical intimidation and detention. In December 1977, this culminated in physical violation when three Madres, Esther Ballestrino, Mary Ponce, and the group’s first leader Azucena Villaflor, were disappeared.

In Chile, one of the most commonly recurring themes in AFDD discourses depicts the absence of men from the family. On one level (legitimising discourse), this interpretive frame suggested that women were forced to “abandon” the private realm in order to fill a public gap left to them by absent men. For example, Zuñiga clearly stipulated that women relatives consciously assumed this task: “there were brothers, fathers, [and] male cousins. There are masculine subjects within those families, who are not searching. Those who search are the
women, not the men. In Argentina it’s the same” (2009). On another level (counter-discourse), this legitimate claim challenged the illegitimacy of absence. In this sense, women became the medium through which to see the disappeared. This frame highlighted men’s absence by using standard masculine plural nouns to identify the disappeared: “Nuestros hijos, esposos, padres, hermanos fueron secuestrados y hechos desaparecer…” (“Our children [sons], spouses [male], parents [fathers], siblings [brothers] were kidnapped and made to disappear…”) (AFDD 1997, 7). The idea of “absent men” was repeatedly reinforced in visual discourses through dance, song, and poetry, to images sketched for testimonial publications and embroidered onto cloth in the clandestine *arpillera* workshops.101

The AFDD’s 1978 formation of a folkloric group, which used music and dance to express their defence of the family and the nation, is one of many discursive examples. Traditionally danced with a male partner, women in the AFDD began to dance the *Cueca Sola* (Alone) – unaccompanied by a man – to “give testimony to the absence of the compañero in dance and in life” (García 2002). According to the lyrics of this symbolic national dance, these women – embedded in their family relationships – felt incomplete without their male companions: “I am mother, I am wife, I am daughter, [and] I am sister… I dance the *Cueca* and I dance alone, I dance alone so that you see me, with you and without you I dance…” (AFDD 1997, 31). Similarly, on a publication entitled *¿Dónde Están?* (Where are they?), the figure of a young mother, holding an infant in her right arm and the photo of what must be the infant’s father in her hand, suggests the incompleteness of a fatherless family (AFDD 1981). In addition, a series of simple sketches compiled for a special AFDD publication in 1983 reproduce this same idea twice. Both sketches mark the notion of incompleteness by depicting a family unit in traditional terms: mother, one or two children, and a missing father. In one of these images, the absence of “the man in the house” is represented by an empty seat at the dinner table, in the other, by a faceless male silhouette under a lifeless tree. The disappearance of these men is indicated by a question mark, which references the question *¿Dónde Están?* (AFDD 1983, 85-93). In a third image, the words “exile,” “repression,” “misery,” “loneliness,” “fear,” and “running,” surround the image of a broken home (89).

The absence of men from these discourses suggests the endangering of the social harmony and integrity of the complete family, and the family home, by “the problems that

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101 *Arpilleras* are small embroidered quilts. Originally, they were hand-made from pieces of donated clothing and according to some testimonial accounts, from the clothing of the *desaparecidos*. Women made a certain number of these quilts each week for sale through the *Vicaría de Solidaridad*. Some were sold to foreign collectors, before being banned by the military regime (Agosín 2008).
our people are experiencing” (AFDD 1983, 88). By metaphorical extension, these intimate personal stories also narrated national and political fractures. These family frames enabled women activists to successfully negotiate the intimacy and horror in their personal world and expose the illegitimacy of this silent horror to the shared social world, without threatening the social order, and most importantly, without provoking a violent backlash. Then in addition to shifting their local claims of defending the family toward more global claims in defence of nation, or in defence of democracy, these stories travelled from the clandestine spaces of origin to international audiences.

From these examples, the deep levels at which these family metaphors became politicised in the Southern Cone region is demonstrated. They support Chilean feminist philosopher Olga Grau’s theory of the “hyper-representation” of family in Chile’s public discourses between the years 1978 and 1993. For Grau, these familial metaphors became an “obligatory reference” to all political, religious, and cultural actors wishing to “demonstrate interest in social matters” (1994, 44). Similar claims have been made in analyses of Argentina’s Peronist era (Perrig 2008), dictatorship era, and post-dictatorship era, documenting that the identification of “the family as a building block of the nation” has a long history (Bonner 2005, 56). As I demonstrate later, this performative shift from personal to national narratives that enabled women leaders defending family to act in defence of the nation and democracy would be of particular significance to Bachelet and Fernández when battling for the presidential office.

The emphasis that these kinship frames placed on blood relationships and the corporal provided the AFDD women in Chile and the Madres in Argentina with another range of discourses that would uniquely characterise their iconic identity: bodily discourses. During the dictatorship years, the AFDD and the Madres began to wear photographs of their children and relatives around their necks and/or pinned to their clothing, expressions of a physical memory and a close bodily connection to their lost loved ones. Similarly, both the Madres and the AFDD women carried body silhouette images as a visual reminder of their disappeared children and relatives. Numerous examples abound of these bodily discourses projected in women-led human-rights struggles in current day Argentina. Two Argentina examples are the Abuelas’ search for identity through the extraction of blood samples for DNA testing and the Madres’ weekly march in circular movement around the “beating heart”
that is the Plaza de Mayo (Mellibovsky 2006). Hebe de Bonafini expresses this feeling clearly when she describes the ritual wearing of a headscarf, bearing the names of their disappeared children “well pressed against our heads, as if it were their embrace” (2009b). Chile’s AFDD provided poetic examples of this bodily connection that temporarily suspend disbelief and transport these women to an in-between world where they may communicate with their imprisoned and disappeared loved ones. In one example, a disappeared husband speaks from an in-between place as if he were present: “Here I am and I don’t know where I am; what I do know, seeing you with my photo on your chest, is that I love you again like I loved you before…” (1997, 45). Other Chilean examples include the AFDD women chaining their bodies to the fences around Congress and the Ministry of Justice; their participation in hunger strikes under the banner of “Our Life for Life” (AFDD 1983, 50); and their choice of language to represent their physical suffering and that of the nation: “our open wound,” “the lacerated, mutilated, disappeared body of Chile” (AFDD 1997, 7).

Within these bodily discourses, a range of visual symbols represented the continuation of life: birth, child-rearing, mother-child bonds, shared blood lines and genealogies. At the same time, these symbols articulated the material repercussions of disappearance. Many were framed within a construct of physical communication flowing between the desaparecidos and their living relatives. The ultimate “channel” for this flow of life, and of life blood, was projected onto the mother’s body. By halting this flow of life, disappearance made the mother’s story of loss even more compelling. Of the bodily silhouettes adorning the main entrance to the Argentine Espacio para la Memoria grounds, that representing a pregnant woman tells the most powerful story. It is no coincidence that in Chile also the image of a pregnant woman has come to symbolise this “culture of life” (Rosemarie Bornard, quoted in AFDD 2009b). A highly visible example is in a newly inaugurated memorial paying homage to those who were disappeared from the Antofagasta Region, where the silhouette of a pregnant woman has been “symbolically installed in every one of the memorial plaques” (ibid.).

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102 In September 2009 a bill, authored by a team of lawyers working on behalf of the Abuelas, was sent to Congress to allow the state to legally oblige potential children of desaparecidos to undergo DNA testing. When they refuse blood testing, DNA can be gained from alternative sources of genetic material, such as that can be gained from the testing of items of personal use.

103 Another link between maternity and the nation took international stage during the World Cup in South Africa in 2010, when the Argentine football team, led by their coach Diego Maradona unfurled a banner supporting the nomination of the Abuelas for the Nobel Peace Prize. This expression of solidarity legitimises the actions of these mothers/grandmothers as if they, like the football team, are in the business of defending of the nation.
The visual reconstruction of these bodily kinship relationships in high profile public spaces invites a range of interrelated interpretations. Many reproduce contradictory mariano codes. In constructions of the mother’s body as a functioning vessel, a carrier of life from one generation to the next, these maternal bodies are de-eroticised. When the AFDD and the Madres expressed an almost mythical ability to physically channel the voices of their loved ones, they glorified notions of women’s spirituality. This particular construction gained symbolic importance after the return to electoral democracy, when these women became the primary advocates for keeping memory alive in the Nunca Más (Never Again) movement. In Argentina, for example, at the signing of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Fernández metaphorically enshrined their bodily discourses and corporality in the notion of “living memory” (“memoria viviente”) (2007d, 340).

Further, discourses directly addressed the realities of fear and death that engaged attention and focused women’s emotional intelligence. The following example from an AFDD publication exquisitely frames the decision to contest the military state in terms of maternal sacrifice and affective motivations:

We live between two fears… One… was running the same risk as our relatives by doing what was necessary to ensure that ‘Nunca Más [would it happen] in Chile.’ The other, [was] that if we did nothing we wouldn’t have clean and free hands to caress our children (1997, 68, my emphasis).

Finally, when the AFDD folk songs lamented “for the jailed bird… for the uprooted flowers, for the crushed grass, [and] for the pruned trees” (Agosín 2008, 137), and when a Madre poetically expressed the act of seeing her son “in the fast pink cloud, in the beautiful silver moon and in the surly impetuous river” (“Estás en todas partes” 1984), these bodily discourses drew on exaggerated constructions of women’s proximity to the natural world.

Throughout these works, the AFDD and the Madres came to embody previously latent perceptions of women. However, their decision to mask the political and legal basis of their protests behind “apolitical” family frames and to embed themselves in these bodily discourses has to be understood within the very violent and threatening context of military rule. As with all other oppositional groups, these strategies were essentially designed to protect them from physical as well as verbal attack.
The preceding analysis of feminised political discourses focused on the parallel ways in which the AFDD and the Madres strengthened as movements under dictatorship. There were also differences between them, some of which would have a significant impact on the strength of their collective identity and relationship to the state following the return to electoral democracy. As I have argued thus far, the AFDD’s literature focused centrally on “absent” men and it frequently gender identified disappeared loved ones within family trees that accurately accounted for multiple kinship relationships. This particular aspect of the AFDD’s discourse contrasted significantly to the Madres all-inclusive references to “nuestros hijos” (“our children”). In the specific context of Chile’s electoral democracy, the AFDD’s family identities continued to foreground the desaparecido and minimise their protagonism as an organisation of women. This displacement later complicated their relation to the state as a strong female collective. By contrast, the following section demonstrates how the Madres used their singular maternal identity to form kinship relationships with other social actors. Following Argentina’s economic collapse in December 2001, for example, this iconic identity enabled them to engage in broader socio-economic struggles. Subsequently, after Kirchner’s 2003 election, the Madres forged kinship bonds with the state: Kirchner said that “we were his mothers. And he always says that our children are his compañeros. And that is very strong, very strong. (JC: Is it like a family link?) Yes, yes, yes” (Bonafini 2009a).

To understand how the ADFF and the Madres identified themselves and referenced their loved ones, we need to historicise their discursive performances within the violent context of military dictatorship. There is a parallel between the gender norms which shaped these women’s direct experiences and the ways in which gender informed what happened to their loved ones. While the military regimes never clearly defined what they meant by “political subversive,” or “subversion,” people understood that this identity was gendered. An awareness – materially supported by demographic and testimonial evidence – demonstrated that after being informed primarily by political identification, acts of detention, torture, and disappearance were also informed by gender and age, and that these crimes ranged across classes.104

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104 Cherie Zalaquett’s (2009) gender-based analysis of women who participated on both sides of Chile’s dictatorship-related struggles, Chilenas en armas, provides one of the most broad-ranging collections of testimonial accounts to date.
A series of studies concentrating on the axes of gender, disappearance, and torture indicate that understanding these histories in terms of “gender difference” is unavoidable. Elizabeth Jelin’s (2003) analysis of known disappearances in Chile and Argentina posits that a greater proportion of men than women were disappeared in both countries as a direct consequence of gender expectations. This gap, she adds, corresponds to the asymmetrical sexual labour division particularly as it was defined in the 1960s and 1970s, when men were favoured over women for institutional and/or “public roles” (2003, 77-78). Further, Jelin asserts that this gender difference was “more marked in Chile,” where the main targets were “politicians and government employees…” (77). The number of women disappeared in Argentina, Jelin maintains, was greater than in Chile because “in Argentina… the most violent repression was directed at militant groups” (ibid.). In these groups, she explains, beyond the institutional and formal channels, young people predominated, and significantly, it was also here that “women already had a significant presence” (78).

Furthermore, numerous researchers argue that such contrasting gender frames contributed to the cognitive process through which women become the prime targets for sexual violation. In a “terrorist state,” this contrast is intensified to such a degree that it may even legitimise the sexual torture of women (Caro Hollander 1996). Jean Franco argues that a long-standing history of constructing and performing masculine identity associated with “the power to inflict pain,” helps explain “the fact that the torturers were male” (Franco 1992, 107-108). In stark contrast to the more empowering projections of women representing humanity, life, and love, gender experts such as Jelin frequently cite contrary constructions of womanhood as an “ambivalent condition,” characterised by passivity, dependence, and an awareness “of bodily necessities” (2003, 78-79).

Studies also show that these gendered constructs cannot be limited to a binary construction of women as victims and of men as aggressors (Franco 1992). The emergence of a significant number of armed women militants (guerrilleras) in Argentina, for example, confounded this perception of a binary gender framework. Hence, pro-military publications represented these militant women as “masculinised women.” Militant women are believed to have adopted “desexualized” identities (Jelin 2003, 79). With men, the military attempted to weaken their victims’ resistance to torture by feminising their identities. This included psychological and physical forms of torture, ranging from a verbal assault disparaging penis size, through to sodomy (Franco 1992, 107).

Although rarely documented, Argentine cases of women’s participation in torture sessions further problematised the gendered duality of masculine torturer and feminine
victim. For example, one of the few known women torturers, Lucrecia, was mentioned in Argentina’s *Nunca Más* report (CONADEP 1986, 291). In addition, a multitude of studies focusing on Argentina’s dictatorship era document the torture, disappearances, and heavy censorship that occurred under Argentina’s first woman president, Isabel Perón, an impotent, disempowered figure who emerged by default in a period of Peronism that Argentina prefers to forget.\(^{105}\)

In contrast to Argentina, there have been a significant number of historical accounts of women acting in support of the Chilean military regime (Power 2001, 2002; Zalaquett 2009). They testify to the ways in which gender performances reproduced this fear of women adopting masculine models, which led to a fierce defence of femininity. For example, a first generation of military women were officially incorporated into the then Pinochet-led Chilean Armed Forces immediately after the coup, when the *Escuela de Servicio Auxiliar Femenino del Ejército* was opened in 1974.\(^{106}\) These conservative military women were controlled by “rigid norms of feminisation” (Zalaquett 2009, 20). They were restricted to feminine dress codes, limited to non-combatant roles, and faced difficult decisions over motherhood and marriage (19). Although officially enrolled in military schools, these first generation military women were denied agency, and their training in administrative and support roles replicated women’s archetypical roles “in the service of others” (Zalaquett 2009, 50).

Women’s active participation in these masculinised roles and the fluidity of some of these gender constructions, might have altered dominant power relations between men and women. However, hypermasculine discourses monopolised and governed all public spaces. During the dictatorship eras these hegemonic discourses exaggerated gender “differences” and treated women whose discourses deviated from the gender status quo as invisible or ridiculous. After women were forced out of the political arena in Chile and Argentina, hegemonic military discourses attempted to erase women from the workforce and confine them to domestic spaces.

This domestic space is precisely the location from which women-led HROs emerged. Through their visible opposition to those who operated within hegemonic military political frames, women-led HROs chose to resignify the hypermasculine public space without adopting archetypically masculine behaviours. Instead of playing the game like men, these

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\(^{105}\) Critics of the Peronist legacy tend to recall Juan Perón’s second term in office, which was characterised by internal instability and economic decline.

\(^{106}\) After being renamed in 1984, the *Escuela del Servicio Femenino Militar* closed in 1988 and reopened from 1991 until 1995, when women were incorporated into the *Escuela Militar* (Zalaquett 2009, 23-24).
women performed gender “differently” to men. They became “women of influence,” as opposed to “women of power.” A few Southern Cone women icons have come to represent important stages of this region’s history, including legendary political figures such as Eva Perón in Argentina and Chile’s Gladys Marín who continue to inspire. Uniquely, the AFDD and the Madres established symbolic legitimacy by claiming feminised political identities. As older women, they have provided later generations of political women with a legacy that is not perceived as “feminine” in the same way that this construct is associated with younger women leaders today (c.f. Camila Vallejo, ex-president of CONFECH in Chile). Instead, the Madres and the AFDD women leaders have left a political legacy that is encoded as “female” and unique to “women.”

LEADING AS WOMEN: RESIGNIFYING HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSES AFTER THE RETURN TO ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY

Some thirty years on from the transition to electoral democracy, the political and socio-economic structures in which these two HROs operate are quite different. Contextual differences existed between the ways in which Chile and Argentina shaped their electoral democracies; however, the initial challenges faced by the AFDD and the Madres were similar. Prior to Argentina’s 2001 economic collapse, for example, these two HROs were similarly situated vis-à-vis the state. The disconnection between neoliberal democratic governments and the women leaders of the AFDD and the Madres left both organisations with the same limited decision: diversify and broaden your support network or demobilise.107

Neither demobilised, however, patience was required as the Madres had to wait nearly twenty years for the Argentine democratic state to respond to their demands for the nullification of the infamous amnesty laws Final Point (Punto Final) and Due Obedience (Obediencia Debida), in 2005.108 Those same political and economic challenges also explain

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107 In Georgina Waylen’s description of the AFDD and the Madres, she defines them as human rights groups and draws a parallel between them by locating their activities “outside the political process” (2000, 774). Her reasoning centres on their rejection of the emerging governments’ compliance with amnesty laws and the emphasis given to policies of reconciliation as opposed to justice, “making the trial of all those accused of human rights abuses impossible” (ibid.).

108 In Argentina, a self-amnesty law, declared by the departing military regime in 1983, was later overturned by president Alfonsín. However, in 1986 and 1987, Alfonsín’s administration caved in to military pressure and passed two replacement amnesty laws known as Final Point (Punto Final) and Due Obedience (Obediencia Debida), respectively. The former, limited trials against perpetrators of human rights abuses to a period of sixty days, and the latter, exempted lower ranking military personnel from trials, as they were “following orders.” Two pardons later decreed by Carlos Menem in 1989 and
why the Chilean state did not begin to make gestures of “cercanía” (approachability) until 2005-6, when Bachelet made “improving the relationship between the government and the citizens” one of her administration’s key policies, or sellos (stamps) (2005d, 19). According to Zuñiga, the AFDD women anticipated a significant change in their relationship with the state after Bachelet’s election: “one of the first things that [Bachelet] did… was to come here and sit down with us, [something] that no other president… had done” (Zuñiga 2009). However, when it later became clear that the state would not be responding to the AFDD’s historical demand for the nullification of the Amnesty Law, the AFDD leaders found it “more and more difficult to meet with her” (Zuñiga 2009). To understand why the women leaders of traditional HROs have had to redefine themselves in order to stay politically relevant, the two key socio-political and economic challenges they faced following the restoration of electoral democracy must be considered.

First, these HROs had to challenge the official discourses around major reconciliation projects, amnesty laws, and pardons that were generated at various stages of the transition to and consolidation of electoral democracy. When confronted with a political culture committed to forgetting the past, the AFDD and the Madres needed to reinforce their political identity with the Nunca Más movement, which privileged the public preservation of memories that discomforted large sectors of these two societies. Given this polarising tension, the disagreement over which human “rights must be protected in a democracy” kept these political cultures in conflict after the return to electoral democracy (Bonner 2005, 55).

In Argentina, between the initial transition to electoral democracy (1983) and Kirchner’s election to the presidency (2003), a massive political-economic media campaign urging society to let go of the traumatic past developed into a number of reconciliation projects that reframed past conflicts. For example, advocates of what came to be known as the “teoría de los dos demonios” argued that while the military coup and violent repression that followed during the military dictatorship was far more powerful than the forces it was confronting, they occurred in response to violent terrorism by leftist armed militant groups such as the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo and the Montoneros. Boldly, the Kirchner administration took public and controversial steps to denounce the teoría de los dos demonios. In 2006, for the thirty-year commemoration of the military coup, Kirchner commissioned a new edition of the Nunca Más report. In it, he authorised a new prologue to precede the original one written by Ernesto Sábato in 1983. The new prologue asserts that “it

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1990 led to the release of a number of military personnel convicted of crimes against humanity. These were overturned only in 2006.
is unacceptable to justify state terrorism as a game setting two violent forces against each other as if it were possible to find a legitimising symmetry…” (IADE 2006), which disputes Sábato’s opening sentence: “during the 1970s, Argentina was torn by terror from both the extreme Right and the Far Left” (CONADEP 1986, 1). This move received the enthusiastic support of the Madres. During a period of heated public debate over whether the commission of the new prologue was justified or not, Hebe de Bonafini emphatically denounced Sábato’s original as “una porquería” (rubbish), adding “our children were not demons. They were revolutionaries, guerrilleros, wonderful unique people who gave their blood defending the fatherland…” (2006).

Those who define the “children of democracy” as being “free of the baggage and scars of decades of animosity and division that at times broke down into bloodshed” criticise the “old political culture” (Clutterbuck and Montoya 2010). To combat this argument, one of the greatest challenges for historic HROs in Chile and Argentina has been to transfer their sense of political conviction and social responsibility to younger generations who were born into democracy and are therefore only indirectly affected by the events of the dictatorship era through their family histories.

The second most important challenge that these women-led HROs have had to overcome has been the economic pressure to moderate their public expression of historical ideological and especially political convictions. To a degree, the consensus drive manifested in the social reconciliation policies described above grew out of neoliberal economic policies. In order to reverse democratic gains of previous decades, a “free-market ethos” that shaped the neoliberal economic model accompanied the installation of Latin American dictatorships, beginning with the Pinochet regime in the early 1970s. Aided by globalisation winds, this contagious neoliberal logic later spread to post-dictatorship 1980s Argentina and intensified under Menem (1989-99). In Argentina, an economic meltdown, one in which the middle classes found themselves severely affected by economic crisis, was required for the post-dictatorship state to realise its responsibility to intervene in wealth distribution and to ensure social equality. However, prior to this shift, the Madres collaborated with civic pressure groups acting against the state for socio-economic reasons. All previous post-dictatorship governments in Argentina, Alfonsín (1983-89), Menem (1989-99), Fernando de la Rúa (1999-2001), Adolfo Rodríguez Saá (2001), and Eduardo Duhalde (2002-03), had left the role of poverty alleviation largely to NGOs.

By the turn of the century, the social value of collectivism, “mutual solidarity, and common good,” had been severely undermined by neoliberal economics (Dockendorff,
Román Brugnoli, and Energici Sprovera 2010, 190). The 1960s and 1970s era ideologies centred on a discourse of “revolution, socialism in its different variants, unity in action, liberation, [and] victory” (Andújar et al. 2009, 11). The cultures that have fought to carry these politically back-grounded ideologies into the twenty-first century are currently facing their greatest challenge: a strongly individualistic consumer society that has grown out of measures designed to make civil society socially compliant, politically centrist, and economically regressive.

Despite having acquired a reputation as non-violent luchadoras (warriors), new economic challenges required much more of these women leaders than leftist anti-state discourses. Now, the HRO leaders faced a young generation of middle-class consumers, for whom the pursuit of purchasing power had been purposefully and progressively introduced and had thus overtaken the notion of civic obligations and active political participation. In addition, these younger freer communities had broader options than their parents. The original members and leaders of the Madres are now over eighty years of age, and many of the AFDD died during the final years of the dictatorship. These personal and collective circumstances left their younger relatives to take up the reins and gain the trust of younger more liberal, consumer-oriented communities.

Following Argentina’s 2001 neoliberal collapse, all attention, including governmental, suddenly shifted toward immediate socio-economic needs. This new context provided the Madres an opportunity to reconfirm their public presence and to garner public empathy and trust. However, this shift also required new strategies. As Bonner’s comparative study highlights, there were distinct advantages to using a gendered discourse frame in the post-dictatorship moment, provided that it had “historical consistency… with society’s values and political culture… [as well as] present consistency… with current events and everyday experiences…” (2007, 9-10). By 2001, there was adequate evidence to suggest that the Madres’ maternal model of leadership had the flexibility to adapt to these dramatically different circumstances. By then, the Madres had begun to embrace diverse conceptualisations of human rights and family in their collaboration with other anti-neoliberal groups. Nevertheless, it is largely through their work with economically disempowered peoples, following the 2001 crisis, that the Madres resignified their political role in the

109 In 1991, Sola Sierra, who died in 1999 and was succeeded by her daughter Lorena Pizarro in 2003, spoke about the mental and physical toll that years of “anguish and tension” had taken on many of their lives (1991). She stressed that in the last three years of the dictatorship, seventy active members of the AFDD had died: “twenty six [died] of cancer, eight by heart attack, three have committed suicide, three have been violently attacked, [and] many [died] of thrombosis” (ibid.).
protection of human rights. While continuing to draw on an archetypical maternal construct, their discourses effectively shifted toward a vocabulary of socio-economic rights. In this way, the Madres broadened their original campaign – the return of their disappeared children alive, for information about their fate, and for justice for thousands of detenidos and desaparecidos who were tortured and murdered – to include a struggle for the redistribution of low-cost housing, employment, food, and education. This shift also represented a transformation from an organisation that looked toward the past to one that looked toward the future.

After first opening the Universidad Popular Madres de Plaza de Mayo in 2000, the Madres, who had historically kept their distance from economic and political elites, then began to work largely in cooperation with the Kirchner administration (2003-2007). In doing so, they were able to consolidate their public presence in a range of major socio-economic projects (discussed below). Collaborating with the Fernández government in the Sueños Compartidos (Shared Dreams), and the more recent Espacio Cultural Nuestros Hijos (Our Children Cultural Space), the Madres now move fluidly between subaltern and dominant sectors of Argentine society. Consistently, the discourses surrounding these projects are framed in ways that allude to previous revolutionary struggles, based on “convictions of love and dignity” (María del Carmen, quoted in Madres 2008).

Varying types of civil discontent with lack of state intervention in the economy remain clearly observable in Argentina. Despite continued daily public manifestations of discontent and in spite of their on-going support of socio-economic demands, such as the “Redistribution of Wealth, Now!” and the “Hunger is a Crime” campaigns, the Bonafini line of the Madres have had good reason to stop supporting movements contesting the state.

First, in 2003, the Kirchner administration expressed interest in settling the state’s “historic debts” to human rights organisations. Second, Kirchner slowly responded to immediate socio-economic demands by way of redistributive social welfare programmes and an increase in the state’s economic role under the banner of a “regulatory state” (discussed further in Chapter Four). In 2006, Hebe Bonafini publicly announced that the end of an era of contesting the state would be marked by a last annual Marcha de la Resistencia in the Plaza

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110 This university was originally conceived as a “new space of resistance,” and a highly ethical learning centre, providing an alternative to “the intellectual hegemony” and “educational practices” that legitimise oppression (Madres). Since 2000, the UPMPM has grown into a multifaceted academic enterprise, consisting of multimedia archives and offering a robust academic curriculum: seminars, conferences, free public courses, and human rights-based diploma courses. By 2010, political opposition had become fierce. Diana Maffía (2009), accused Bonafini of transforming a “popular” university into “a private university with state funding...” and of replacing the original professors with “Kirchneristas who ideologically have nothing to do with... Marxism... Che Guevara... [or] popular education,” in return “for money and to sit in the seat of power (palco de poder).”
de Mayo, which the Madres initiated in 1981: “the enemy is no longer in the Casa Rosada [the government palace]… there is no need to resist this government, but to support it instead” (quoted in Meyer 2006). The Bonafini line of the Madres has been severely criticised for pulling out. The annual marches are still staged by a wide range of groups contesting the Fernández administration, including the Línea Fundadora.

Argentina’s economic conditions at the time of Fernández’ election (2007), were in sharp contrast with those at the time of Bachelet’s election (2005-2006). Since the return to electoral democracy, Chile’s Concertación coalition had managed to maintain a stable economy and keep poverty from reaching national crisis level. Under Frei and Lagos, for example, the Chilean state steadily improved public transportation systems and other infrastructure by providing “market solutions,” such as the “public-private” funding of national roads and the controversial Transantiago public transport network. Moreover, the Chilean governments’ failure to protect citizens’ socio-economic rights had not yet been made as apparent in Chile as it had been with the Argentine crash of 2001.

As Fraser’s three-dimensional conception of social justice highlights, however, economistic remedies are not wholly satisfactory if they subordinate cultural and political justice claims (2009). By ignoring, for example, “the cultural subtexts of nominally economic processes” (2003, 62), the Concertación successfully failed to ensure that Chilean citizen’s enjoy “participatory parity” (36). Given this context, the AFDD’s distance from the first four Concertación governments (1990-2010), as well as the incumbent Alianza government, a coalition of two right-wing parties, is not surprising. The AFDD’s non-relationship with the Chilean state is indicative of the formidable veto power that conservative parties have held and continue to hold over attempts at political, economic, and social reform. Of particular concern was the Concertación’s inability to lessen the negative impact that consensus politics and neoliberalism had on participatory parity during their twenty years in power. Often highlighted as the root causes of malestar (discontent) in Chile (Ocaranza 2011), these two governing discourses have proven resistant to change. While they are

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111 Fraser formulates parity as “the condition of being a peer… of standing on an equal footing” and she argues that “members of society [need to] be ensured the possibility of parity, if and when they choose to participate in a given activity of interaction” (2003, 101).

112 The Alianza por el Cambio (Alliance for Change) is made up of two right-wing parties: la Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI) and the Renovación Nacional (RN). Justin Vogler, writing for the Upside Down World describes Sebastián Piñera’s RN party as “a neoliberal club for Chile’s landed gentry…” and the UDI as “a dynamic party of former Pinochet henchmen with slightly fascist undertones and close ties to Opus Dei…” (2010).
increasingly disputed, they are also firmly guarded by the Chilean constitution’s built-in protection mechanisms.

However, the AFDD’s experiences of public legitimacy have also differed from those of the Argentine Madres. For years, the AFDD’s determined struggle over the Amnesty Law did not allow them to broaden their definition of human rights to include more immediate social and economic matters of concern to Chile. While more recently they have supported student-led struggles for constitutional and educational reform and even participated in the feminist-led reproductive rights debate, they are not leading these struggles. Instead, these discursive shifts seem to run parallel to a growing “spirit of rebelliousness” within civic society (Arendt 1963), which suggests that the AFDD is “latching on” to these other opposition movements. Likewise, the ailing state of its financial affairs compares dramatically to the Madres’ strong support from the Kirchner and the Fernández administrations and their significant growth as an organisation. Thus far, the AFDD has not had the opportunity, financial means, or the symbolic capital to broaden their human rights discourses to the same degree as the Madres in Argentina.

In the context of dramatic socio-political or economic shifts, both of these HROs, members of a movement dating back some three decades, have been overshadowed by more immediate concerns. Conflicting and intergenerational perceptions of political and economic power limited the extent to which these HROs were able to broaden their support base. However, in the face of these challenges, it helped that, in symbolic and ideological terms, if not also concrete terms, the leaders of the AFDD and the Madres were disassociated from the politically and/or economically elite classes. In addition to this non-elite identity, the Madres found their strongly maternal frame, the performative symbology of the headscarf, and the weekly ritual useful. The AFDD lacked this theatricality and this may account for their comparatively smaller support base. Yet, despite this, they have been singularly responsible for calling political leaders to account and they have experienced widespread appropriation of their discourse on memory, truth, and justice in the public arena. The section that follows will outline the political elite’s appropriation of these two groups’ discourses over recent decades, leading to a mutual exchange of feminised leadership frames.

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113 On April 22, 2008, AFDD leader Mireya García participated in the Pildorazo protest march, in defence of the morning-after pill.
CONTESTING MASCULINE MODELS: FOUR FEMINISED LEADERSHIP FRAMES

There are few feminine models of leadership, and when there are feminine models of leadership such as Golda Meir... and Margaret Thatcher, they are masculine models, that is, they are men wrapped in a woman’s body; because historically we don’t have feminine referents of leadership (Zuñiga 2009).

Nothing about gender construction is clear-cut; however, the manner in which we gender-construct our memories of public figures can be dualistic. For example, recent media constructions of key military figures on trial for crimes against humanity in the Southern Cone dictatorships have depicted them as the incarnation of conflict, hate, terror, and authoritarian power.114 This does not mean that the women leaders connected to this same period are always attributed with discourses about humanity, life, and love. Some people associate highly visible women like Isabel Perón, and the conservative women who led Feminine Power, with hate, and blame these women along with men for the dictatorial regimes, in Argentina and Chile, respectively. Despite their achievement of prominence in relation to the political world and the public sphere, there is good reason why these women have been erased from the Southern Cone’s historiography of political icons.

By contrast, the courageous steps of the non-violent luchadoras, the AFDD and the Madres, who contested these hypermasculine military powers, are revered today. In addition, the flexibility with which these feminised models of leadership shifted from historical arguments, toward more immediate struggles is observable. In resignifying their roles in current society, the Madres, in particular, have come to symbolise an alternative space for all who feel excluded from the public and political domain. Since the introduction of Sueños Compartidos, these women have become the face of housing and dignity for disempowered peoples. There is evidence to suggest a kind of bottom-up legitimisation of these women’s redefined roles in both countries. In Chile, there is evidence of a mutually supportive relationship between the AFDD and the economically and ethnically marginalised indigenous

114 Throughout most of Kirchner’s administration and well into Fernández’ mandate, former Argentine dictators, military officials, and police chaplains faced trial and were convicted for crimes against humanity, highlighting their connection to notorious torture centres such as ESMA and Campo de Mayo, and the transnational Operation Condor.
Mapuche. In Argentina, the Madres have established a huge support base among the economically marginalised.

Bearing these figures in mind, then, how has a collective memory of hypermasculine leaders and authoritarian rule affected the gender performances of a succession of male democratic presidents in Chile and Argentina? Furthermore, how did this masculinised history affect the gender performances of women candidates for the presidency? Returning to characteristics with which women leaders of the AFDD and the Madres are strongly associated, to what degree can we say that Bachelet and Fernández were publicly profiled as defenders of the family, who follow a maternal ethic of caring, and a doctrine of non-violence?

In terms of prevailing ideologies, for example, theories such as that of “los dos demonios” have discouraged political actors from appropriating the human rights agenda as defined by the Madres. Critics perceive such discourses as belonging to a political “culture that is based on confrontation, exclusion and antiquated ideology…” (Clutterbuck and Montoya 2010). When Kirchner began to express his criticism of the military, for example, political observers accused him of “overreacting” and of “radicalism” (Rohter 2006). Nevertheless, I propose that a range of fluid feminised frames of collective action, and some specific leadership narratives observable within these frames, have provided Bachelet and Fernández with an attractive platform from which to contest the rigid masculine gender codes governing the exercise of power in high political office before them. Few, however, would directly link these women leaders with those frames.

The “Feminine Sensibility” Frame

In responding to questions such as those above, researchers have turned to the public discourses surrounding women’s political candidacies in recent election periods. Analyses of these discourses suggest that women aspiring to political positions have found stereotypical gender constructions useful when appealing for political and cultural change toward a more caring government. Political women’s discourse framing suggests a role-based care politics and it frequently reappropriates historical semi-religious constructions of sacred women, such as the maternal figure of the María, thus endowing women with a heightened spiritual

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sensibility. Alternatively, the framing is of the historical figure of the domestic angel, who feels an immense responsibility to the children of the nation, to humanity, and through a heightened emotional intelligence, proximity to nature. A number of interviews undertaken in Chile reveal that eighteen of the twenty women candidates who ran for municipal posts between 1992 and 2004 claimed that women’s leadership style differentiates itself in comparison to men’s in ways that echo the archetypal qualifications observable in Chile’s long history of activist women. Below, I translate the qualities that are supposed to resonate among these political women:

A greater capacity for team work, greater consecuencia [commitment], interest and approach to all themes concerning the community, proximity to the people, greater willingness to forge alliances, greater clarity when setting out the problems, more receptivity to demands, capacity to develop more concrete ideas, sensitivity toward women’s issues, capacity to work and, finally, untiring and greater responsibility (Humanas 2008, 91).

Many of these attributes are observable in Bachelet’s public profile during her campaign year. Bachelet’s message to the nation on closing the second and the third presidential debates in 2005 and 2006, emphasised a high level of sensitivity to the social within a framework of feminine sensibility: “Because I am a woman, a mother, and a doctor, I know… and I can guarantee you that as President I will think and respond to Chile, to you” (“Lo que dijeron” 2005); “A president has to recognise the needs of her people, of her country. I am a mother, I am a doctor, [and] I have met the needs of my patients, of my family” (“Lo que dieron” 2006). By stressing her experiential knowledge as a woman, a mother, and a doctor, in both of these thought-provoking messages, she positioned herself firmly within the female condition while subliminally also drawing on a history of socialist equality. Stressing the unique combination of her maternal and professional roles, Bachelet presents herself as an advocate of “care politics” and constructs the figure of the mother-president, whose life experience has better prepared her to recognise and care for the “people” who need her.

Although in comparison to Bachelet’s experience Fernández’ appeal to feminine sensibility was less convincing, she nevertheless positioned herself within a framework of maternal care politics. During her first public speech as presidential candidate in July 2007, for example, Fernández articulated women’s primary role as a mother, interpellarating her
“gender companions” as “value shapers, the first to define the values of her child” (2007a). Then, Fernández suggested that biological differences shaped in women an aptitude for facing adversity: “We are biologically prepared to withstand pain, culturally shaped to face adversity…. When you are a woman, [life] is a lot more difficult” (ibid.). Continuing this line of thought, Fernández illustrated the discursive source for this limited construction of womanhood, one that had been defined by the Madres: “We are also prepared… to carry out activities simultaneously, in the public [sphere] and in the private [sphere]…. It is no coincidence that during the dictatorship it was women who put white kerchiefs on their heads to search for the desaparecidos” (2007a). During her campaign year, Fernández frequently referenced the Madres as exemplary figures of women’s “cultural stamp” (“impronta cultural”) (2007d, 438). In a seminar on women’s suffrage in Argentina for example, Fernández hailed the Madres as an outstanding example of women’s cultural ability to “integrate, to bring [people] together, to strengthen ties, [and] to unite forces…” (ibid.).

In a direct reference to the ways that the Madres have adopted post-2001 redistribution claims, one of Fernández’ campaign spots personified Argentina as a young girl born in December 2001: “Dolores Argentina. The girl who was born the day that we all wanted to die” (Campaña 2007). Dolores Argentina’s life improves as she grows up; she was adopted by the “vecinos [citizens]… as if she were their own daughter,” people cooked for her in the symbolically dented “cacerolas” [cooking pots], and while the countryside provided her with milk, the factories provided her with nappies made in Argentina. Metaphorically speaking, it was a “caring” state that through its solidarity with the people and the land had helped Dolores Argentina to “grow a little bit every day.” Representing the social mobility of the middle classes, the wounded nation of Argentina grew up to be “a normal girl.” In conclusion, Fernández appeared on stage alongside her vice-presidential candidate Julio Cobos. By further displacement, Fernández promised to embrace the child-like nation and lead her through her first school years – by 2007 Dolores Argentina would have been no more than seven years old. Although Fernández is generally perceived in the most non-maternal terms, in this spot she reappropriated the figure of a mother-president. Clearly, these images cannot be mistaken for paternal, or suggestive of any desire “to be Perón,” as Maffía has often asserted (quoted in “Evita referente” 2006). Nor is the state portrayed in masculine terms, as it might have been had Kirchner bid for a second term. Instead, they reappropriate a series of maternal frames in order to portray Fernández as a profoundly caring leader.
There is a clear antecedent to this campaign spot in a short article entitled *How was the University Born?* by Hebe de Bonafini (2005). Written in 2005 to commemorate the fifth year of the *Universidad Popular Madres de Plaza de Mayo* (UPMPM), Bonafini uses one extended family metaphor to describe the university’s emergence and its first five years. She compares the UPMPM’s emergence to the birth of a daughter, an event that brought with it the feelings and “fears [typical] of first time mothers.” Born “healthy” and “strong,” she “grows quickly,” much loved and aided by the professors. By the time of her fifth birthday, she has “fought with some of her little friends who wanted to take her toys” and has defended herself well. She is surrounded by family, “two brothers, the Library, the Video-library and even a cousin, the *Madres* Printing Press… her big brothers are the Osvaldo Bayer Literary Café and the Bookshop,” and “we, her mothers, like any mother, protect her, embrace her and help her to grow up free and strong” (ibid.).

While it may seem odd to readers unfamiliar with the *Madres*’ history, this choice of metaphor for a university is no accident. In the face of political criticism and bureaucratic obstacles, Bonafini repeats the same maternal discursive strategy that helped her face adversity during the dictatorship era. Just as maternal discourses disguised the unprecedented and “subversive” nature of the *Madres*’ protest action, this family metaphor deflects attention from the “radical” and non-conformist nature of opening an alternative non-hegemonic space of learning. Bonafini, who is well aware of her public perception as a “radicalised” public figure (Bonafini 2009a), draws on her own maternal experience to protect, defend, even justify the rebellious project. In doing so, she portrays the act as an example of good motherhood: raising a healthy, strong child, surrounding that child with family and love.

Likewise, through their appropriation of these “feminine sensibility” frames, Bachelet and Fernández were able to avoid accusations of following elite masculine leadership models, and being delegitimised as “men wrapped in a woman’s body” (Zuñiga 2009). However, what does not feature in the description of political women’s leadership style outlined above corresponds to that which was missing in the reductionist presentations of Bachelet and Fernández as presidential candidates: “authority, decision-making confidence, ability to negotiate, political ambition, rationality in moments of conflict… aptitudes belonging to the exercise of power and decision-making, historically associated with masculine attributes” (Humanas 2008, 91). In addition, no matter how positive and widely held these perceptions of a woman’s style of political leadership may have been, none had amounted to much in terms of political outcomes for women candidates in Chile and Argentina before.
One of the factors that made the Bachelet-Fernández electoral successes outstanding is that few women figures within Southern Cone political history had successfully, let alone independently – depending on how independent one feels the “wife of” Kirchner really is – achieved such elite political status. The pathway to electoral success had not yet been normalised by a legacy of successful women who were perceived as legitimate presidential candidates with their own merits.

*The Experiential Knowledge Frame (1): Women at the Heart of the Family-as-Nation*

Given the tense socio-economic and political context of their respective elections, how is it possible that two political women, of economically and politically elite classes, managed to gain the trust of a large majority of non-elite citizens? In both Chile and Argentina it was the vote of the popular classes that catapulted Bachelet and Fernández to the highest position of political power.\(^{116}\) The examples of discourse exchange that follow evidence one way that the Bachelet and Fernández campaigns appealed to non-elite voters: by articulating the difficult negotiation of their personal and public lives, as *women* and as *politicians*, within experiential knowledge frames created by the AFDD and the *Madres*. This is not received knowledge. Instead, this knowledge is gained from life experience, which adds to its resonance and credibility. Through resonant narratives relating to family roles and responsibilities as well as past struggles, these political leaders stressed that the place where they learned to assume responsibility for national social issues was not in a university but rather through personal life experience.

While the women icons of the Southern Cone’s *Nunca Más* movement have never stopped acting in defence of human rights linked to the dictatorship eras, much of their current discourse transcends the artificial separation of time into past and present. These discourses remind society of the ways in which the repressive projects of the past dictatorship regimes, which were as economically motivated as they were political, correspond to the current economic moment. The drastic economic adjustments made under neoliberalism have

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\(^{116}\) To date, I am not aware of any gendered data for voter turnout in Argentina, however, election results indicated that while Fernández lost to middle-class voters in the three major urban centres, Buenos Aires, Rosario and Córdoba, she won a wide majority of the votes among the “suburban working class and rural poor...” also known as the “traditional Peronist bastions of support” (Goni 2007). Although Bachelet won the election by a narrower margin than Fernández, she nevertheless “won by a wide margin in popular zones” (“Candidata gana” 2006) Bachelet also garnered more women’s votes (53.33%) than Lagos had done in his second round (48.65%). To compare Chilean election results since 1989, see the following web page, http://www.elecciones.gov.cl, last accessed January 2012.
left a trail of unresolved poverty-related issues in Argentina, and parallel ideological projects severely weakened strong working-class movements in Chile. Through their gender-sensitised political discourse on human rights, women-led HROs remind people of the importance of a collective action frame in defending the rights of a community *as a community*, as opposed to defending one’s individual “entitlement… to aspire to live a life as good as anyone else’s” (Chris Brown, quoted in Listener 2010, 18).

The collectively-experienced knowledges that these women-led HROs produced have such national significance that they continue to inspire the mass mobilisation of people. Struggling against current forms of oppression that are more difficult to define, and no longer faced with an easily identifiable enemy, marginalised groups find themselves struggling against socio-political phenomena such as the legalised discrimination of minorities, social intolerance, and the socio-economic phenomena causing extreme wealth gaps, poverty and hunger. A passing glance at the wide array of spray-painted protest slogans and demonstration placards circling the central plazas in Buenos Aires and Santiago today reveals numerous examples of the influence that the AFDD and the *Madres* have had on these wide-ranging struggles.

One example is Chile’s massive student-led movement, which emerged in 2011. Throughout the year, Pinochet images filled Santiago’s streets. Students dressed in military costumes, they danced and marched to music reminiscent of the socially conscious *Nueva Canción*, and they reproduced the words of Salvador Allende. Music videos showed students bearing their names on small placards, as if they too had been “disappeared.”

One poignant billboard, bearing the words ¿Dónde Están?, displayed a black and white photo of ex-president Bachelet. Although resignified for an entirely new context, these two words – their form and even their position on the billboard – directly cite one of the AFDD’s most iconic and now instantly recognisable representations of the *desaparecido*. This is just one of many examples revealing how historical frames are being used to connect the violence of the

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117 Philip Gendall’s study of the dramatic shift in attitudes toward “social inequality” in New Zealand presents an interesting comparative case study (Listener 2010).

118 In particular, I refer here to rap group Calle 13, who performed their song “*Latinoamérica*” in collaboration with *Nueva Canción* artists Inti-illimani at Chile’s historic Viña del Mar music festival in September 2011. In October, 2011, this recording was used as a sound bed for a Youtube video supporting the call for a plebiscite on national education. This video features Lorena Pizarro (AFDD), who defines this action as “a profoundly democratic exercise that is calling the institutionalism of this country into question and demanding that this government listen to the citizens.” See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fk8wLiUtOdQ&feature=player_embedded, last accessed January 2012.

119 Here, I reference the video that Chilean Rap Artist Ana Tijoux directed for her new song “Shock,” in support of the 2011 student mobilisation.
past to the present situation. Another, “Hunger is a Crime,” names an anti-poverty campaign launched by a network of social organisations that emerged in response to the 2001 economic collapse in Argentina, namely, the Movimiento Nacional de los Chicos del Pueblo.\textsuperscript{120} Having maintained their iconic status, the Madres have had significant influence in how other political actors frame their redistributive claims. Slogans such as this one form part of massive human rights protests, marches, and festivals, with which the Abuelas, and both lines of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo – the Linea Fundadora and the Hebe de Bonafini line – are affiliated. As Hebe de Bonafini confirms: “We have always marched for our children who demanded [just] that… ‘One thousand five hundred Thursdays of struggle and resistance against hunger, which is a crime…” (interviewed by Vázquez 2006).

In both of these examples, inequality and poverty are resignified as social collective concerns and matters of national responsibility, rather than the result of individual failure or laziness. Adding to their symbolic impact, these phrases connect socio-economic problems such as the huge wealth gap in Chile and in Argentina to internationally declared crimes against humanity committed during periods of military rule.\textsuperscript{121} By default, this human rights frame evokes the much disputed mechanism of legal impunity which has allowed criminal perpetrators to assume that “they would never be called to account for their actions” (CONADEP 1986, 235). Given that the AFDD and the Madres have demonstrated the systematic nature of crimes against humanity, these messages implicate the perpetrator in “criminal events that cannot be considered ‘excesses’ or chance occurrences” (ibid). In other words, poverty and wealth inequality is also systematic, and someone, or some body of people, such as the state or the elite classes, can be held accountable. A discourse of national responsibility would certainly resonate among those who suffered economically in December 2001. In addition, Argentine politicians can no longer afford to ignore such resonant messages. In turn, the feminised political codes stressing the continuation of life, the strengthening of the community, and the ethic of care make this a potent legitimising discourse for women trying to distinguish themselves as political leaders who will make a difference.

\textsuperscript{120} This example formed part of the Resistance March on December 10, 2008, which also marked 25 years of democracy in Argentina.

\textsuperscript{121} According to Amnesty International, “acts such as genocide, apartheid and enslavement constitute crimes against humanity. The definition is also considered to include the systematic or large-scale practice of murder, torture, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, enslavement and forced labour, persecutions on political, racial, religious or ethnic grounds, rape and other forms of sexual abuse, arbitrary deportation or forcible population transfers.” (1998).
When interviewed for this thesis, a founding member of the Madres, Juana de Pargament explained the Madres’ fight for basic socio-economic rights as a commitment to the memory of their disappeared children. Learning that these were the same values that their children fought to protect, and for which their children were disappeared, the Madres assumed this cause, as Pargament puts it, “in name of our children” (2009). Judging by this statement, the Madres’ unique understanding of the continued defence of socio-economic rights is informed and driven by family experiences that recover collective social values such as mutual solidarity and common well-being.

As such, the epistemologies of the AFDD and the Madres impart a gender-sensitised politics of care. Standing in stark contrast to received neoliberal doctrines such as individualism and meritocracy, this paradigm evokes a collective agenda aimed at strengthening a community of people. By comparison, this frame discredits the individual agenda that operates without relationship to others as lacking compromise, as “out-for-self,” distant, cold, and selfish. In the Chilean context of embedded neoliberalism, the solidarity-individuation debate pervades all levels of social life today. After December 2001, mutual-solidarity narratives held particular resonance for Argentine citizens.

For women aspiring to top political positions, these experiential knowledge frames would have been inspiring. Examples taken from Bachelet’s and Fernández’ speeches during their campaign years reveal a tendency to claim that their credentials for rebuilding democracy, or a new future, lie in their proven ability to rise above personal struggles. Both women referenced a difficult past: Fernández frequently spoke from a position of surviving the dictatorship, the 1982 Malvinas War, and the economic collapse in December 2001. Bachelet often referenced her role as a solo mother in defending the family and building the family home. In her closing campaign speech in December 2005, for example, Bachelet stressed a life history of struggle and family responsibility: “I am a woman, like so many women, who has worked hard and kept her family going… Almost all that I know I have learned by struggling, out of love for my children, for my profession, for my country” (2005b, my emphasis).

While drawing on this experiential knowledge frame, both of these candidates repeatedly used a family-as-nation metaphor. For example, Fernández likened the economic collapse to “arriving home and finding everything patas arriba (belly up)” (2007d, 431):

During a speech announcing the construction of special venues for the Bicentenary celebrations, Fernández expressed a strong sense of parental responsibility: “our children, the future generations… we are going to give them a country a bit better than that through which
we had to live during these last tumultuous decades, of tragedy, [and] of disagreement” (2007d, 442). Likewise, after legitimising her political ambitions as a labour of love, in the campaign speech above, Bachelet suggested that her credentials for nation-building lie in her experience as a mother and a doctor, wherein she directly linked the nation to the home: “Because I am a mother and a doctor, I know that [nations] are built like a home: with love and perseverance” (Bachelet 2005b).

In Argentina, this nation-as-home metaphor is testament to the continued relevance of the Madres’ experiential knowledges in current day Argentina. Despite lacking any formal training in managing massive sums of money and huge numbers of people, the Madres now head an ambitious government funded housing project, Sueños Compartidos. Kirchner gave the Madres the management of this comprehensive social programme, centring on the construction of housing in some of the poorest shantytowns (villas miserias) in and around Buenos Aires and extending nationally. As the following suggests, their close cooperation with the government on this social project has generated a mutual exchange of discourses between the political elite and the Madres: “[Fernández] often borrows the Madres’ words. When we inaugurated the last hospital in Chaco she said, ‘As the Madres say, our compañeros desaparecidos are there, in the workers.’ This really moved me. We are always saying that our children live on in others who struggle and fight” (Bonafini 2009a).

Given their rich history and prominent national presence, it makes sense that government elites would appropriate the Madres’ discourses in order to suggest that they too can be trusted to strengthen the community. However, the difficulty lies in convincing people that it is personal experience and by default, personal vulnerability that drives a commitment to social justice and nation-building. When Fernández’ campaign discourses aligned the promise of constructing a new future and recovering national solidarity to ideals of care politics and family-based values of life and love, she showed understanding of this challenge. Fernández appropriated the Madres’ experiential knowledge frame during an inaugural event early on in the 2007 Villa 15 housing project, when she was still a presidential candidate, by addressing an audience of beneficiaries as “desaparecidos sociales” (2007d, 461). Unpacking this concise phrase, we can see that Fernández marries current day struggles for basic needs, such as a home and a job, all of which are closely linked to the defence of the family, with historic struggles for human rights. She achieves this through her appropriation of one of the most iconic terms summarising the brutality of the dictatorship, the desaparecido. In addition to evoking this resonant national memory of physical brutality, Fernández proclaimed that the Madres were “constructing new symbols… over the top of the destruction and the hatred of
those who never understood… and who thought it necessary to install other models of which all of us now know the result” (2007d, 461-462). While articulating her departure from neoliberal logic, referenced here by the epithets “destruction” and “hatred,” Fernández suggests that the preferred political economic model is based on a contrasting set of principles: “construction” and “love.” Such discourses propose an unquantifiable ethic of care, in which the state assumes responsibility for subaltern groups, the poor, and children in particular. Within this ethic of care, Fernández then defines the Sueños Compartidos project according to a matrix of family values: “construction, love, and work, which definitely [means] to believe in family…” (2007d, 462).122

As President, Fernández’ discourses continued to articulate the idea of constructing “a better country, a better society and a better citizenry” (2008c). In a series of articles published by provincial periodicals in 2008, she positioned her government’s social policies in housing, health, and education, in a framework of socio-economic rights for disempowered peoples and places that have been “forgotten and overlooked” (2008a). She expressed her personal commitment to “building a country in which all of us share the same possibilities, the same hopes” and she complimented Argentines whose “sense of the social… [and] of solidarity…” make her feel at home (2008b).123

Similar scripts of strengthening the community were observed in Bachelet’s first campaign slogan “Estoy Contigo” (I am with you) in 2005. There are a number of ways to interpret this slogan. By one interpretation, this slogan and the visual material that surrounded it profiled Bachelet as the spiritual embodiment of the welfare state that promises, from a position of power, to be “more friendly and humane” (Michelle 2005). However, on another level, this campaign encouraged people to help themselves while Bachelet offered mutual support to those who are willing to work alongside her. This campaign did not directly appeal to citizens for their “vote.” Instead, people were encouraged to contribute that which they could to a common national cause. For example, a range of photos showed a pregnant woman carrying the words “I have trust,” a teenage woman saying “I have conviction,” a young boy thinking “I have time,” and a middle-aged man in his work apron stating “I have tools”

122 Beyond these campaign discourses, the importance of family was further supported through the building of family homes, nursery schools, and lunchrooms catering to construction workers and their children, not to mention the Fernández administration’s provision of child subsidies for unemployed, underemployed, and low income parents, announced by decree in November 2009 (further discussed in Chapter Four).

123 The same script can be appreciated in the Sueños Compartidos publications, for example, defining this as a project that is committed to “the construction of an egalitarian society for all men and all women” (Madres 2009, 28).
Ending with the question “¿Están conmigo?” (“Are you with me?”), the televised spot reinforced the notion of horizontalism. Bachelet’s campaign invited voters to join her in her personal commitment to re-building the diverse national family under the collective banner, “Chile Somos Todos” (“We are all Chile”) (ibid.).

The Non-threatenining Luchadora Frame: Symbols of Peace

Linking Chile’s militaristic past to the presidential profiles that followed, political scientist Jaime Baeza Freer observes a softening of the hypermasculine military caudillo construct in ex-president Patricio Aylwin’s wise, caring grandfatherly image, and the intellectual male profiles portrayed by former presidents Frei and Lagos, finding its culmination in Bachelet: “it was completely unconscious but the country was looking for something more feminine after so many years of boots and marches” (2009). Similarly, in a strong message of support for Fernández’ presidential candidacy, the iconic Argentine singer Mercedes Sosa, herself a symbol of memory and times of peace, said “Cristina… as an Argentine woman, I feel truly proud of you. You have all of my support... I love you, I admire you, I respect you, and I hope that you become our president because now this country needs a woman to assume the presidency” (Cristina por Mercedes 2007). These statements correspond to what I have already suggested in this chapter: historic models of women’s leadership, anchored as they are in reductionist gender constructs, have provided political women aspiring to fill powerful masculinised roles with a number of powerful discursive tools. I believe that another reason why Bachelet’s and Fernández’ presidential candidacies reappropriated this range of feminised political narratives, resignified by discourses about the family, the home, and a maternal ethic of care and love, is tied to a perceived need to present women politicians as non-conflictive. Historical gender constructions of women’s participation in the public sphere provide them with this frame.

Given the historical differences between Chile’s and Argentina’s transition to electoral democracy as discussed, the non-threatening luchadora frame was of greater relevance to Bachelet than it was to Fernández. In addition, this was not Bachelet’s first breakthrough into Chile’s tough patriarchal political mould. Early models in Chile, presenting women leaders as posing little real threat to the dominant social order of male-virility or to the military, as in the cases of Feminine Power and the AFDD respectively, resonated in Bachelet when she was made defence minister in January 2002. Due to the controversial
nature of this appointment, it was important that Bachelet present a strong but non-confrontational model of leadership to historical military powers.

In addition, given the fact that she was the first woman defence minister in Latin America, this was an inherently gendered negotiation of power, which required a counter-discourse to legitimise her position against gender-based attacks. Early scepticism suggested that Bachelet would follow a masculine model. Five months into her term, a major newspaper, *La Tercera*, cited Chilean novelist Isabel Allende accusing Bachelet of acting “like a man” (“Escritora Isabel Allende” 2002). However, these criticisms were superficially based on Bachelet’s appearance in suits and short haircut, and drew parallels with old assumptions made about women power-dressing when they first began to enter into powerful positions in the workforce: “they dressed like men and they cut their hair like men, they were like [men]” (Allende, quoted in “Escritora Isabel Allende” 2002).

While Bachelet had already become a public figure through her role as health minister, there was little controversy in this already feminised area of public policy. The masculinist conceptualisation of the Ministry of Defence made this a highly visible role that catapulted Bachelet to the top of the public opinion polls, especially after a well-publicised moment in June 2002, when she climbed aboard a military tank in military garb. Importantly, Bachelet became the “face of reconciliation” (“La inesperada” 2006), and a “symbol of peace” (Gladys Cuevas, quoted in Wood 2006), and numerous political observers define this moment as a turning point in her political career (Baeza Freer 2009; Velasco 2006; Zuñiga 2009). For Chilean political scientist Jaime Baeza Freer, this visual discourse was seminal in terms of Bachelet’s candidacy to the presidency in that it “struck the population” and articulated the idea of Bachelet as “a woman of strength… [who]… can rule the country” (2009).

A positive shift in public discourses toward Bachelet’s reconciliatory leadership style credited her, rather than the then president Lagos, with the subversion of the “highly segregationist” and exclusive public identity of the military classes during her two year term (Zalaquett 2009, 54). That shift began with her defence of the military on her first world tour when she publicly announced that “the Armed Forces are modernising and don’t intervene in public life” (quoted in “Escritora Isabel Allende” 2002). Advocating the humanitarian side of the divided military, she won the trust and respect of a sector of Chilean society that had been the most closely aligned to Pinochet. Toward the end of her two-year term as defence minister, the then commander-in-chief of the Chilean Army Juan Emilio Cheyre incorporated the symbolic words *Nunca Más* into a speech in which he publicly admitted that the Army
had made mistakes during the dictatorship. In addition to this discursive process of humanising the military, Bachelet literally feminised the military ranks by multiplying the numbers of women cadets entering all levels of military service and expanding to women for the first time certain opportunities for training and promotion within the armed forces. Military women have testified to experiencing “evident change… [rather than] just talk” (Zalaquett 2009, 108), and “changes in form and also content” (28), all of which represented signs of things to come at the end of 2004, when Bachelet stood down in order to compete for the presidential nomination.

The epithets that followed Bachelet throughout her defence career paralleled those that would later circulate during her campaign year. Among others the terms “emotionally intelligent,” “simpática” (nice), “empathetic,” and “humanitaria” (defender of humanity or humanitarian) prevailed. Bachelet had come to embody the non-threatening luchadora image, historically constructed by the women leaders of the AFDD. Within this frame, Bachelet had found a rich source of feminised political discourse to soften any potentially masculinised conceptualisations of her role.

In Argentina, Kirchner appointed a woman, Nilda Garré, to be the defence minister in December 2005. Later, Garré represented the Kirchner administration when the keys to one of the military dictatorship’s largest concentration camps, an ex-military school previously known as the Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA) in Buenos Aires, were symbolically handed over to the state. It was highly significant that this ceremony took place on October 3, 2007, the same month as the presidential elections, in which Fernández won her first Presidential mandate. These three interrelated acts reveal a strategic positioning of women politicians as the symbolic faces of peace. Fernández confirmed this when she defined the four years leading-up to her election as “años felices” (happy years) and expressed her desire to bring “more happy years… more work, more education, more health… more happiness, more solidarity, [and] more collective projects” (2007c). Given that the Madres and the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo had already claimed this “peaceful warrior” identity for women leaders, Fernández’ appropriation of it felt normal and legitimate.

Confirming their symbolic presence in Argentina’s post-dictatorship moment, on November 20, 2007, the out-going Kirchner administration gifted the ESMA grounds and buildings, the entire site now renamed the Espacio para la Memoria, to the HROs. On this day, Fernández reclaimed a non-confrontational identity: “In order to fight for others, to build

the *Patria* and a better country, you have to do so with joy…” (2007c). Then, two months later, the Bonafini line of the *Madres* moved a part of their organisation into one of the most symbolic buildings: the officers’ *Casino* (dining room), wherein people were previously detained and tortured and from where many of these detainees were then “disappeared.” In a symbolic act of replacing death with life, a collective group of children and adults painted the walls of one of the main halls with “suns and flowers” (ECuNHi 2008). Since then, the *Madres* have converted the site into a cultural centre for the arts, namely the *Espacio Cultural Nuestros Hijos* (ECuNHi). Beyond the murals, photographic displays, and documentary films, live music concerts, visual and performance arts fill the eerie chambers with young active bodies carrying on their lives in ways that were unimaginable for those tortured bodies held captive there during the Dirty War.

*Experiential Knowledge Frame (2): Representing Social Trauma*

The degree to which Bachelet’s and Fernández’ personal links to the past were seen as consistent with the present, is parallel to the degree to which each of these two presidential candidates referenced their personal experiences of national trauma. Once again, contrasting contextual conditions between Argentina and Chile allowed Fernández greater freedom of movement in regard to representing social trauma during her presidential candidacy.

Despite their differences, both Chile and Argentina are living an era of reconciliation with their tragic past. Prior to their respective elections to the presidency, Bachelet and Fernández had already observed male-led governments petition a series of investigative studies into forced disappearances, illegal imprisonment, and systematic torture, generally known as the truth commissions.\(^{125}\) In Argentina, president Alfonsín’s establishment of the National Commission on the Disappearance of People (CONADEP) investigation into forced disappearances culminated in the *Nunca Más* report in 1984.\(^{126}\) In Chile, successive presidents Aylwin (1990-1994), Frei (1994-2000), and Lagos (2000-2006) convened, in respective order, the *Rettig Report* (1991) into known executions and forced disappearances, the *Mesa de Diálogo* (1999), in which the armed forces and *Carabineros* (Chilean police force) met with civilians, human rights lawyers, and religious leaders to reveal what they

\(^{125}\) Argentine governments also declared commemoration days and memorial sites.

\(^{126}\) *Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas.*
knew about the fate of the disappeared, and the *Valech Report* (2004 - 2005) into human rights abuses, including imprisonment and torture.\(^{127}\)

As a consequence, both of these countries had established a vast testimonial archive, about which Jelin (2003) observed patterns of expression that projected gender differences. Women’s testimonial discourse, she argued, tended to mirror their primary care-taking role, causing many women to “slip into narratives that appear to centre on others” (83). In this way, she added, the female protagonist was inclined to self-identify as a witness by bringing “another person’s protagonism (a disappeared son, for example)…” to the foreground (ibid.). Beyond testimonial narrative, Jelin finds that gender codes are further reinforced through selection processes. She asserts that men’s narratives dominate in the public sphere, by way of “public documents, judicial testimonies, and journalistic reports” (ibid.). Conforming to gender role expectations, men’s testimonials predominate in those frameworks that entail “factual description, narrated precisely as possible, about the material of torture and political violence” (ibid.). Similarly, it is no coincidence that women’s testimony tends to take more diverse forms, such as “autobiographical texts and interview based testimonial renderings” (84).

For this reason, however, masculine constructs predominate in the institutional archive, leaving an imprint that lacks women. The Pinochet proceedings between 1998 and 2000, for example, are embodied on the institutional side by the male faces of “the accusers, the defendants, [and] the judges” (Jelin 2003, 77). A turning point in Chile’s recent history, Spanish Judge Baltasar Garzón’s attempt to extradite Pinochet to Spain in 1999, and Pinochet’s return to Chile in 2000, presented an enormous challenge to the then presidents Frei and Lagos. The AFDD took a strong stance against the Frei administration over its refusal to support Pinochet’s extradition to Spain. They placed their hopes on the incoming Lagos administration, which also failed to bring Pinochet to trial before he died in December 2006. The eventual failure of patriarchal leaders Aylwin, Frei, and Lagos to have Pinochet tried and convicted for the numerous charges brought against him for crimes against humanity might explain the opinion of Soraya Rodríguez, a journalist and previous government advisor, who felt that in contrast to the largely paternal style these men introduced, “Chile needed a mother’s lap, but not any mother. Bachelet was the figure of that

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\(^{127}\) In 2006, the Bachelet administration declared by decree August 30 the National Day of the Detained and Disappeared, then opened the Human Rights Institute in November 2009, and inaugurated the *Museo de la Memoria* in Santiago in January 2010.
traditional mum (*mamá de antes*), good in the kitchen, and in the soul, honest and affectionate, fun and suffering” (Plama 2007).

Fundamentally, there was an ethical dilemma with the process of truth and reconciliation itself. Effectively, after Pinochet’s arrest had awakened a spirit of hope for justice in Chile, the sense of disillusionment that followed led to an equal sense of mistrust in the Concertación and its masculine leaders, Lagos in particular. The AFDD refused to participate in the *Mesa de Diálogo*. Gladys Marín summarised this significant period in her testimonial book *La vida es hoy*:

> Again, the celebrations, the toasts, the festivities, and afterwards, more embraces between the military and civil [society], embraces between the UDI [*Unión Demócrata Independiente*] and the Concertación, delivering some ‘remains,’ a false list in which there is consensus to accept it as true, and, of course, this whole lie in exchange for the impunity of the now insane Pinochet (2004, 28).

Next door, in Argentina, the entire process of reconcilation, along with those who presided over the CONADEP investigation, and those who wrote the *Nunca Más* report, were severely criticised by the *Madres*. While this process resulted in the sentencing of a number of military junta members for crimes against humanity, and the principal perpetrators to life imprisonment, the then president Menem pardoned these same perpetrators by way of a series of decrees in 1989 and 1990. However, by 2007, the Kirchner administration had dramatically redefined the power relationship between civil society and the military and lifted the cloak of silence that had masked turbulent memories and repressed the free expression of social trauma for at least twenty years. In turn, this opened a pathway for Fernández to represent a large sector of society that had felt repressed for those decades.

In contrast to the dramatic changes implemented under Kirchner, the Lagos administration had not opened the way for Bachelet to freely represent social trauma. Largely constrained by her political position of power, and lacking the vocabulary, Bachelet developed alternative strategies for representing trauma within existing discursive frames. In particular, she chose a frame in which the witnesses remain silent about their own suffering and highlight that of their colleagues or family instead.

Despite not being able to talk about her personal trauma, however, it was widely known that Bachelet had suffered at the hands of the dictatorship. The growing mythical status that Bachelet’s public profile gained as the health minister, the defence minister, as a presidential candidate, and later as a president owed much to her life story. She shared much of this personal trajectory with the AFDD women and there was a fluid intertextual connection to their symbolic discourse frames. Like many AFDD leaders, Bachelet suffered the same trauma of missing relatives, broken family, separation, loss, and exile. In addition to that, she and her mother had been physically tortured. It has even been suggested that “through her own history, through her role in democracy and for being a woman,” Bachelet incarnated the “numerous feminine bodies that had battled for memory during the dictatorship and la Concertación governments” (Vidaurrázaga Aránguiz 2010, 98). In the early months of Bachelet’s presidential campaign, the Concertacionista (member of the Concertación) Guido Girardi publicly voiced the importance of this history to her legitimacy as political candidate: “What [could be] more legitimate than a woman able to confront life after her father [had been] assassinated by the dictatorship?” (Schiattino F. 2005). Bachelet’s “empathetic” public profile owed a great deal to the fact that she foregrounded other people’s suffering.

However profitable her legitimate personal experiences of dictatorship were, this history also presented her with challenges in her political career. When interviewed for this thesis, human rights lawyer José Aylwin likened Bachelet to the patron saint of the Chilean armed forces: “Bachelet is like the Virgen del Carmen, even though she is not Catholic. She has many Catholic values, she is good, she is self-sacrificing, and in addition, she is close to the army through her history” (2009, my emphasis). This interesting parallel, largely critical of Bachelet’s mandate, connects historically to the religious iconography surrounding Pinochet’s leadership when “the ambiguous ‘silent’ Virgen del Carmen… assumes without ‘opposition’ her role as the patron saint of the Chilean Army” (Lagos Schuffeneger 2001, 31).

While the silent victim is a highly restricted and fictional identity that by no means defines any multifaceted individual, it represents one of many constructions projected onto Bachelet’s public persona. The unofficial media campaign did pursue this aspect of her life story to its maximum effect in headlines such as: “A Life Marked by Political Militancy and the Death of her Father” (“Una vida marcada” 2006); and “Paediatrician Victim of the Military Dictatorship Seeks Chilean Presidency” (AP 2006). Nevertheless, a critical reading of Bachelet’s narration of her memory of interrogation and torture when she and her mother
were taken by the secret police in January 1975 reveals a notable reluctance to reveal her own suffering.

In describing their blind-folded journey toward the Villa Grimaldi torture centre, Bachelet regularly slips into a narrative that centres on her mother, noting for example, the fear she felt should her mother be tortured and tell the National Directorate of Intelligence (DINA) about “the documents that were in the freezer” (quoted in Subercaseaux and Sierra 2006, 71). Displacement is further reflected in Bachelet’s re-telling of her mother’s fears: “she thought that I was more fragile and more vulnerable than I was” (ibid.). While recounting her first-hand experience of torture, Bachelet shifts the focus of attention away from her own suffering toward that of her cellmates, whose burns and wounds she treated. Again, displacement is demonstrated when she recalls the forms of torture used: “they insulted me, they hit me, but no me parrillaron…” (72) (quoted in Subercaseaux and Sierra 2006, 72). The latter refers to a particularly brutal form of torture that involved the application of an electric current to parts the body, typically sexualised and masochistic in nature.

Bachelet’s utterances reveal her awareness that in Chile there were plenty of historical gender frames to avoid: those that presented women as passive, dependent, and weak, and above all as victims. This finding aids an understanding why Bachelet’s personal connection to the victims of past conflict was notably understated in her official campaign.

CONCLUSION

In order to demonstrate that the AFDD in Chile and the Madres in Argentina developed a feminised model of leadership over thirty years, this analysis focused on three key collective action frames that emanate from women’s traditional roles with children and the family, and their association with an ethic of care. Focussing on their bodily discourses, this chapter revealed the different ways in which the Madres and the AFDD expressed “womanhood” under dictatorship: motherhood and the absence of men, respectively. I argued that these women leaders emphasised their family roles to contest the military state and legitimise their presence in the public sphere. In turn, my findings suggested that the effect that this legitimisation process had on the public sphere was two-fold: 1) it politicised roles traditionally associated with women; and, 2) they gender-sensitised and enriched the political sphere with discourses and codes that resonated among all citizens in the post-dictatorship moment: the continuation of life, strengthening of community, and well-being. This history
provided an alternative way of understanding the moment in which Bachelet and Fernández were elected to the presidency.

While concentrating on how the campaign discourses drew on these experiential knowledges, this analysis suggested that these candidates used leadership discourses unique to “women” in the Southern Cone. The historicisation of these campaign discourses demonstrated the consistency of this symbolic material with present contexts. First, representing women leaders as a break with the dictatorial past responded to public demand for fuller democracy, as documented in the pre-election opinion polls. Second, the AFDD, and especially the Madres, had already resignified leadership frames to broaden understandings of human rights. In the context of Chile’s deeply embedded neoliberalism, and, in particular, following the 2001 economic crisis in Argentina, where poverty came to be explicitly perceived as a violation of human rights, it was essential that these two candidates address well-being as a human right. Chile’s deeply entrenched politics of consensus limited the degree to which the AFDD and Bachelet could provoke structural change. Nevertheless, the AFDD’s persistent defence of memory, truth, and justice highlighted the failings of successive masculine leaders and redirected hopes for change toward Bachelet’s candidacy. Finally, in this case, “not acting like men” was a benefit rather than a disadvantage in the political campaigns of both Bachelet and Fernández. However, the discourses sampled in this chapter suggest that the difficult challenge of “acting like women” in a political context where there were few role models was aided by drawing on a “maternal legacy” enriched by feminised political codes.

Bachelet and Fernández appropriated four leadership frames from this “maternal legacy” for their election campaigns and policies. First, the iconographic “feminine sensibility” frame, from which the AFDD and the Madres strengthened their political presence and gained much public empathy, have continued to inspire Southern Cone women in politics over the past thirty years. Second, the AFDD’s and the Madres’ ability to transcend their personal experiences of the horrors of dictatorship and convert this suffering into productive national movements for political change created a positive legacy of female leadership from which political women could draw. In contrast to patriarchal models of family leadership – hierarchical and pyramidal – which traditionally served governing bodies as a metaphor for the nation, these women resignified the national “building block” with feminised political narratives that reinforced a more horizontal politics of care, in which people are joined by a spirit of community, and a respect for the Other and the common good. Third, this analysis drew a parallel between the non-threatening luchadora image that
women-led HROs developed in opposition to hyper-masculine violence of the past and the political candidates’ non-conflictive image that responded to calls for a politics of care in the present. Finally, the fourth frame suggests that Bachelet followed the AFDD’s silent model of embodying the desaparecido in her foregrounding of the victim rather than her own suffering. This contrasted with Fernández, whose mutually supportive relationship with the Madres allowed her to act as though she were personally related to them. I extend this analysis of human rights discourses in the following chapter to include the notion of socio-economic equality between men and women. I will explore in detail how Bachelet and Fernández embedded gender-related economic policies in role-based frames of strengthening and caring for the well-being of the family and the community. While in Argentina and Chile role-based discourses gloss over specific rights-based demands, in Chile, they strategically mask the neoliberal state’s weak contribution to poverty alleviation.
CHAPTER IV
ECONOMIC POLICY CLAIMS

In the preceding chapter, I argued that among the diverse factors that coalesced to bring the first two elected women presidents into power in Latin American history, it is possible to distinguish a distinct backlash against the domination and exclusion popularly associated with the hegemonic masculine figure associated with authoritarianism. In 1970s-80s Argentina and Chile, dictatorships of military “strong men” seized power and retained it, legitimised by their expertise in warfare and promise to restore order. They were tolerated at a time when a significant part of society felt it was heading toward civil war or economic and political collapse. Less obvious in the popular imagination is the second masculine figure associated with exclusion, the neoliberal “expert” or techno-bureaucrat who exercised power along with the generals. Upon the restoration of electoral democracy, his rise was due to his dominance of a narrow and highly specialised area of expertise assumed to be fundamental to the functioning of good government. The results of his work only became widely discredited with the 2001 collapse of the Argentine economy, which made obvious the flaws of neoliberalism as an economic model.

The popular rejection of these archetypically masculine constructs automatically implies a preference for women, identified with life, non-violence, child-rearing, maternal love, inclusiveness, and an ethic of care. Certainly, an inclusive democratic platform drawn from a strong legacy of human rights movements led by women who, as Jean Franco asserts, have “permanently affected the way we think of culture and politics” (1992, 115), was available to and no doubt influenced Bachelet and Fernández.

Turning now to socio-economic policies, this chapter analyses the discursive strategies that the Bachelet and Fernández campaigns used to achieve two interrelated objectives: first, to promote the belief that a woman-led economy promised a more profound politics of “care” within the historically masculinised and largely exclusionary world of

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129 Milton Friedman first introduced this figure in Chile with his Chicago trained economists, informally called “The Chicago Boys” who proposed free market policies in Chile as his first experiment, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1976. Naomi Klein explains this history and the underlying logic promoted by Friedman’s experts, who move into a society at times of crisis with terms drawn from military history, “Shock and Awe,” and who have as their goal the total restructuring of society to release every aspect to market forces before the traumatised population realises what is lost in the process (Klein 2007).
economic power; and second, to soften the impact that this new feminine face and the potential for a more inclusive rights-based approach to socio-economic reform might present to the politically and economically powerful masculine elite, in a post-authoritarian moment. This latter challenge references a broader range of gendered figures that had to be avoided during these two presidential campaigns: back-grounded figures commonly associated with political movements of the 1960s and 1970s, such as socialism, communism, and feminism.

As discussed previously, the 1980s and 1990s neoliberal restructuring produced widening disparities among social classes. This economic context coincided with the dominance of identity politics as a mode of organising within new social movements and as a mode of analysis for academics. Within both groups, there was firm rejection of neoliberalism on one hand, and of the analysis of social class as the primary source of identity on the other. Although identity politics was conceptualised in the 1960s, the widespread embrace of a politics based on one’s experience of marginalisation vis-à-vis the social discourse on race, gender, and sexuality rather than social class became the norm in the 1980s. It matured to normative status as indigenous, African American and Afro-Latin American, feminist, gay and lesbian, and other movements articulated their politics as having emerged from their specific experiences of marginalisation that traversed social class. In Latin America, a related discursive shift that accompanied the end of dictatorship and the introduction of electoral democracy occurred: the terminology that directly referred to social class (associated with socialism) was abandoned and a rhetoric that referred instead to democracy and social justice was adopted.

Chapter Three demonstrated how kinship relationships linked to a long history of women-led human rights struggles resulted in exchanges and borrowings of feminised political discourses from these maternal legacies. This chapter asks whether gender-based bonds were forged across distinctly constructed social classes: the more privileged middle class, from where these presidential candidates acted, to the working or popular class positions where the majority of their voters were situated (see note 116). A key part of this analysis focuses on the potential for intersectional exchanges between these political candidates and those actively struggling for their socio-economic rights.

Having examined how these campaign discourses drew authority from a maternal legacy of women activists, I now explore the ways that they constructed the specific interests and citizenship identities of poor and working-class women in Chile and Argentina. Here, I analyse how these two women presidential candidates proposed to address the socio-
economic realities of slum life, where the “feminisation of poverty” is most visible. Campaign discourses are analysed for how they framed their ideas about meeting the socio-economic needs of massive numbers of impoverished citizens, women in particular, in terms of housing, employment, health and education. This proved a delicate balancing act: they had to present themselves as relevant leaders in fragile political and socio-economic climates but had to avoid explicit references to women’s rights and social class.

A useful frame for this area of discursive analysis comes from feminist scholarly attention to how legislation defines women (Blofield and Haas 2005; Pickup 2001; van den Burg 2010). These studies discriminate between the assignments of a “role-based” versus a “rights-based” legal status to women. Blofield and Haas conclude that for women, the role-based legal subject has been disadvantaged because these laws “do not fundamentally challenge existing definitions of gender roles…” (Blofield and Haas 2005, 36). Their discourse analysis of thirty-eight “bills seeking to expand women’s rights in Chile,” introduced over the first decade of post-transition electoral democracy (1990-2002), demonstrated how role-based rather than rights-based bills are more likely to pass into Chilean law when two structural factors are present: 1) when the proposition does not challenge “class privileges” by requiring “redistributive functions on the part of the State,” and 2) when the authorship of the bill originates at the executive level (2005, 36-41).

Building on the Blofield and Haas findings, Lisa van den Burg’s (2010) discourse analysis of anti-violence laws relating to women in Chile and Venezuela identifies a significant link between rights-based legislation and the advancement of gender equality. Her findings question the degree to which the strategic use of “traditional gender frames which relegate women to the private sphere and consign them conventional roles within the family” contributes to “a distinct lack of democratic progress for women” in Chile (ibid.). Van den Burg asks whether legal equality will be achieved without rights-based legislation that empowers women with sovereignty as legal subjects apart from their families (ibid).

Using a gender lens, I highlight discursive examples from the campaign periods as well as the programmes they introduced that frame the state in “caring” terms. I give

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130 This term is borrowed from a broad range of studies, including feminist. Since Diana Pearce coined the term (1978), it has been used to reference the argument “that women bear a disproportionate and growing burden of poverty” (Chant 2003a, 1). In the Latin American context, the majority of these studies are supported by statistical evidence that shows the existence in society of a range of circumstances disadvantageous to women. These studies point to higher proportions of women being exploited in informal work environments, gendered wage gaps, and gendered disparities in the distribution of intra-household resources, income, and reproductive work, at a given point in time.

131 I am very grateful to Lisa van den Burg at The University of Auckland for drawing my attention to this useful frame for analysis.
particular attention to archetypically feminine constructs, such as the domestic angel and the mother-figure. Few would argue that either Bachelet or Fernández constructed their political images primarily around the archetypal mother-figure or the angelic figure of the self-abnegating care-giver. They both worked purposefully to be seen for their respective achievements in political life. For some observers, this created a “duality” (Aylwin 2009) or a “dual condition” (Piscopo 2010, 198). José Aylwin, when interviewed for this thesis, used the term “duality” to define his perception of Bachelet’s double-sided public persona: “maternal” and “martial” (2009). The first, he explained, “has a strong impact on her high popularity,” the second, “emerges with ease when she mixes with the Armed Forces” (ibid). Jennifer Piscopo used a similar concept to reference the dual roles that Fernández performed prior to the presidential election in 2007. Fernández was both a national senator and the First Lady. In Piscopo’s estimation, “Fernández’ own ambiguity about her dual status exacerbated the media’s preoccupation with this issue…” (Piscopo 2010). Informed by these observations, I suggest that Bachelet and Fernández’ campaign teams strategically reappropriated gendered role-based images in order to promote the idea of “newness.” Incorporated within this fresh construct is the replacement, or even displacement of the familiar patriarchal father figure, caudillo or military leader, and the neoliberal expert prominent in this economic context.

In this analysis I use feminist CDA to expose the more opaque uses of gender identification. Focusing on the gender-coding of programmes designed to improve the lives of poor and working class women, I compare the degree to which this coding suggests economically beneficial policies for the nation or the family as a whole, to coding that identifies these policies as beneficial to women as citizens per se. Specifically, I demonstrate how the use of egalitarian role-based frames for poverty-alleviation policies either hides or avoids a rights-based agenda. These discourses avoided challenging conservative economic elites in two ways: 1) by appealing to their patriarchal understanding of family values and responsibilities, and 2) by avoiding a discussion of how, when entrenched gender and class ideologies combine, poor and working-class women are doubly affected. I argue that the

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132 Aylwin constructed this idea as a series of oppositional characteristics: “feminine”/ “authoritarian” and “maternal”/ “martial” (2009).

133 One her severest critics, Revista Noticias, went to extreme of highlighting Fernández’ rumoured bipolarity, a medical condition that is said to provoke manic mood swings, from euphoric highs to depressive lows (Linder 2007).

134 As Chilean elites increasingly conceive of themselves as carrying Chile forward into the “First World,” the idea of looking less “Third World” would carry weighty appeal. In order to give this impression, it would be increasingly important to conceal one of the main characteristics of that existence: poverty, especially the feminisation of poverty. Keeping this logic in mind, the use of universal family values to frame targeted poverty alleviation policies both avoids any discussion of deep rooted socio-economic
strategic use of role-based gender constructs to avoid rights-based rhetoric does little to address the entrenched ideologies reinforcing the perpetuation of poverty, in which women are over-represented and denied economic autonomy.

TIMES OF FRAGILITY AND CHANGE

In view of the negative social impact that economic and political crises have had on those Latin American nations that have returned to electoral democracy within the last three decades, the term “fragility” is often used by political observers to describe the post-dictatorship era. Some political analysts fear that “democratic continuity in the region is far from a foregone conclusion” (Weitz-Shapiro 2008, 286). Looking at the 2007 Latinobarómetro results, The Economist concluded that “the biggest falls in support for democracy occurred in Argentina and Chile” (“A Warning” 2007). Focusing specifically on Argentina in 2008, observers commented on the high level of “public disillusionment with the way democracy works…” (Weitz-Shapiro 2008, 286). While according to the 2008 Latinobarómetro this sentiment was expressed to lesser degree next door, Chilean political candidates continued to face a polarised political constituency along class lines. Further, they tended to have a remote relationship with younger voters, who are among the hardest to convince of the significance of electoral participation.

A particularly pessimistic discursive trend is observable in the most recent phase – 2000-2010 – in the consolidation of electoral democracy. In 2008, political observer Emir Sader summarised what many had been noticing since Argentina’s economic collapse in 2001: Latin America was experiencing growing disillusionment with the outcomes of market-led political-economic policies implemented over the previous decades. The neoliberal economic model and voters’ disillusionment with it, he claimed, have been a determining factor in a number of electoral outcomes throughout the region during the past decade disparities and responds to the expectation that some of the wealth will trickle down and rid Chile of the shantytowns that make poverty so glaringly visible. According to this opinion poll, 39 percent of those questioned in Chile felt either very or more or less satisfied with the form of democracy in their country. This compares to 32 percent in Argentina. In regard to leadership, Bachelet was rated more highly than Fernández. She rated 5.5 on a scale of 1 to 10, wherein a 10 translates into very good. Fernández rated 4.7 on the same scale (Latinobarómetro 2008).
As a case in point, he states that Kirchner’s 2003 election in Argentina is more accurately viewed as the rejection of Carlos Menem.

While many would argue that Chile’s relationship with neoliberalism is inconsistent with this regional trend, the situation there is ambiguous. On one hand, the Chilean neoliberal state appears to have been less susceptible to voter discontent. On the eve of the second round of the Chilean presidential elections in January 2006, a Wall Street analyst described the Chilean economy as “an oasis of tranquillity” vis-à-vis neighbouring countries (quoted in Zuñiga 2006). Despite the late 1990s economic recession, voter disillusionment with the neoliberal model was undetectable in the election of the Concertación coalition party’s presidential candidate, Ricardo Lagos (2000-2006). Although a Partido Socialista member, Lagos is a US-trained economist whose campaign platform pledged an agenda of economic growth that essentially deepened the “prudent” macroeconomic policies implemented under previous post-transition presidents Aylwin (1990-94) and Frei (1994-2000). Both earlier presidents barely modified the “Chicago School” model formerly imposed by the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-90). Further, strong global demand for Chile’s copper combined with the signing of free trade agreements with the EU (2002), the US (2003), and China (2005), which lowered trade tariffs, have led to steady economic growth in the past decade. The exception was a drop in Bachelet’s final year when the global economic recession caused Chile’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to contract by 1.8 percent (ECLAC 2009). Finally, the 2010 election of neoliberal economist Sebastián Piñera to the presidency makes it difficult to define the majority of voters of Chile as disillusioned with neoliberalism.

Among defeated ex-presidents Sader cites “Alberto Fujimori in Peru [1990-2000], Fernando Henrique Cardoso in Brazil [1995-2003], Menem in Argentina [1989-99], Carlos Andrés Pérez in Venezuela [1974-79; 1989-93] and Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in Bolivia [1993-97; 2002-03]…” (2008, 8). All of these presidents were also associated with high levels of corruption, higher than the norm, at a time when IMF austerity measures put pressure on working and middle classes.

For his historical militancy in the PS, Lagos is more generally referred to as the first socialist president to follow Allende. However, to be accurate, in his bid to represent the Concertación in the 1999 presidential elections, Lagos ran as a dual-party candidate for the PS and the Partido por la Democracia (PPD). The latter he co-founded 1987 as part of the growing political opposition to the dictatorship. The PS was illegal at the time. When the PS reformed in 1989, Lagos began a period of double-militancy in both the PDD and the PS.

While the average annual rate of GDP growth for the Chilean economy during Lagos’ six year mandate (5.3%) was lower than that of Frei (5.5%) and Aylwin (7.7%), Chile’s GDP accelerated in 2004 and 2005 to 6.1 percent and 6 percent respectively (“El país del sucesor” 2005; Navia 2006). According to official statistics, the annual GDP grew by an average of 2.85 percent under Bachelet’s mandate. This calculation is based on the Chilean Central Bank GDP growth reports for 2006 (4.6%), 2007 (4.6%), 2008 (3.7%), and 2009 (-1.5%).

\[\text{136}\] Among defeated ex-presidents Sader cites “Alberto Fujimori in Peru [1990-2000], Fernando Henrique Cardoso in Brazil [1995-2003], Menem in Argentina [1989-99], Carlos Andrés Pérez in Venezuela [1974-79; 1989-93] and Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in Bolivia [1993-97; 2002-03]…” (2008, 8). All of these presidents were also associated with high levels of corruption, higher than the norm, at a time when IMF austerity measures put pressure on working and middle classes.

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However difficult this may be, counter-arguments do exist. A closer analysis demonstrates that not all of Chile’s citizens are complacent about the role that the state has played in their economy (see below). The negative experience of economic recession in the late 1990s introduced what the 1998 UNDP report on Human Development in Chile defined as a “diffuse and silent [sense of] malestar [discontent]” (50). By 2005-6, when Bachelet’s presidential campaign indicated a subtle shift toward a different style of economy, there had been considerable public debate over the effects that neoliberalism – referred to as “modernisation” throughout much of this debate – was having on the microeconomic level, particularly at the level of family life.139

In Chile, led by successive governments strongly committed to neoliberalism, and Argentina, recovering from a neoliberal crisis, the economic conditions of the two election periods I examine can best be characterised by a deterioration of the social systems of protection, the “safety net.” Given these deep, aggravated structural conditions, the most any political candidate could aspire to achieve in a four-year mandate was to introduce a “politics of care.” The alternative thrust might have been a Chávez-inspired Bolivarianism, which confidently waves the banner of “democratic socialism” and “anti-imperialism” (Sojo 2005). However, this is not viable in Chile or Argentina, where their experience of populism and modest moves toward socialism provoked responses that led to dictatorship, which made the former trends appear “antidemocratic” and “regressive.”140 The choice of women presidential candidates as the face of their economic agenda by the official parties in Chile and Argentina, led at the time by Lagos and Kirchner, respectively, prompted gendered constructions of this politics of care. Although gender was central to the projection of a “new face” to socioeconomic policies, my findings indicate that its construction relied on role-based rather than rights-based frames for women, in order to avoid backlash.

As maintained in Chapters Two and Three, role-based constructions of political womanhood have a long history in the Southern Cone. Some have observed that during times of political or economic disillusionment, there has been an increased presence of women in

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139 For contributions to this debate by Norbert Lechner and Pedro E. Güell see the following UNDP webpage http://www.desarrollohumano.cl/extension.htm. For a robust discussion of the negative impact that the continuation of this neoliberal model has had on Chile’s labour unions, see Buchanan and Nicholls (2003). For a more recent analysis of the neoliberal modernisation project’s impact on the family in Chile, see Tironi (2005a). For a retrospective analysis of neoliberalism’s effect on citizen participation, see Delamaza (2010).

140 One columnist wrote in November 2007 that Fernández’ “sympathy toward other women such as Hillary Clinton, Bachelet and Merkel may stimulate her to boost ties with serious democratic countries, distancing herself from the increasingly regressive Chávez” (Aguiinis 2007, 37). Others may question the extent that these nations are currently experiencing representative democracy.
institutional politics and a greater appreciation for “characteristics… predominantly associated with female figures” (Tironi 2005a, 31). Further, a recent gender-focused study of the presidential elections of Chile’s Bachelet and the Liberian president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, documented “a greater emphasis on feminine gender characteristics when the electorate is dissatisfied with the current political leadership” (Thomas and Adams 2010, 109). In 2005, Eugenio Tironi argued that Chileans were demanding a new style of leadership, one that was more “communitarian” in that it placed “greater focalisation on the emotional and physical well-being of people and on matters belonging to the so-called ‘domestic sphere’…” (31). In an opinion piece, published prior to the first round of the presidential elections, Tironi argued that “after a period of great changes and tensions [under Lagos], Chile need[ed] to take a break and tend to los caídos [those who fell through the cracks], to those who went unheard, to those who were left behind” (Tironi 2005b). This, he added, required a president who could “offer empathy, contención [self-control], participation, [and], cariño [affection]… the type of leadership that [Bachelet] embodied…” (ibid). Of particular interest in his analysis is that none of these phrases comes out of socialism or rights-based discourse. Instead, they are associated with women and role-based discourse.

Organically, the acceptance of a “feminine” style of leadership seemed to advance hand in hand with the increase in women leadership models. This development mirrored global trends vis-à-vis the normalisation effects of a slow cultural shift on the emergence of women political leaders (Franceschet and Thomas 2010; Lagos Escobar 2007; Piscopo 2010; Ríos Tobar 2009; Stevenson 2009; Tironi 2005a; Torres 2009). In her media analysis of Fernández’ presidential campaign, Piscopo argues that one of the unique characteristics of this period was that in general “female politicians in Argentina had made extraordinary leadership gains…” (2010, 199). For Tironi this slow-moving cultural shift has effected significant changes also for women in three key areas of Chilean life: “education, employment and family” (2005a, 154). In a comparison of the 1992 and 2002 census data in Chile, Tironi summarised women’s advancement as increased higher education participation, presence in the labour force, and what he referred to as a “feminisation” of family headship – an increase in women heads of both single and bi-parent households (155). What is striking, then, is the absence of a rights-based discourse to accompany this trend toward women’s greater participation in the public sphere. Global social change has meant that femininity does not automatically imply domesticity. In other words, cultural norms do not compel women who can afford to stay at home to do so. Instead, women who have this choice often
perform both domestic and professional tasks, and tend to be admired for being able to do both.

It is clear that this opening to women was gradual and depended upon diverse political and economic shifts. Those and pragmatic considerations persuaded Lagos and Kirchner that it was the right time to promote the integration of women into high political office. For a more complete understanding of this process, the influence of societal attitudinal factors on those political party decisions must be acknowledged. While there is evidence of an attitudinal shift toward women in politics in the public discourses around the Bachelet and Fernández campaigns, it is informed by the cultural acceptance of the ways in which these women performed in relation to historical gender constructs. Bachelet’s and Fernández’ discourses show a clear understanding of this.

DEFINING THE NEW ROLE OF THE STATE

In this section, I examine the gender coding in the Bachelet and Fernández campaign platforms that articulated the economic role of the state. However first, a brief historical review of the international economic and policy context is in order.

While the Cold War may have been rooted in the struggle between organised workers and capitalism dating from the end of the nineteenth century, the role of the state in this war was especially contested after WWII. Some of the most violent contestations of the Cold War were in what was commonly called at that time the “Third World.” Across the “First World,” a wave of mass discontent followed the 1929 Depression. Through two world wars and in the face of the institutionalisation of communism in the USSR, the middle classes of most of these countries joined the organised working class in demanding that the state take a greater role in protecting their interests by regulating the economy. Leaders from large and small nations responded with a variety of state-led reforms and social programmes. These job-creating infrastructure initiatives were led by Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-1945) in the US, with similar Keynesian reforms introduced by Joseph Savage (1935-1940) in New Zealand, and Clement Attlee (1945-1951) in the UK. In the 1950s, these countries enjoyed a long period of sustained economic expansion, which helped to prevent opposition to these policies. For at least three decades, there was a clear rejection of classical or laissez-faire economics, which had been widely understood to have produced the Depression. A strong general consensus emerged that the state must lead in infrastructural development and policies to increase employment and wages, alleviate poverty, educate the population, and enable
workers to obtain affordable housing. These state policies, defended by Keynesian economics, and underpinned by European social democracy and Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, made the middle classes of these nations the envy of the world.

Many of the same trends were observable in Latin America during these decades. However, there was a significant additional struggle to claim economic and political sovereignty from US and European neocolonialist domination. With the WWII’s weakening of Europe, movements for decolonisation arose around the globe, beginning with India’s expulsion of the British in 1947.

In the Latin American context, the 1930s-1950s period of national populism supported by policies of Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) led the way to reformist programmes known as developmentalism that achieved impressive results. Promoted by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, (ECLAC), under Raúl Prebisch (1950-1963), teams of development economists were trained to advise governments across the region, but especially in the Southern Cone. One outcome was that “by the 1950s, Argentina had the largest middle class on the continent” (Klein 2007, 55). The purpose of national-popular policies designed to support families and working people in Latin America was largely to discourage worker interest in socialism or communism. Importantly, these policies represented a top-down form of governance that excluded the political participation of most of the population. Therefore, the male politicians who introduced these policies were admired as “strong men,” and never feminised for taking a position that supported “workers’ rights.” Ideologically propelled opposition to these managed reforms arose in revolutionary movements that sought greater political and economic sovereignty and re-alignment with the USSR and/or the People’s Republic of China, and crystallised in the iconic figure of Che, who joined the generalised call for alliances across the colonised world. Following the success of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, various armed resistance movements arose to challenge developmentalism and the reformist political parties that supported these policies. The response to these challenges came in the form of enhanced repression by increasingly dictatorial regimes, who took this masculine image of the powerful state into its exaggerated hypermasculine form.

In 1970, after elected president Salvador Allende pledged to pave the way for a peaceful transition to socialism, anti-communist hysteria persuaded the US that a line had to be drawn. Recent evidence has established definitively that Operation Condor was a continental military alliance, funded by the CIA, to defeat all movements toward socialism across Latin America (Klein 2007; McSherry 2005). Condor was centred on the military
dictatorship of Pinochet (1973–90) and reached its most pathological state in Argentina during the “Dirty War” (1976-83) and in Central America’s civil wars, particularly in Guatemala (1980-1996). Under these dictatorships, “the regulatory state” was dismantled and its national-popular policies were reversed, not by the citizenry, but by military force. In both Argentina and Chile, generals replaced democratically elected leaders and promoted a hypermasculine form of power that implemented neoliberal policies through force, not consensus. The legitimising discourse was the establishment of “order, democracy and the rule of law.” In Chile, all terminology referring to socialism introduced under Allende was prohibited. The economic discourse stressed “modernisation, efficiency and prudence.”

The later presidents Lagos (Chile) and Kirchner (Argentina) may enter history also as “strong men,” remembered for their bold initiatives in economic policy. Lagos introduced important changes to the public health care system (*Plan Auge*), sealed several free-trade agreements, and orchestrated major public-private funded infrastructure projects. In a distinctly different economic climate, Kirchner defied the IMF in an attempt to reduce high levels of poverty and unemployment after the 2001 economic collapse. Even though Lagos did not face the same level of poverty as Kirchner, both embedded their economic policies in a language of “solidarity” and presented themselves as socially conscious, progressive leaders (social democratic). Lagos and Kirchner chose to frame their poverty alleviation policies under a broad rubric of “social justice.” In part, this was to differentiate themselves from their disgraced predecessors. While Menem (Argentina) was a fellow Peronist and Frei (Chile) a fellow member of the Concertación coalition, both left office under heavy criticism of their human rights and economic policy decisions.

Perceived as the “natural” occupants of the masculine seat of political and economic power, neither of these two male presidents was assessed in relation to a distinctly gendered frame. With the absence of this “gender factor,” strategic gender policies were not identified as a relevant part of their economic agendas and apart from autonomous feminist “social accountability” initiatives such as the *Equipo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Género* (ELA) in Argentina and the Index of Accountability in Chile (Valdés E. and Donoso 2009), they were not held accountable. Although Lagos and Kirchner increased targeted spending on

141 In a series of edicts that were imposed by the Chilean military junta between September 11 and September 21, 1973, the overthrow of Allende was justified in the following way: “to re-establish the country’s economic and social normality, [as well as] the peace, tranquillity and security that were lost” (Garretón Merino 1998, 61). The terms “economic normality” referenced what Naomi Klein defines as “the core tenets of Chicago School economics – privatization, deregulation and cuts to government services” (2007).

142 *Indice de Compromiso Cumplido* (ICC)
family assistance programmes and sponsored projects directed at poor and working-class women, such as the *Sonrisa de Mujer* programme in Chile, these initiatives received less public acclaim than their daringly bold steps on an international stage. In acknowledgement, one journalist described Lagos’ legacy “as the president of public works and of the ‘opening-up’ to the international [market]” (Correa 2006). Conversely, it is Bachelet who is more readily acknowledged for her expansion of the *Chile Solidario* programme, first implemented under the Lagos administration in 2002. In Argentina, public acknowledgement of Kirchner’s heroic stand against the International Monetary Fund belatedly followed his 2010 untimely death. However, his moderate commitment to socio-economic gender equality remained largely unmonitored.

Both Bachelet and Fernández self-identified with the same historically significant parties as their male predecessors. Correspondingly, they explicitly pledged to continue the progressive “neo-Keynesian” economic policies that Lagos and Kirchner developed. They too sought to stimulate the economy through public works, and offer concessionary housing and work programmes to alleviate the harsh impact of neoliberalism. At the same time, however, perpetuation of the status quo was not an option. In contrast to Lagos’ and Kirchner’s relative freedom from the constraining “gender factor,” Bachelet and Fernández were expected to operate within gendered frames: while most assumed that they would operate within the “feminine” spheres of the “family,” “motherhood,” and “childhood,” others hoped they would champion women’s rights (as I discuss in Chapter Five). When Bachelet and Fernández emerged as presidential contenders, their campaign teams had to learn to negotiate this gender factor.

In addition, a clean break with the past was viewed as essential to electoral victory. For Bachelet, this meant the need to avoid being associated too closely with the contradictory masculine models of the elite Chilean Left, well-established within the Concertación. José Aylwin defined the model as “being infused with a culture that was… very Europeanised,

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143 Between April 2000 and October 2001, Lagos’s wife Luisa Duran headed a publicly subsidised dental health programme called *Sonrisa de Mujer* (Woman’s Smile). Exclusively aimed at women who could not afford dental care, this programme provided treatments at half of the market price, organised loans, and allowed repayments to be staggered over one or two years.

144 Lavín used this legacy to differentiate himself from Lagos by saying that while “Lagos will be remembered as the president of infrastructural works and FTAs, I want to be remembered as the president of social change” (Espinosa V 2005).

145 *Chile Solidario*, implemented in 2002, was designed to reduce poverty through a system of “social protection, in which an active state supports families in interacting with social institutional networks to exercise civic and social rights, obtain benefits and strengthen capacities and social inclusion” (Frenz 2007).

146 For a pertinent example see Giardinelli (2010).
deeply machista, racist, [and] classist” (2009). Next door, Fernández needed to reduce the knee-jerk reaction and rumblings that paternal Kirchnerist discourses had begun to provoke among politically conservative middle and lower-middle classes. They no longer accepted the regulatory and interventionist measures of Kirchner’s emergency decrees,147 once seen as essential to Argentina’s recovery from the 2001 collapse. Thus gender coding aimed to mask or dilute any potentially damaging perceptions of these women leaders. I argue that Bachelet’s and Fernández’ campaign teams consciously shaped the role of the state into a more feminine image that suggested a shift toward a new phase of democracy, one that was more “inclusive” and “caring.”

However, this strategy had to convince without alienating. It also had to be adequately subtle to avoid the unwanted effects of “denaturalisation” in terms of gender roles and expectations. For example, Diana Maffía, one of Fernández’ harshest critics, has consistently argued that even though Fernández physically “imitates Evita… she wants to be Perón” (“Evita referente” 2006; 2009). Using Judith Butler’s “gender performance” theory to read Maffía’s argument reveals the provocative allusion to a deceptive masquerade. Endeavouring to weaken Fernández’ image, Maffía accuses Fernández of a “deceptive” and “unnatural” gender performance.

In Chile, the 2005 presidential campaign period was littered with illusions to the “gender factor.” Relative to right-wing candidate Joaquin Lavín’s historical appeal among poor women,148 polls had forecast a drop in his popularity due to a “gender mobilisation” toward Bachelet during the lead-up to the first election round in 2005 (Ramos 2005, 142). Women were pinpointed as an important sector of the electorate, alongside young voters. Endeavouring to overcome his weak appeal to poor women, Piñera’s image consultants advised a different look, a casual, rolled-up sleeve family-man image that would soften his formal neoliberal economist image. Thus, an important context for the second presidential debate in 2005 was this race for the female vote. In this debate, Bachelet suggested that candidate Piñera’s self-identification with Christian democratic values – an appeal to a moderate female electorate – was a form of “travestismo político” [“political transvestism”], explaining that he was “trying to disguise himself as something that he is not” (“Campaña

147 For details, see http://adclegislativo.digbang.com/listadodecretoporpresidencia.php, last accessed August 2011.
148 Before the second round of the 2005 elections, many analysts alluded to the importance of capturing “Lavinismo’s popular feminine vote” (Faundez 2005). Before Bachelet’s election to the presidency, this electorate was described in terms of its adherence to Lavín: “specifically among popular sector women, [a] niche that has historically been Lavin’s stronghold” (“Mujeres” 2005).
presidencial” 2005). Within Butler’s “gender performativity” analysis, cross-dressing and female impersonation was understood as a conscious counter-strategy to expose the hypocrisy of the heterosexual social imagination (Butler 1990, 119-120). Thus, in addition to standard “disguise” and “parody” interpretations, Bachelet’s criticism is gender coded. Like Maffia, Bachelet attempts to weaken her opponent by accusing him of impersonating her values in the race for her share of the female vote, a deceptive gender performance.

Superficial change was not enough. According to official voting statistics, Piñera garnered almost three percentage points fewer female votes (24.1%) than male votes (26.9%) in the first presidential electoral round. By contrast, female support (47%) for Bachelet was greater than male support by more than two points (44.77%). The El Mercurio-Opina poll concluded that it was among women voters “that Bachelet had her greatest strength… they are more decided on voting for the Concertación candidate than for Piñera… Bachelet surpasses Piñera by 11.6 percent in this sector” (Sierra 2005). These statistics made it clear that Piñera had work to do before the second round. Subsequently, he targeted this sector by going to the shantytowns to meet with female victims of crime.

The “gender factor” was also made manifest in Bachelet’s comparatively weak appeal to male voters. With their highly competitive values deepened by neoliberalism, Piñera appealed to young, especially male, voters as a successful entrepreneur and a “self-made man” in both the 2005 and 2010 presidential campaigns. Ironically, Bachelet employed what could just as easily have been seen as “unnatural” masculine rhetoric when she emphasised economic growth in order to directly address young male middle-class voters, “looking to improve their income levels” (“Los razones (sic)” 2005).

In their campaigns, these women shared their visions of the “new” state that they would lead. They pledged to advance already progressive economic paradigms and feminise them with an ethic of care and a sense of community. They borrowed these themes from historically resonant gender constructions of women in domestic settings and at the helm of important social movements. A sophisticated use of gender-codes suggested that while these women candidates would displace and improve the economic practices of their male predecessors with new, more inclusive, more participatory practices, they would also continue the successful legacy of economic growth and poverty reduction achieved under the Lagos and Kirchner administrations. At no point did this discourse threaten the structures of privilege previously enjoyed by economic and political elites. Instead, this ethic of care

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appears to have provided the framework and policies necessary to impart to the existing economic system a more “affable face.”

Clearly, each woman needed to develop a distinct political identity, one that minimised the risks of being labelled feminists, of being associated with a feminist agenda, or of being seen as holding too strong a bias toward poor women. While it was necessary for these presidential candidates to couch their economic discourses in terms that distinguished them from their male predecessors, their women-friendly pledges were not explicitly framed in terms of women’s individual rights. Instead, role-based framing disguised a series of policies aimed at extending those rights.

In Fernández’ campaign, this role-based identity was reinforced by an economic narrative that pitted a foreign masculine neoliberal state against a local feminised and “more virtuous” state (Fernández de Kirchner 2007f). Throughout 2007, Fernández built-up a narrative based on her ambassadorial capacity to represent Argentina’s “virtuous” economic mission before “First World” audiences. In a speech before the Council of the Americas in New York, she used the term “virtuous” to suggest that the Kirchner Administration had begun to steer the economy away from imported neoliberal logic of the 1990s toward a local logic of social responsibility. She used the same term in her pledge to potential foreign investors that her administration of the Argentine economy would “generate a [fiscal] reality more virtuous than any that we have had to live through until now” (2007b). Likewise, in Switzerland, before an international organisation of employers, Fernández concluded: “We have not based economic growth on foreign theories [teorías extrañas]… we have created and returned to the old culture of the human being, that which… articulates the force of capital and work. We know that this articulation is virtuous…” (2007d, 398). In an international context of “scandals and criminal proceedings…” (Klein 2007, 445), the image of a virtuous state was important. By 2007, a cast of hegemonic masculine leaders linked to the military dictatorship and the 2001 neoliberal crisis, were facing life sentences. An unblemished record appealed to all political fronts; the narrative of a feminine state, represented by a feminine face, enhanced this image. It was the feminine packaging that made this narrative more convincing. The “virtuous” feminine state narrative conveyed an impression of new hope, renovation, and change to voters and potential investors. Under the

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150 Once the neoliberal crisis went global, Fernández also became an “authority” on recovering from IMF debt. However, this was not yet obvious in 2007.

151 This included two of Argentina’s former military junta leaders Jorge Videla and Emilio Massera. Like Pinochet, Massera was deemed unfit to stand either extradition or trial due to ill-health. This also included ex-president Fernando De la Rúa, and the disgraced neoliberal economist Domingo Cavallo.
banner “Change has just begun,” the Fernández team used this narrative and a pledge to deepen the “socially responsible” economic model implemented under Kirchner to strengthen her political identity as a leader.152

Fernández defined the “new role of the state” as one that “could no longer be absent…” as it was under neoliberalism, nor could it be “entrepreneurial” as it was “at the early stages of Peronism…” and she contextualised this statement with praise for “the regulatory state” (2007e, 10). While the neoliberal model has not been totally dismantled in Argentina, Kirchner implemented important economic measures that allow the state to intervene in local market pricing and to control export revenues through heavy taxation. Capitalising on her marital relationship to Kirchner gave Fernández licence to frame her plans for the future as a break with the neoliberal past. What is new here is that Fernández deploys the kind of rhetoric developed by leaders of earlier women’s social movements (not identified as feminist), which legitimised women’s entrance into the public sphere by filling a gap left by absent men. While this role-based performance is strategic, it also helps to suppress Fernández’ own prominent status in the political realm. In addition, by capitalising on Kirchner’s anti-neoliberal fame, her own reputation which had previously been gained back in the 1990s as “the most emblematic anti-Menem senator” (Alberto Fernández, quoted in Halperín 2009, 237), is now reduced to an implicit code within this role-based frame.

Fernández further minimises her reputation as a fierce anti-neoliberal force with a disclaimer that this was the only way to successfully “articulate market and society…” and to bridge the gap between “public and private space…. without abandoning the representation of national interests and the large majorities” (ibid.). Reading Fernández’ promotion of the state’s reinsertion into the economy from a gender perspective reveals the less obvious layers of framing. As opposed to an explicit feminist or rights based claim, her critique of the splinters and gaps between socio-economic spheres, which she formulates dichotomously as public/private and market/society, is gender coded. In proposing to close these gaps with her “virtuous” feminine presence (as opposed to masculine “absence”), this gender coding speaks to that broad base of support that Fernández has among marginalised women, who are doubly disadvantaged on both levels. As I argue below, when market-oriented policies (maldistribution) and patriarchal norms (misrecognition) work together, poor women are severely disempowered. Fernández endeavoured to use gender coding to mask the difficulty

152 Fernández explained this slogan, in Spanish “el cambio recién empieza,” as the continuation and deepening of Kirchner’s efforts: “Now what is needed is a deeper reform, more acute, a kind of deepening…” (“Cristina Kirchner” 2007).
of addressing the cultural subtexts exacerbating poor women’s experience of maldistribution. I also suggest that Fernández strategically used this mask to transcend the social class barriers that would otherwise separate her from these voters.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Eva Perón deployed a range of gender-coded discourses to interpellate working women. In this respect, it might be argued that Evita provided Fernández with a model. Indeed, part of this coding imitates Evita’s gender performances as First Lady: while praising the paternal Kirchner State in true Peronist fashion, Fernández presents herself as the bridge over these gaps, which resembles Evita’s claim to power as a mediator. In 1940s Peronist imagery, women took on political or public and productive roles out of duty to “their home, their family, seemly conduct and public assistance” (Halperin 2009, 40). This basis justified Evita’s protagonist role because instead of acting independently, as a legitimate member of the political world with individual rights, she portrayed herself as the bridge or “the nexus between political power and the popular classes” (98).

Furthermore, in claiming legitimacy as a public figure and as a woman by alluding to “absent men,” namely Perón and Menem, Fernández’ likens the nation to the family. Using Evita’s maternal model of leadership, as opposed to Perón’s paternal one, this discourse promises to take good care of the child-like masses abandoned by the masculinised neoliberal state embodied by the figure of Menem. She does this in order to reach a subaltern sector, where these references would resonate. Clearly, this discourse assumes a subaltern sector opposed to the imported neoliberal economic model; however, it also assumes ideological rejection of a fraternal group of University of Chicago-trained economists who designed and advised Menem’s implementation of this model. Fernández’ disassociation from the figure of the neoliberal “expert” is significant. Despite her own reputation as a university-trained intellectual, Fernández relies on a local historical role-based model of women’s leadership in order to temporarily remove herself from this discredited elite position.

Taking this disaffiliation process a step further, she links the management of the domestic economy to that of the family. Here, she referenced the golden rule of not living beyond your means: “no-one can spend more than they receive and this does not come from Harvard, from Yale, or the University of Buenos Aires; it simply draws on la economía casi familiar [the family economy]...” (Fernández de Kirchner 2007f). This careful choice of

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153 Naomi Klein’s robust account of this history points to the fact that Menem appointed a number of Chicago School alumni to “top economic posts” (2007, 166). Informally known as “Chicago Boys,” Roque Fernández, Pedro Pou, and Pablo Guidotti were “all former students of Milton Friedman and Arnold Harberger” (165).
role-based rhetoric creates the image of the nation as a well-managed family, within which women’s resource management role is clearly appreciated. However, in her attempt to create an unproblematic image of a feminised state that pledges to do more than the paternal and neoliberal states of previous decades, Fernández described the nation in terms that numerous feminist theories have tried to deconstruct. In pledging to pass the economy into the careful hands of a woman, Fernández reappropriated a set of well-assigned gender roles that were defined in a patriarchal context: the myth of the domestic angel. At the same time as this historical frame was helpful in gaining consensus for a woman-led economy, in terms of women’s human rights, this decision has been read as a step backwards in the sense that it limited the reach of rights protection discourse to the narrow parameters of women’s roles within the family and the community.

Although similar to Fernández in her “caring” tone, Bachelet’s assurance of careful domestic frugality was not placed in opposition to the neoliberal state, but instead closely resembled her predecessors. For example, while trying to reassure the public that the proposed expansion of social reforms would not interrupt economic growth, Bachelet promised that her administration would improve “spending efficiency” claiming that “we will watch every peso” (2005a, 13). She added that “when I am in the Moneda one of my principal tasks will be to guarantee that not one peso will be misspent…” (2005f, 5). However, her deployment of historical gender frames and coded references to the family can be read in the same way that Fernández was:

I will govern with skirts and trousers. Trousers to take all the hard decisions… and skirts to ensure that while we are encouraging those who want to rise, we also embrace and protect more those who have difficulties (Bachelet, quoted in Guerra 2006).

This exemplifies one of the key referents in Bachelet’s campaign speeches: a subtle shift from the Concertación’s successful “Pro Growth Agenda” to a “Pro Equality Agenda” (Bachelet 2005a). In this quote, Bachelet anticipates the ideologically conservative economic strategy that Piñera would take. For example, in an interview published just after the first election round in 2005, Piñera responded that labour reform must be “pro-employment, pro-salary, pro-growth, and allow more flexibility” (quoted in Sepúlveda 2005). The equality frame differentiates Bachelet’s economic proposals in an important way from those of her opponent. However, her proposed change was not precisely what the public wanted. As
reflected in numerous opinion polls, a large section of the electorate responded negatively to Bachelet’s attempt to shift economic discourses. The Centro de Estudios Públicos public opinion poll for October-November 2005, for example, clearly demonstrated that the one area of policy where the Chilean public held greater confidence in Piñera than in Bachelet was in his ability to “ensure more economic growth” (CEP 2005). Bachelet’s campaign team failed here to read a situation in which the politics of equality collide with an ideology that has been firmly implanted in the minds of Chileans by decades of neoliberalism: meritocracy. For this sector, the country is perceived as an enterprise that is to be administered efficiently by those who merit a place at the table. Within this entrenched ideology of meritocracy, Piñera was seen as a symbol of neoliberal success. For example, when interviewed about the candidates heading into the first round of the presidential elections, a weekly political columnist for El Mercurio Joaquín García-Huidobro summed up this positive perception of Piñera by saying that “a millionaire is someone to be respected” (Villalobos 2005, 85).

In this context, Bachelet turned to a role-based discourse that emphasised family and the home in a quest for legitimacy and consent for a shift toward not only economic equality but also gender parity. As revealed in critiques of how neoconservative and neoliberal forces gained hegemonic power around the world, this had been attempted before, and it had worked. Fear of economic change can be counteracted by constructing “a climate of consent around a coherent set of moral values” (Harvey 2005, 83-84). An inclusive family frame can work like “social glue” (82). A close reading of Bachelet’s campaign platform reveals a set of social reforms in labour, health, and education designed to benefit the family, in particular, women, children, and the elderly (see the final section of this chapter). Of key interest to my analysis are the ways in which these policies situate women within the family context, as providers of a second income, or as caregivers. In a proposed reform of pre-school childcare facilities, for example, Bachelet claims that “everyone wins… children win… mothers win… society wins…” (2005f, 6). Policies designed to increase women’s presence in the workforce are justified in terms of improving the family economy: “more women incorporated into the workforce, [means]… more income in the home” (Bachelet 2005a, 9). She argues for the proposed reforms to the pension system on the grounds that “our parents and grandparents deserve dignity” (2005a, 10). This approach disguises those rights-based reforms that aimed

154 The CEP opinion poll (October-November 2005) indicated a 37 percent vote of confidence in Piñera, compared to a 34 percent vote of confidence in Bachelet to achieve economic growth (2005, 75). The DataVoz poll (Dec 19, 2005-Jan 4, 2006), published in La Tercera on January 8, 2006, showed a 46 percent vote of confidence in Piñera and a 43 percent vote for Bachelet to address economic growth (“Los factores” 2006).
to enhance the financial situation for working women, who as a result of earning less than men, have contributed less over their working lives to a privatised pension scheme and therefore suffer the consequences at retirement.\(^\text{155}\)

In view of conservative voters’ wariness regarding the potential effect that this proposed shift would have on economic growth, Bachelet would have been aware of the political risk involved in directly addressing poor women and children by emphasising their socio-economic rights. She attempted to mask an agenda that promotes women’s rights by presenting it as an agenda for social justice, referencing all of Chile with inclusive family terms, making Chilean society feel like “a family, a real home, [where] we all win” (2005d, 27). The political implications of framing economic responsibilities in role-based terms, by extending much of that responsibility to the family, wherein the traditional division of labour and gender roles in the home enable the provision of unpaid “reproductive labour” (defined below) to relieve state reserves and safeguard class privileges, should not be underestimated. Appealing in this way to Chile’s broad political Centre was a politically strategic move. This strategy was especially necessary in the lead-up to the second round of the presidential elections, after Lavín left the race. A large percentage of Lavín’s constituency was constituted of poor women and Bachelet’s success with women voters in the first round did not guarantee that these historically conservative voters would swing to the Left behind her in the second.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF FEMINISING THE STATE

Brazilian feminist Rose Marie Muraro might say that this socio-economic vocabulary belongs to what she calls a “feminine economy,” which she describes as “collaborative,” “solidary,” “win-win,” and geared toward “putting people first, not utility” (quoted in Osava 2010). These discourses strategically extend the notion of solidarity into the realm of “family values.” Whether you choose to categorise these definitions of the state as “feminine,” there is good reason to believe that Bachelet and Fernández benefited from emphasising the contrast with the masculinised discourses of neoliberalism.

Within neoliberal logic, the idea of meritocracy, as with the sports metaphor, gives the impression of competition in which there are winners and losers. These discourses provide a

\(^{155}\) In 2009, feminist organisation Corporación Humanas reported that “figures from the Superintendencia de Pensiones were showing that women’s contributions to social security savings equate to half of those being collected by men in the system” (Mujeres 2009).
useful strategy for male Southern Cone leaders attempting to look masculine without appearing militaristic in an era when war and battle metaphors were out of the question. However, these discourses also highlight one of neoliberalism’s basic fallacies: an even playing field, where all play by the same rules. In tandem with sports metaphors, meritocracy functions to strengthen competitive nationalism perfectly calibrated with neoliberalism, while it also reassures men of different social classes that all men share a commonality: they are playing a game together in which they all participate as men. For example, during the Argentine celebrations commemorating twenty-five years of electoral democracy, a photographic display on the official grounds of the Casa Rosada in Buenos Aires visually recreated a chronology of presidents since 1983. Each of the male presidents was visually connected to the national sport, football. Among the images featuring the ex-presidents Alfonsín, Menem, De La Rúa or Kirchner, each appears to be tossing a football. This imagery references the idea of Argentina as one of several nation-states who are “playing” in a fair economic game and each of the presidents is just one more guy playing the game.

The link to neoliberal logic lies in the way winners are determined. Measurements of a narrow band of IMF collected statistics, namely GDP, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and other economic indicators are the only internationally recognised ways of measuring a nation’s economic efficiency. In order to win the game, the rules indicate that the country must have the highest GDP and largest FDI indicators when compared to others. Conversely, this system of measurement implies that there is no gain in improving living standards, particularly in terms of gender equality.

This helps explain why as unemployment rose in the 1990s under Menem, the warning signs were overshadowed by a rise in Argentina’s GDP. As national industries were sold off and closed, affecting thousands of kilometres of railroad, cutting off rural towns and creating high unemployment in Argentina, those statistics did not enter into the official assessment of the economy, especially by the “unaccountable” IMF, which understated the severity of these changes (Harvey 2005, 69). When the reality of the 2001 economic downturn could no longer be obscured by IMF discourses about Argentina’s “success,” the implosion exposed the deceptive nature of GDP and FDI, as well as the IMF. By that time, it was too late, too much capital had been extracted from the economy and Argentina suffered massive capital flight, largely into the hands of the international banks.

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156 As will be discussed below, women’s rights arguments are left to less powerful UN bodies such as the Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
In Chile, a parade of neoliberal discourses, stressing the competitive marketplace and the freedom to choose whether to send children to public or private schools, for example, tends to mask the reality of a high concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. As in other market-oriented economies, 2005 presidential candidates were assessed as if they were commodities. A consumer survey dramatically differentiated Bachelet’s campaign profile from Piñera’s by labelling her as “the guardian” (Guardián) and him as “the adventurer” (Explorador) (Aguirre Pascal 2006). While this branding approach had the potential to mark Piñera’s 2005 candidacy as strong, fit, and competitive, it marked Bachelet in a broadly appealing way. As part of this branding exercise, a marketing consultancy company likened Bachelet to common household products, “Omo, Doko or Tucapel,” detergent, pet food, and rice, respectively. Piñera was likened to luxury brands such as “Packard Bell, Sahne Nuss [chocolates], Duna [perfume] and Cristian Dior” (ibid.).

While having to operate within neoliberal structures Bachelet used gender roles to tactically distance herself from the neoliberal doctrines of “efficient” policy decision-making and “governance by experts and elites” (Harvey 2005, 66). This was evident on numerous occasions such as when she announced her intention “to make public policies for the people and with the people” (Bachelet 2005d, 24). On first reading, it might be argued that this demonstrates a subtle co-optation of Allende’s socialist discourse, since a parallel can be drawn between this utterance in his final address from the Moneda on September 11, 1973: “history is ours and it is the people who make it” (Allende 2006, 255). However, unlike Allende, Bachelet did not use class-based socialist language. She never interpellated people as workers, nor criticised imperialism or capitalism in the way that Allende did. Her language was neither neoliberal nor socialist. Instead, Bachelet positioned herself within a series of “feminine” role-based frames that evoke women’s “natural” capacity for including others, listening to others, taking care of others, and as she promised, “of doing things in a different way” (Bachelet 2005d, 24). As a result of this down-to earth image, Bachelet’s brand better appealed to a large part of the Chilean electorate, one that expressed its preference for a president that displays “honesty and trustworthiness” (“Los factores” 2006).

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157 For a compelling account of “the inequality behind Chile’s prosperity,” see Silvia Viñas (2011).
158 For a complete copy of Allende’s final words on this date and other significant speeches, see Allende (2006).
Installing a woman head of state does not feminise the state. A feminine face does not guarantee that economic policy will be perceived as feminine or that the state and its economy will necessarily be perceived positively, as affable. As a clear example in contrast to Fernández, Isabel Perón became the first woman president of Argentina by default. As vice president during Perón’s third mandate, she succeeded him when he died in office. Despite the fact that she was the world’s first woman president, her pathway to this otherwise powerful position was never perceived as anything more than a “widow track” (Ramsay 2003). Then, when forcibly removed from this role, she was better remembered for ushering in an era of extreme instability. It has been estimated that as many as 1,500 members of the organised opposition, some of whom were armed militants, were disappeared while she was president.\footnote{In 2007, A Spanish judge arrested Isabel Perón for her suspected connection to human rights abuses during her term in office. For details, see Carroll (2007).} After she was arrested and the military government installed, those numbers rose to tens of thousands. As a result of her embedded, albeit disempowered, role in the dictatorship, few would argue that she had any role in the state, let alone a role in the feminisation of the state.

Furthermore, scholarly attention has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that derogatory statements and attacks made against the socio-economic policies of women-led states in other parts of the world tend to deploy masculinised gender frames. From the range of case studies reviewed in Chapter One and other comparative studies (Murray 2010), there are some consistencies in the gendered evaluations made of the socio-economic policies implemented under women leaders. For example, the criticism that women heads of state behave like “men” when they should behave like “women” was applied with equal fervour to Britain’s Margaret Thatcher and Helen Clark in New Zealand.

Attacks from the political Left against Margaret Thatcher’s conservative neoliberal government, also known as Thatcherism,\footnote{Observers have noted that Thatcher modelled her economic system on the one Pinochet established in Chile. According to Jon Lee Anderson, Thatcher “sent an aide to Chile to spend six months studying Pinochet’s economic reforms before she embarked on her own in Britain” (1998).} deployed a high degree of hypermasculine militaristic epithets, making her out to be “combative, dominance-oriented,” of having a “warrior style,” and of ruling “by fear” (various authors, quoted in Brown 1989). The aim and perhaps the effect of stressing all that would stereotypically be considered “unnatural” behaviour for a “woman,” was the “denaturalisation” of her public image as a political leader.
Likewise, but from the political Right, critics used masculinised epithets to attack Helen Clark’s leadership of the New Zealand government (1999-2008). Linda Trimble and Natasja Treiberg’s study of the media’s masculinised representations of Helen Clark during her five election campaigns, 1996-2008, provides numerous examples. The media’s masculinised gender frames in these five campaigns, they argue, cast Clark “as unusually, and even suspiciously, unfeminine” (2010, 121). The deployment of this gendered vocabulary shifted the terms of several economic debates to discredit her establishment of what her critics saw as an overly protective or interfering state.

It is also true that both Bachelet and Fernández have been accused of not being “totally feminine” or for “lacking care.” For example, Bachelet was criticised as defence minister for not dressing in an appropriately feminine way. As a presidential candidate her single, husband-less status was compared during the pre-candidacy period to Soledad Alvear’s “traditional Catholic femininity” (Vera 2009, 121). Fernández’ handling of the farming conflict mid-2008 was perceived as confrontational and authoritarian, at the extreme of being reminiscent of “the military dictatorships” (Dell “Oro” 2008).

At the same time, their presumed “masculinity” has been questioned. During the well-publicised incident between the King of Spain and Venezuela’s President Hugo Chávez, in 2007, during the Ibero-American Summit hosted in Chile, Bachelet, who was the moderator, was criticised for not being sufficiently energetic in bringing order to the negotiating table, and she was criticised for being “blanda” (soft). Under the Fernández administration in Argentina, endless references to the economy were made to suggest that Kirchner was still in charge and that she was, therefore, a mere figurehead.

These examples suggest that when both dominant and dissident discursive attacks resort to either the hypermasculine or the feminine as identifying constructs for the purpose of challenging policies carried out under women leaders, then there is reason to suspect that

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161 In one of the strategies used to attack Thatcher on a personal level this masculinised profiling reinforced negative images of her as a woman, resulting in descriptions of her as an overbearing and controlling “governess” or as the infamous “Iron Lady” (Brown 1989).

162 In another parallel example to Thatcher’s experience, Clark’s critics derogatorily referred to her administration as “the nanny state” during her third and final term (2005-2008). The introduction of what was purposefully and inaccurately nicknamed the “anti-smacking” bill in 2005 (a bill introduced to prevent legal protection of child abuse), brought this debate to a head and it continued to plague Clark’s public profile well beyond 2007, when the bill was passed into law, into the 2008 election period, when she lost to John Key. The political aim of these gendered attacks was further supported by right-wing critics who likened her administration to that of an imaginary communist state: “Before you could say ‘Dancing Cossacks,’ the spectre was being raised of East European-style inspectors forcing their way into the nation’s bathrooms” (Armstrong 2008). For Thatcher’s criticisms of the “coddling” “Nanny State” see Yergin and Stanislaw (1998).
the criticisms are located within patriarchal structures that are challenged by these women leaders. If gendered strategies are absent when criticising similar policies made under male leadership, then this suggests a delegitimisation of women-led decisions. At one extreme, these socio-economic policies are not even perceived as coming from women. Instead these women-led states are seen as a continuation of a masculine state, adding only superficially a feminine face somewhat irrelevant to the structures of economic power.

Before the first presidential election round in 2005, political columnist Joaquín García-Huidobro argued with distinct sarcasm that Bachelet would make a better national symbol or figurehead and “should be elected queen, not President…” (quoted in Villalobos 2005, 85). For this argument García-Huidobro provided a very simplistic explanation, revealing the underlying gender coding: he converts the symbolic head-of-state into a domestic “queen,” saying that “we all love Bachelet a lot and she could carry out a role of unity, understanding and acogida [shelter] because it seems that after Lagos we Chileans want a mum not a dad” (ibid). On close examination, the sarcasm in this utterance masks this critic’s shame and disapproval of men in wanting a maternal president. In other words, his sarcasm replaces a direct criticism of the men who “behaved badly” in the past and led Chileans to call out for a mum to put the home in order and to make it more welcoming. In a slip of the tongue, this critic later argued that as right-wing politicians such as Lavín and Piñera enjoy the “economic freedom to not depend on politics [for a living], this sector is full of ‘niños terribles’ [terrible or spoiled naughty children]” (ibid).

Keeping the historical context in mind, this gendered criticism contrasts significantly to the pre-dictatorship past, when a hypermasculine military was asked to come in and restore order to a home being left in disarray by “subversive communists.” While such an approach provides clear evidence of a power shift in social criticism, from a top-down targeting of political “subversives” to a bottom-up targeting of political elites, there has been no move away from gender attacks, which scapegoat particular gender characteristics of those targets (c.f. Chapter Three).

Given this context, these presidential candidates never stood a chance of avoiding gendered attacks. The use of gender frames could therefore be considered a calculated risk. The appropriation of patriarchally-defined gender roles must be viewed as a high-risk move at election time. In their simplicity, these role-based frames carried a high risk of exposure to very negative connotations from within the very same patriarchal realm where they are constructed. While political commentators found it difficult to place Bachelet into a simplistic schema of Iron-lady or “mujer de” (see Chapter One), Argentine critics had no
such trouble identifying Fernández as an example of the latter. Critics routinely used this stereotype to delegitimise Fernández because of her linkage to Kirchner. In addition, even though her political career may have at times been parallel to or anterior to his, she became a genuine contender during his presidency. Nevertheless, the contrasts drawn between Fernández’ biographical context and Bachelet’s unmarried status go beyond pure biographical facts. They are discursively constructed profiles, embedded within a heterosexual, neo-conservative, and patriarchal worldview.

This campaign strategy targeted sectors of society that might respond to a feminine “sensitivity” or “intelligence” capable of redressing flaws in the existing state of electoral democracy. Both candidates were required to promise change in view of deteriorated social systems, wherein neoliberalism had shown its flaws, as in Argentina, or where there was a call for a more affable, caring, and human face, as in Chile.

Of course, this change platform provoked targeted attacks from the opposition. Both Bachelet and Fernández suffered from criticisms that no significant change was intended. Many suggested that these women candidates formed part of a masking process to disguise continuation of the status quo. Sarcastic comments directed at Fernández during her candidacy alluded to the idea of falsity and façade; for example, “she was more real as a person when she was a lowly senator” (Goni 2007), and in comparison, Evita “was a real queen, not a botox queen” (Carrió, quoted in Vidal 2007). Similar perceptions were expressed during Bachelet’s campaign. For example, historian Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt accused Bachelet of being a “media marketing product, a populist,” who was a “not yet recognised” member of the Chilean military (EMOL 2005).163 Much of the speculation surrounding Bachelet’s drop in pre-election polls and her eventual failure to win in the first round suggested that the initial illusion of gender novelty combined with an emphasis on her being “the people’s candidate” (candidata ciudadana) had worn off (“El desafío” 2005). For some, the real face of politics will always be patriarchal and authoritarian, irrespective of the gender of that face.

Uncovering the “Real” Face of Government: Rights Based Arguments

Looking back from the final and the middle stages of the Bachelet and Fernández mandates, respectively, numerous analysts argued that increased governmental attention to the social

163 In Spanish, “En concreto pienso que es usted un producto de marketing mediático, populista, una carta tapada, no reconocida aún, de la fuerza militar.”
situation did not alter structural inequalities in either of these two countries (Borzutsky 2009; Gherardi 2009; Kubal 2009; Sehnbruch 2009). Instead, it has been argued that these women presidents drove a trickle-down form of poverty alleviation. Further, they were criticised for excluding or at least severely limiting citizen participation, through either the quid pro quo of clientelism or the suppression of rights. Instead of levelling the playing field, they were accused of protecting class power.

In Chile, for example, some saw in Bachelet a Janus-face. They argued that her caring or “maternal” face represented a “danger” to quality of life as it gave the impression of a politics of care when Bachelet’s other face responded to poverty and environmental depletion with the same market solutions as her post-transition predecessors. In a 2008 review of the region, Emir Sader isolated Bachelet as one of the few Latin American presidents “who struggle to keep [the neoliberal economic model] going…” (2008, 8). Clearly, she was a controversial leader; one with whom at least three sectors of Chilean society directly expressed their discontent during her mandate.

Expressions of that discontent reveal a common denominator. They all claim that Bachelet’s feminine “sensitivity” has not translated into structural change of the neoliberal economic model. In fact, the high concentration of wealth in Chile remains evident in global indices. For example, Forbes’ 2011 list of the world’s billionaires according to “country of citizenship” documents that four of the world’s wealthiest people are Chilean: the wealthiest Chilean claimed position twenty-seven and Sebastian Piñera held position 488. In comparison, two are Argentine, with the wealthier of the two at position 200. According to Forbes, eight of the first two thousand of the world’s largest public companies, are in Chile, while Argentina has none.164

Among groups that have voiced strong opposition to the state’s neoliberal policies are Chile’s indigenous Mapuche population, identified largely in rural regions of the southern IX Region, who have faced the usage of anti-terrorist legislation for their protest against corporations pursuing forestry interests, mineral extraction, and hydroelectric projects that have displaced their communities from ancestral homelands. Chile’s neoliberal economic model has weakened state protections of their basic cultural and socio-economic rights, as

164 The richest people in Chile, according to the 2011 Forbes list are Iris Fontbana and family (27), Horst Paulmann and family (75), Eliodoro, Bernardo, and Patricia Matte (77), and Sebastian Piñera (488). In Argentina, Forbes catalogues Gregorio Pérez Companc and family (879) and Carlos and Alejandro Bulgheroni (200) as the richest people. For further detail, see http://www.forbes.com/wealth/billionaires. For further information on the World’s Biggest Public Companies, see http://www.forbes.com/global2000, last accessed May 2011.
reported by the UN Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Affairs, Rodolfo Stavenhagen and current Rapporteur James Anaya. Human rights groups working on behalf of Mapuche communities have provided detailed reports for these UN bodies. When I interviewed human rights lawyer Nancy Yañez in 2009, she complained about a state in which both the ruling coalition party, the Concertación (1990-2010) and its main opposition at the time, the Alianza, actually coordinated economic development initiatives, creating “a state clearly responsive only to groups of economic interest …” (2009). NGOs that seek to intervene on behalf of Mapuche face a weak state that refuses to regulate corporations and continues dictatorship-era legislation that incarcerates indigenous leaders without the basic legal protections accorded other citizens. The media, owned by many of the same magnates, generally represent Mapuche communities as the violent parties, focusing on their protest instead of the violation of their rights. Furthermore, these NGOs struggle for resources when they and the people they defend are “in conflict with groups of interest…” (ibid.). The result, Yañez argues, is a “lack of resources to protect rights of people” (ibid.).

Students organised as a second opposition group. They represent resistance to the privatisation of education, a neoliberal project that advances rapidly in Latin America and the world. In Bachelet’s first presidential year, 2006, a well-publicised student protest movement ruptured her post-election honeymoon period to oppose to the special privileges and discriminatory selection processes implemented under a competitive Milton Friedman-informed “voucher-like system of school funding” (Kubal 2009). While students demanded their “right” to the equal distribution of quality education and an end to “structural sources of inequality in the system,” the state responded with a moderate reform package shorn of two rights-based clauses, (removed at the demand of the political opposition), to eliminate state subsidies to for-profit private schools and force primary schools to have “an open admission policy” under most circumstances (ibid). Instead of acknowledging students’ basic rights to education, Bachelet’s new administration made superficial pledges to increase spending without challenging the competitive market structure of Chile’s education system.

165 For details, see http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ Countries/LACRegion/Pages/LACRegionIndex.aspx, last accessed July 2011.
166 Due to the state’s failure to protect education rights, students took to the streets again under President Piñera, in 2011. While Piñera and his education minister, Joaquín Lavín (2010-2011), became the primary targets of criticisms, it was generally acknowledged that the Concertación presidents did very little to improve the situation.
The third major opposition group are environmental activists,\textsuperscript{167} who articulated a similar rights-based argument in a more recent example of discontent in 2011. In March 2011, Radio Bio-Bio’s Santiago director Tomás Mosciatti (often compared to Larry King) publicly criticised Bachelet’s “maternal tone” as “false and dangerous” (quoted in Álvarez). He was referring to the Bachelet administration’s relationship with the AES Gener thermoelectric power plant in the V Region. Mosciatti criticised a December 31, 2009 decree that permitted this company to establish its plant in an area normally closed to industrial development (the \textit{Zona Verde} or \textit{Zona Restricción Humana}). These are buffer zones that safeguard neighbouring urban residential zones from the toxic effects of industrial zone activity adjacent to the belt. Mosciatti’s assassination of Bachelet’s “maternal” character directly targets the same role-based frame in which much of her poverty alleviation policies were located during the presidential campaign.

In Argentina, a huge concentration of land (50\%) is reportedly being exploited by 2 percent of export-oriented agribusiness (Aranda 2011). Since 2000, numerous rural social organisations, largely indigenous peoples and \textit{campesinos}, have disputed the environmental, social, and “real human costs” of Argentina’s agricultural “extraction model” (ibid.). For example, indigenous Qom communities have protested the Fernández administration’s protection and advancement of large-scale soya plantations. They have met with violent state repression that is ignored by official media. In view of the state’s failure to provide statistical data on soya production and its criminalisation of social protest, the opposition has denounced “the president’s silence” (ibid.).

Among other claims against the Argentine state, social organisations argue that Fernández’ 2008 push for Resolution 125 – a new tax on agricultural exports intended to raise funds for social investment – never threatened the \textit{agroexportador} model or any of its key actors (ibid.). Instead, \textit{Red Agroforestal} claims, “while the discourse questions it, in practice [the state] keeps supporting the extraction production model and committing an outrage against the lives of indigenous and \textit{campesino} peoples” (ibid).

In Chile, this cross-section of rights-based counter-arguments against the state accounts for a significant percentage of the population. In Argentina, mass mobilisations of large economically disadvantaged groups to protest against the state’s weak regulation of

\textsuperscript{167}In May 2011, there was a wave of mass mobilisations both in Chile and around the world against the Piñera administration’s approval to build five hydroelectric dams in the Patagonia area, known as the \textit{HidroAysén} project. Reflections on this situation brought the Bachelet administration into question once again, some accusing her administration “of having perpetuated an antidemocratic institutional design that allowed political intervention in environmental decisions to continue” (Sepúlveda 2011).
corporate economic powers point to signs of unrest among “a large underclass” (“The Americas” 2011). Apart from exposing structural inequalities in both Chile and Argentina, these protest movements also highlight the ways in which Bachelet and Fernández used “social reform” discourses to mask those realities. In summary, neither administration was encouraged to articulate a socio-economic rights policy in view of in-country, regional, and global infatuation with neoliberalism’s competitive markets. This is especially evident after the adoption of such rights-based constitutions in Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela.

Bachelet’s and Fernández’ supporters offer an alternative explanation for continued Chilean and Argentine structural inequalities. They view the limited freedom of movement within the elite patriarchal institutional and constitutional parameters that constrain the presidency as better explanation. In Argentina, neo-gorilismo makes it impossible for Fernández to prevent an “irrational hatred toward whatever this government does,” according to Argentine writer Guillermo Martínez (quoted in Di Marco 2010). The normative ideals of a patriarchal state and a conservative elite society clashed with a public demand for a more democratic, caring, humane state. To lead, Bachelet and Fernández strategically reappropriated hegemonic patriarchal discourses centring on the feminine and appealing to an ethic of care in order to exercise a variant of socialist politics. This tactical use of role-based frames gave these women presidents an element of agency. However, the significant public expressions of contestation brought against both Bachelet and Fernández during their respective mandates suggest that the feminine face of the state served the purposes of a politics of care more than the purposes of a politics of social justice.

Official discourses about women in poverty used gender-based roles to avoid talking about gender-based rights. Reliance on role-based campaign discourses carries a cost to women’s human rights because they continue to situate women in the home performing the double roles that prevailing patriarchal normative ideals impose. Post-liberation women today are expected to competently and cheerfully fulfil the domestic role such as child/elder care, cleaning, cooking, shopping, and laundry and then leave the home to fulfil the professional role, to provide income for the family. Role-based frames project archetypical gender roles based on normative assumptions about the historical construction of separate economic spheres, public and private. The “good woman,” the “good mother,” and the “good wife” are deeply rooted in the private realm, relating back to the domestic angel. While women who succeed in both roles, such as the mother-president, are admired, this “admiration” fails to question these ideals and examine women’s economic autonomy in the Southern Cone. Within the values of the postmodern era that are “westernised” by globalisation and
“individualised” by the competitive logic of neoliberalism, this angelic domestic image is an anachronism, one removed from the economic realities of today’s women: elite, professional, working-class, popular class, or destitute.

In the section that follows, evidence is provided to support the feminist argument that contests these unrealistic role-based codes on the basis that they mask the reality of women’s everyday lives. In a special case, single working mothers must fulfil domestic and professional roles and bear a third burden. In addition to producing income, they must undertake “work so vital to income conservation, such as shopping around for the cheapest foodstuffs, or self-provisioning rather than purchasing market goods and services” (Chant 2003a, 7). In addition to struggling against gender norms and codes that obscure their reality, women’s every-day lives have been exacerbated by “the withdrawal of the state from the economy” (Craske 1998, 104).

FEMINISATION OF POVERTY

In May 2010, at the second International Feminist Congress hosted in Argentina, exactly one hundred years after the first one, a key part of the debate centred on poverty among women. This debate concluded that one of the main challenges facing “the modern woman” in Argentina is “economic oppression” (Jastreblansky and Vera 2010). Since the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action reinforced the idea that “the number of women living in poverty [had] increased disproportionately to the number of men, particularly in developing countries” (United Nations, 19), feminist scholars began to count social phenomena such as “the feminisation of poverty” (Chant 2003a), and “the over-representation of women among the poor” (Medeiros and Costa 2006), as negative outcomes of the 1990s structural adjustment policies. The Washington Consensus, the neoliberal economic project, left women more “time-poor” and more resource poor in relation to men (Chant 2003a, 29). This resulted from a combination of two key factors: 1) the state’s disinvestment in the household and the community; and 2) patriarchal structures that assigned to women the major responsibility within those two spaces.

168 Sylvia Chant (2003b) examines three major bodies of feminist research that have encouraged gendered understandings of poverty around the world. Following the UN Decade for Women (1975-85), “the second wave” of research that she outlines emerged as a result of structural adjustment policies. Of the major contributors to this dimension of poverty analysis, she applauds Elson (1989); Moser (1989); and Safa and Antrobus (1992), and for having “demonstrated unequivocally that the burdens of debt crisis and neoliberal reform were being shouldered unequally by women and men” (Chant 2003b, 11). Catherine Kingfisher applies this this argument to her anthology of the Western World (2002).
Several Latin American observers argue that the market-led economy and its “championing of individualism and consumer mentalities…” (Buchanan and Nicholls 2003, 58) has had a disproportionately negative impact on low socio-economic sectors in the Latin American region. The exposure of the national economy to a highly competitive international market resulted in a decreased emphasis on workers’ rights and collective bargaining, high unemployment, and underemployment in a growing informal labour market. As these more cost effective measures continued to devalue and replace human capital, “the figure of the disposable worker” emerged (Harvey 2005, 169). In a discursive sense, a feminisation of the labour force evolved as these discourses repressed and denied unions and workers power and agency in their work, which in turn reduced the quality of employment. Unsurprisingly, at this juncture the workforce experienced concrete feminisation, resulting in a concentration of poorly paid women in unprotected and informal employment, and with fewer opportunities than men to improve their circumstances.

The extreme devaluation of domestic work in the home, largely by women, mirrored the experience of the depreciated male in the formal workplace. “Reproductive labour,” defined as unpaid domestic chores, including child/elder care in the home, defies quantification in the neoliberal sense (Zibecchi, Gherardi, and Pautassi 2009). However, it is not impossible, and numerous feminist and women’s organisations have argued for the importance of measuring reproductive labour for its market value. In addition, UNIFEM has actively supported a range of “time-use” studies in both Argentina and in Chile. They are important for women because they reveal the degree to which working women carry the burden of the “double shift,” both productive and reproductive labour. A 2009 International Labour Organization report co-authored by the UNDP, urged that real advancement in Latin American gender equality required “reconciliation between work and family… through social co-responsibility: redistributing care responsibilities between men and women, as well as among the family, the State, the market and society as a whole” (2009, 9).

The prevailing consensus that reproductive labour is “women’s work” is supported by statistical evidence of women’s low labour force participation rates and of significant salary gaps between men and women who are formally employed. Numerous gender-based studies,

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169 Buchanan and Nicholls stress here that the neoliberal project imposed under Pinochet’s authoritarian regime was systematically “designed to break with the class-based collectivist traditions of the past, decrease social reliance on collective agents and the State.” (2003, 58).
170 Among others, Equipo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Género (ELA) and La Dirección de la Mujer in Argentina, and SERNAM in Chile.
171 For a list of these studies and a review of the region in regard to the gendered distribution of work and family responsibilities, see ILO and UNDP (2009).
including the CEDAW and the annual World Economic Forum Gender Gap reports, have examined women’s economic situation in Chile and Argentina at intervals between 2000 and 2010. The 2009 Gender Gap Report calculated the female-to-male ratio of labour force participation at 0.57 for Chile and 0.70 for Argentina, on a scale of 0.00-1.50, (1.00 indicating gender equality). Using the same scale to measure what men and women earn for similar work, this report suggested that the income gaps in Chile and Argentina are among the widest in the Latin American region. On a female-to-male ratio, Chilean women sit well below the bar in terms of gender equality.172

The statistics for informal employment or unemployment are equally dismal. In Argentina, the 2005-8 ELA report on gender and human rights was based on a range of these statistical studies, including the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INDEC). In 2006, this study found 55.4 percent of Argentine women employed in the informal sector, characterised by poor working conditions and instability; that compared to 46 percent of the male population (Zibecchi, Gherardi, and Pautassi 2009, 132). The vast majority of unemployed and underemployed Argentines receiving subsidies from the state were single mothers (jefas de hogar): in 2006, 72 percent of the largest state subsidy programme, the Unemployed Female and Male Heads of Households Plan, went to women (170).173 While unemployment figures showed a marked improvement on the 2007 Gender Gap Index, the 2009 report recorded further evidence of gender differentials with higher percentages of the female population registered as unemployed in both countries.174

While these studies examined cases of women’s disadvantage at all levels of the labour market, they did not indicate that these inequalities were increasing in Chile and Argentina. However, all of these statistics confirmed an over-representation of women in inequitable circumstances, facing barriers that block their escape from poverty. If women face discriminatory conditions in relation to men within the labour force, as well as within the home, then we can safely predict that women are over-represented in circumstances that lead to poverty.

172 While the bar marking gender equality is set at 1.00, Chilean women scored 0.48 and Argentine women scored 0.57.
173 Plan Jefas y Jefes de Hogar Desocupados
174 The 2007 report stated unemployment figures at 8 percent for Chilean women and 7 percent for Chilean men; 15 percent for Argentine women and 16 percent for men for that year. The 2009 report showed that in Chile 6.96 percent of women were unemployed, which compares to 5.47 percent of men. In Argentina the same report showed that 11.63 percent of women and 7.79 percent of men were unemployed.
Conversely, studies have shown that there has been an increase in the numbers of women entering into either high quality professional employment or entrepreneurial activity in both countries. However, this process occurs at a slower rate relative to that of men, and these women reported facing continued “glass walls and ceilings in the private sector” (Women 2010, 20). Studies have recorded a reduction in unemployment and poverty overall, lower birth rates, and increased educational opportunities allowing a growing number of women to achieve a social status higher than that gained by their mothers or grandmothers independent of any paternal class privileges. Nevertheless, these socio-economic changes have not translated into the elimination of gender-based disparities and the potential contribution that this makes to women’s over-representation in poverty.

Bachelet enjoyed some success in improving gender parity and/or implementing positive discrimination measures within government and state institutions such as education and the armed Forces. Chile surged sixteen places in an overall country ranking from the 2009 to the 2010 Gender Gap Index. As this same report shows, however, Chile continues to suffer from “low levels of women’s labour participation,” with only a three point increase from the 2009 figures, in the female-to-male ratio, placing women at 0.60 (Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi 2010, 26). Although Argentina is better positioned by comparison, a five-point slip in the overall country rankings for 2010 is largely due to continuing low levels of women’s “economic participation, particularly labour force participation, wage gaps and participation of women in senior positions…” (ibid.).

Although she was unable to transcend structural barriers to rights-based labour reform during her mandate, Bachelet did introduce a new narrative that better appreciated human capital and recognised labour market inequities caused by a market-led economy. For example, she reinforced the need for “collective bargaining” practices (2005f, 7) and claimed that “if we want to be a developed country we have to invest in our people” (2005a, 13). In addition, Bachelet included in her campaign speeches the unacceptably high unemployment rates for women in the year 2004. According to her sources, the rate of unemployment for women in “the final trimester of 2004” was 10.4 percent, well above the overall “national rate [which] was 7.78 percent” (Bachelet 2005a, 9). Recognising the severity of gender gaps, she responded during her campaign with gender-framed economic pledges to equalise Chile’s labour market. Under the banner of “pro-women Labour Reforms” (2005a, 11), Bachelet

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175 Regarding lower birth rates in Chile, Teresa Valdélz asserts, “what we don’t know is if they are having fewer children because they work or whether they work because they are having fewer children” (quoted in Errázuriz L. 2009).
proposed that “anti-discriminatory measures” be added to “a code of conduct” in the public sector and that “labour reforms” facilitate “feminine employment” by incorporating measures to increase flexibility in the work place, for example, “part-time work and teleworking” (9).

There is no question that Bachelet’s pro-women labour reforms targeted women’s low labour participation rates. However, as these latter statements show, even rights-based political discourses can isolate women as a separate economic group in terms of their family role. These targeted discourses signified that women prefer or need the kind of work that complements their duties at home. This reveals underlying stereotypical presumptions about women’s accommodating role and appears to assign exclusive family care responsibilities to the “natural” (biological) pillar of the family. As such, little is done here to question the discrimination of women in the home. Work-life and family care responsibilities compete with each other, positioning these discourses within patriarchal role-based frames that undermine even the most progressive political efforts to improve women’s economic status. Constrained by cultural conservatism, caution, and the neoliberal state’s structural reliance on the unpaid reproductive labour, these role-based discourses fail to question the patriarchal structures underlying women’s economic oppression.

An example of criticism that references this roles/rights conflict emerged toward the end of Bachelet’s administration in 2009. In discussing the framing of labour reforms, Teresa Valdés criticised the “tension” that she observed between policies encouraging women to enter or return to the workforce and “the subtext we want to strengthen the family” (quoted in Errázuriz L. 2009, italics in original). Specifically, this statement was made in regard to the proposed rights-based legal reforms specifically targeting working women, such as extending the three-month pre-and-post-natal leave period to six months, and addressing gender salary gaps through a revision of the Labour Code.

Much of the feminist discourse that was lacking in criticisms of the Bachelet era (2006-10), re-emerged in opposition to President Piñera’s administration (2010-14). Critics have begun to categorise his use of role-based discourses as unsatisfactory (Fernández Ramil 2011). Opposition leader of the Partido Socialista Osvaldo Andrade, for example, argued that the Piñera administration’s “Teleworking bill,” targeting women’s participation in the workforce, “reinforces traditional roles, so that, at the cost of her health and extra burden, her roles as mother, spouse and worker, are made compatible…” (quoted in Pezoa Navarro 2011). In defining “feminine work” as part-time and flexible, this discursive process relegates working women to the bottom of the hierarchy, the very place where social attitudes toward
reproductive labour position women as “non-working.” This perfectly fits the neoliberal agenda of forcing labour costs downward to maximise profit.

In January 2011, a coalition of conservative and centre-left women leaders began to pressure the Piñera administration to keep its campaign pledge to enact legislation for six-month post-natal leave. Using a rights-based argument against the Piñera administration’s re-articulation of existing rights, including a discursive shift toward a six-month period of flexible hours, as opposed to the campaign promise of an integral six-month pre and post-natal period, Carolina Tohá stressed that “labour rights cannot be relativised” (quoted in Martínez and San Cristóbal 2011). Critics of this bill are located across opposition parties and feminist organisations. As the public debate continued in April 2011, Osvaldo Andrade argued that it “reduces currently existing rights (such as maternity or pre-natal leave), [and] advertises men’s co-responsibility in a misleading way because it does not propose effective mechanisms for this to be realised” (quoted in Pezoa Navarro 2011). Later in May 2011, PDC senator Ximena Rincón stated that she would be voting against two of the bill’s articles that “take rights away from women” and referred to potential losses for women in regard to maternity leave, breast-feeding, and child-care facilities (Senadora Rincón 2011).

Despite differing economic realities between Chile and Argentina, and Argentina’s superior record in regard to women’s participation in the labour force (see above), there was less expectation of Fernández than there was of Bachelet to challenge traditional views on the division of labour during her presidential candidacy. A close reading of the speeches selected for publication in her presidential campaign year reinforces the presumption that Fernández would not be introducing a right-based gender agenda in her campaign platform. For example, several speeches published in this collection reveal that throughout her successful 2005 campaign for national senator, Fernández attempted to establish common ground with her “gender companions” by referencing the emotional fall-out for women “when the men of the house… cannot find work… because men have been educated and trained to maintain the family” (2007d, 193). Even when stressing her party’s commitment to increasing work opportunities for women as well as men, Fernández chose a family frame that rises above “economic fact” and positions this labour policy as “the reconstruction of the family” (202). From the perspective of 2005, a few short years after the 2001 economic crisis, she imagined a recovered Argentina in which “men and women have work, kids can study, women can return to the home – if they wish – to look after their children” (214).

These discourses demonstrate that the uses of a role-based frame in the discussion of labour reforms designed to encourage women to enter the workforce have the potential to
retard rather than advance gender equality in labour participation. In terms of labour legislation and policy, women’s economic autonomy appears to be of secondary concern to their role in the home in these market-led political economies. Given that women in general are not commonly categorised as “groups of economic interest,” those women who are participating in the labour force continue to face gendered salary gaps and precarious definitions of “feminine work” that discriminate negatively against them. The level of disregard is higher still for unemployed women’s interests as well as for those working in informal sectors of the labour force because these women do not benefit from the legal protection afforded to those in formal employment (Zibecchi, Gherardi, and Pautassi 2009). While observers of the Fernández administration expressed their concern about a distinct lack of gender perspective in economic policy (Zibecchi, Gherardi, and Pautassi 2009), President Bachelet’s strong support for SERNAM, the government body responsible for ensuring that gender equality forms a part of all selection and policy-making processes across all “ministries and services” (Valdés 2010, 261), shielded her from this criticism. However, as discussed above, feminist organisations have become impatient and hyper-vigilant since the 2010 arrival of President Sebastian Piñera. They expect action on his promise to continue the pro-women social policies implemented under Bachelet (discussed in detail in Chapter Five).

FAMILY NOT FEMINIST: CASE STUDIES

I was never a feminist, I am feminine, and I think I have never looked at politics solely in terms of gender (Fernández de Kirchner 2007d, 351).

As I argued earlier, the implementation of a system of redistributive concessions, which generally manifest as social welfare policies aimed at socially and economically subalternised groups, was one of the main strategies for reducing the negative impact of neoliberal economic practices in the Southern Cone. Such policies have featured more prominently on the 2000-2010 political agendas than in any previous post-transition governments. Lagos used them to differentiate himself from the PDC (Blofield and Haas 2005, 45); however, they more obviously characterise Bachelet’s mandate. Her two key campaign slogans “Estoy...
“Contigo” (I’m with you) and “Bachelet Presidente, por Chile, por la Gente” (Bachelet President, for Chile, for the People), signalled a range of “inclusive” social programmes to come, and heralded the strategic use of role-based gender framing in which she would continue to locate her poverty alleviation policies.

Next door in Argentina, Fernández, following her successful “Cristina, Cobos y Vos” (“Cristina, Cobos and You”) campaign, pledged an inclusive programme to deepen an extensive system of “última generation” social welfare programmes (Zibecchi, Gherardi, and Pautassi 2009, 168), first implemented under Kirchner. Using discourses that made frequent reference to the state’s institutional “responsibility” to build a better life for “our children, for our grandparents, for our founding fathers (próceres), for those who gave their life without asking for anything, for all, for us…” (Fernández de Kirchner 2007b), Fernández located these redistributive policies within a framework of the nation working together and strengthening as a family.

Within this analysis of discursive strategies, a key finding emerged vis-à-vis the masking employed to limit the political cost of verbalising an explicit gender agenda. Specifically, it is clear that for a range of discourses, Bachelet and Fernández masked those parts of the overall economic agenda that might otherwise have openly recognised women’s rights. María de los Ángeles Fernández, speaking from the Chilean context, and Diana Maffía in the Argentine context, often commented on the risk of articulating a gender agenda, and the inhibitions that a fear of being labelled “feminist” creates for women politicians (Fernández Ramil 2007; Maffía 2009).

The next section of this chapter presents a selection of case studies from both Argentina and Chile that exemplify a strategic use of the family frame and role-based discourses. They range across social welfare policies that aim to help poor women escape economic oppression: housing, superannuation, and childcare.

Argentina: Sueños Compartidos (Shared Dreams)

As discussed in Chapter Three, this project was first established during the Kirchner era in Argentina and it has the Madres as its primary figure-head. For this reason, it makes sense that the Fernández administration’s continuation of state funding for the Sueños Compartidos programme would be justified in similar terms: not as a housing project but as “a socio-political project” providing relief to those who suffered the socio-economic fall-out from the
dictatorship era (Bonafini, quoted in Veiras 2011). The first series of projects began in Villa 15, a slum that first emerged in the 1930s in Buenos Aires. Since 1978, when the dictatorship erected a wall around the Villa 15 slum to block it from public view during the World Cup, it became known as Ciudad Oculta (Hidden City). The project centres on the construction of housing in slums but extends to the construction of other community buildings, such as nursery schools, dining-rooms, schoolrooms, and hospitals. Since the pilot project in Villa 15 began, Sueños Compartidos has been extended to other low socio-economic regions around Argentina. An interrelated aspect of the project includes the establishment of a panelling factory, literacy programmes, and professional training in trades such as sewing and construction.

Given that little of its public discourses address women as a group separate from the family, the structure and philosophy of this programme might be mistaken for a conventional male-oriented training scheme. However, a closer look at its day–to–day activities reveals that this socio-economic project is most certainly not adverse to the idea of enhancing gender relations, in particular, with respect to the historical division of labour in the family. Although poorly recognised in the public media, there is a conscious attempt to incorporate women into the workforce, as labourers, union members, and even union leaders. From a feminist perspective, the manner in which this programme self-defines is notable in that no gender distinctions are made between Sueños Compartidos labourers. In theory, the project provides certified training in housing construction for men and women, and those doing the same job are paid the same wage and receive the same benefits. The requirement that at least one member of the family be involved in the construction of a house in order for that family to live there does not impose any gender criteria (Iramain 2007).

*Argentina: Asignación Universal por Hijo (Universal Child Allowance)*

Created by Decree number 1602 in November 2009, the Asignación Universal por Hijo de la ANSES (AUH) provides a minimum allowance of $180 Argentine pesos (raised to $220 in 2010, approximately $56 US dollars) monthly for each child under eighteen, to the child’s guardian. In the literature, the definition of guardian includes “blood relatives up until third degree [kinship] (for example, a grandfather, an uncle, a brother older than 18)…” (ANSES).

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178 Although under a shadow recently (July 2011) because of corruption scandals relating to one of the managers, this programme continues to justify its existence as a human rights project as opposed to a government-funded company that overseas housing construction.
While this policy clearly states that it will give privilege to the mother of the child over any other guardian, the more important criterion for access to this subsidy is that this guardian is unemployed, or works in the informal sector (black market). Those in domestic service work are included. No age limit applies in the case of a disabled child for whom the state allocates $720 pesos (raised to $880 in 2010, approximately $215 US dollars). The subsidy is limited to a maximum of five children per guardian. The next most important requirement for this “cash transfer programme” is that the guardian must provide evidence that each child undergoes compulsory health checks, receives vaccinations, and regularly attends school. No distinction between the roles and responsibilities of men and women as heads-of-households is made; it is a gender neutral policy. Despite this, Fernández re-packaged it into a gender role-based frame.

One discursive example that reinforces Fernández’ traditional views on women and their role in the family is the 2011 announcement of this programme’s extension to pregnant women who carry beyond their first trimester. In her speech, Fernández clarified the requirement that mothers enrol in a national health care programme called Plan Nacer in order to receive the allowance. This is a World Bank-sponsored programme that supports the Millennium Development Goals, the primary stated objective of which is “to contribute to the reduction of the infant mortality and maternal mortality rate in the Borrower’s territory…” (Measham and Cortez 2009). Fernández positioned the extended coverage of the AUH allowance firmly within a “pro-life” frame by stressing the policy’s “strong commitment to life” and quoting maternal death-by-abortion figures (Fernández de Kirchner 2011b). Hence, Fernández drew attention to abortion as the cause of these maternal deaths, thereby masking the legal-cultural restrictions that force mostly poor women into clandestine, unsafe abortion practices (discussed in Chapter Five).

Given women’s over-representation in poverty in Argentina, and feminist criticism of the Fernández administration, it is surprising that the discourses framing poverty alleviation policies in Argentina do not capitalise more visibly on these steps being taken toward gender equality. However, the immediacy of Argentina’s economic concerns and the atomising effect that decades of neoliberalism had on families and communities help explain Fernández’

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180 Plan Nacer was created in 2004. After its initial implementation in northern Argentina, it was extended to the rest of the country in 2006. Fundamentally, Plan Nacer provides free medical care during pregnancy, birth, and the first six years of a child’s life. World Bank finance is results-based, making health care providers accountable for their performance in return for reimbursements and technical help.
pledges to defend, rebuild, and strengthen family-centred assistance programmes. Those most affected by poverty would understandably view the family as “a refuge.” Therefore, as opposed to challenging traditional family narratives with an explicit right-based agenda, this discursive behaviour suggests a hidden feminist rights-based agenda disguised as egalitarian role-based redistributive policy.

**Chile: Reforma Previsional (Pension Reform)**

This pro-equality reform of the privately managed national superannuation scheme was a tardy response to the increasingly contentious issue of income inequality in Chile. A 1981 reform embedded in Pinochet’s neoliberal experiment created a system wherein all dependent workers make compulsory contributions to a privately managed individual retirement plan. While international observers noted the benefits, other Latin American nations adopted a similar model. By 2005, however, more than a decade of investigative studies had shown that this system was in dire need of an overhaul (Arellano 1981; Arenas de Mesa and Montecinos 1999). During the campaign, Bachelet’s team reinforced the projections that these studies had been making since they began in the 1980s: one in every two pensioners would not be entitled to a basic state pension, due to failure to meet the minimum twenty-year requirement of salary contributions to the system (Andrés Velasco, quoted in Salinas 2005; Bachelet 2005f).

In the second presidential debate, Bachelet demonstrated that she was sensitive to the implications that this situation had for women, the majority of whom earn less than men. More importantly, they tend to spend long periods out of the workforce to meet family obligations. While Bachelet made this reform one of her key campaign promises, she did not associate it with women specifically. Instead, she directed these campaign pledges toward *all* Chileans, promising “better pensions to all… including housewives” (BCN 2005). Further, Bachelet’s team used Piñera’s and Lavín’s role-based pledges to “strengthen the family…” by creating a special superannuation scheme for “housewives” to criticise both of these candidates (BCN 2006). Her advisor at the time, Andrés Velasco, argued that they were not “serious,” saying that “they are proposing that the husbands pay part of their contributions to the housewife, when half of those who are registered today do not even have sufficient incomes or contributions to finance a basic superannuation for themselves” (quoted in Salinas 2005).
In 2007, while speaking retrospectively about her campaign discourse at the Tenth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Bachelet acknowledged her refusal to incorporate a “housewives’ pension” into her campaign platform. She justified her decision on the basis of not wanting to “lose credibility” by promising something that might not be financially feasible. Bachelet nevertheless announced in that speech that her government had authored a bill “to grant women a subsidy for every child born alive, equivalent to one year of contributions, as compensation for their leaving the labour market in order to care for children” (2007). In 2005, she had asserted that “the current system… discriminates against women” (2005a, 10). Further at the 2007 conference, Bachelet acknowledged “the deteriorated situation for women within the social security contribution systems” (Bachelet).

However, the “Bono por Hijo Nacido Vivo” or Allowance for a Child Born Alive which formed a key part of the 2008 Pension Reform bill is couched deeply in family frames so as to soften the challenge to conservative sectors of Chilean society. The title alone suggests that this subsidy centres on the child as opposed to the mother. The embedding of this rights-based proposition into a role-based framework recognises the possibility that any consequential reforms will only ever recognise the needs of women who perform a maternal role in the family. While exclusively directing a child allowance to mothers clearly recognises and values the fact that women generally bear the responsibility for care duties in the family, in no instance do these discourses address the underlying need for men and women to share that responsibility equally.181

Chile: Quiero Mi Barrio (I Love My Neighbourhood)

When I say that I want children in Chile to have opportunities, I am thinking about… a country that is transformed into a home (Bachelet, quoted in Browne 2005).

Beginning in January 2007, and administered by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (Ministerio de Vivienda y Urbanismo or MINVU), this programme provides first-home or home-renovation subsidies to families living on or below the poverty line, along with a few subsidies to middle class families to renovate historical trust homes. Although the umbrella

181 In June 2011, Chilean diputados voted in favour of extending this fund to women over 65 who had not yet benefited from this reform, that is, to those who had already retired before the reform came into effect on July 1, 2009.
term that Bachelet used to define the underlying ideology was “neighbourhood,” the building of “family homes” is fundamental to this project; therefore, the discourses surrounding it are embedded in the family frame. The houses are designed for families, with enough space to expand when the family grows. The programme emphasises the desirability of keeping the family together by encouraging them to build homes close to their community of origin. This aspect is linked to newer social housing policy, which distinguishes it from the projects led by Bachelet’s predecessors: the idea of “social integration” as a means to end “social segregation” (Bachelet 2005c). This refers to a system of “location subsidies” that rewards families who build outside of existing ghettos, in areas close to good public transportation, health, and education centres, and thus escape the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty.

On one level, Bachelet’s caring vocabulary expresses genuine concern for younger generations born into a well-defined system of poverty segregation. On a less obvious level, the family-values frame masks the withdrawal of the state from its social responsibility to provide adequate housing. This frame does nothing to challenge Chile’s neoliberal economic model, which increased wealth inequality. While initial assistance subsidies may be provided by the Chilean state, this policy reinforces the neoliberal logic that returns final responsibility for the well-being of these families to the community. In this case, a conservative role-based discourse of strengthening and caring for the well-being of the community masks both the state’s weak contribution to the alleviation of poverty, and its cause: state policies. Specifically, role-based frames prevent this from becoming a strategic rights-based social programme that could have better recognised the specific burdens borne by women in poor communities.

Chile Crece Contigo (Chile Grows with You)

This extension of the Chile Solidario programme explicitly targets young children in the lowest income bracket. It is framed by a discourse of equal opportunities for Chileans from the moment they are born. Despite this child-centred rhetoric, one of this social policy’s underlying goals is returning poor mothers to the workforce: World Bank analyses show lower rates of labour force participation among Chilean “women in the lowest income quintile…,” (27%), than “women in the highest quintile…,” (57%) (Women 2010). In
addition to the promise of building additional preschool facilities,\(^{182}\) Bachelet’s campaign pledges extended to the provision of “health subsidies, legal assistance, the prevention of interfamily violence and other public interventions…” (Bachelet 2005c). In a retrospective 2011 examination, it appears that much of this campaign discourse was indeed written into government policy and passed into law in September 2009; thus, its stability is largely guaranteed.

According to the Crece Contigo web-pages, this programme provides a state subsidy to mothers in 40 percent of Chile’s lowest-income households. It is paid from pregnancy until the child reaches three years of age, at which point the child is guaranteed free access to a preschool education centre (Government of Chile). The provision of this subsidy to “mothers” is relevant to a gender-based study of these official discourses because in their approach to maldistribution and poverty alleviation in general, these policies rely on patriarchally-defined gender codes (misrecognition). In consideration of intra-household inequalities within two parent households, the targeting of poor mothers as opposed to poor fathers in the matter of childcare benefits can be statistically justified. Nevertheless, the emphasis that these discourses place on mothers in poor communities, suggests a causal link is being drawn between child poverty and the increasing numbers of unemployed, single mothers, living in low socio-economic communities.\(^{183}\) In addition, providing subsidies is not enough. Critical assessments of the umbrella programme in June 2009, argued that Chile Solidario subsidies were not meeting the employment needs so essential to escaping poverty (Borzutsky 2009; Sehnbruch 2009). As long as this programme is ineffectual in reducing the barriers to labour participation that poor women in Chile face, mothers in the lowest socio-economic communities are unlikely to find childcare assistance funding an empowering tool.

In regard to childcare, Bachelet stated in a public document announcing her plan for the first one hundred days, that she would “send a bill to grant the children of every working mother the right to day-care” (2005e).\(^{184}\) In an interview, Bachelet defined this as a

\(^{182}\) Childcare facilities “increased from seven hundred to more than four thousand” during her four year mandate (Politzer 2010).

\(^{183}\) Feminist debate has challenged the extrapolation of “women’s disadvantage to women headed households” (Chant 2003a). The increase in women heads of households does not necessarily indicate a socio-economic crisis. Instead, it is indicative of social change and household diversity. In many cases women’s lives improve, if not monetarily, then at least physiologically. It is commonly assumed that the absent male provider accentuates poverty for a mother in lower-working class families but the diversity of women-headed households makes it impossible to generalise in this way. For example, feminist debate has argued that women can suffer from “secondary poverty” within a male-headed household, due to “intra-household inequalities in resource allocation” (Chant 2003a).

\(^{184}\) In Spanish, “Enviaré un proyecto de ley para otorgar derecho de sala cuna a los hijos de toda madre trabajadora.”
programme that aimed to make childcare facilities available to “all working mothers” (quoted in Correa 2006). There are three significant points of interest to a gender analysis of these frames. The first is that in terms of rights, these campaign discourses emphasised the rights of the child. Second, this policy clearly targeted women rather than men and made broad assumptions about the distribution of childcare responsibilities within two parent families, evidenced primarily in the fact that these discourses did not interpellate “working fathers.” Finally, the offer of equal access to free childcare to “all working mothers” removes the class barriers that typically restrict access to social welfare policies. In other words, the gender dimension of this policy statement extends to middle-class and professional women. In this final respect, these discourses approximate a rights-based provision even though they achieve this without drawing direct attention to the protection of women’s rights per se.

The state’s provision of free child care is likely to be effective among middle classes, wherein access to higher education gives women greater opportunity for social mobility. Professional women are in a better position to choose whether to work or to stay at home. As head-hunter Carla Fuenzalida argued, many professional women “feel that our work is optional, that we work because we want to and for our personal satisfaction… and that we can leave it at any time” (2005). It is here that such a policy could effectively empower mothers to either return to or enter the workforce. Discussing the relevance of Bachelet’s childcare policies to middle-class women in an interview in 2009, Teresa Valdés argued that it was a social demand in this sector for a “second income” that was urging an increasing number of Chilean mothers to enter the workforce. Valdés attributes Chile’s comparatively low female labour participation rate to the fact that middle-class women choose to opt out of the workforce after calculating “very clearly whether or not it is advisable to work in relation to the alternative cost of childcare” (quoted in Errázuriz L. 2009). Before the Crece Contigo policy reform, Valdés argues, the cost of paying for childcare “was one of the principal blocks” to women entering the workforce (ibid.).

Speaking before an international pro-women’s rights audience in 2007, Bachelet used the Crece Contigo policy to exemplify “the feminine perspective” of her administration’s public agenda (Bachelet 2007). Albeit a premeditated decision to avoid language that might provoke a backlash among conservative Chileans, the reappropriation of a term as patriarchal as “feminine” in place of the term “feminist” in her discussion of her administration’s approach to social disparity before a feminist-friendly audience is significant. Beyond the social provision of child-poverty alleviation, the Crece Contigo policy is largely informed by feminist research into the wide range of gender disparities that present themselves as barriers
to women’s participation in the formal labour market. It recognises phenomena that these feminist studies have revealed such as reproductive labour and the double shift. However, while this policy goes a long way toward providing middle-class mothers with greater opportunities to choose between working or staying at home to care for their children, the discourses surrounding it assign primary childcare responsibilities to mothers and do little to encourage fathers to share reproductive labour tasks in the home.

CONCLUSION

In order to differentiate their candidacies from masculine neoliberal experts and to distance themselves from the discredited neoliberal fallacy of the level playing field produced by the withdrawal of the state from its social responsibility to protect citizen’s basic rights, both of these presidential candidates pledged to take the state in a new “feminine” direction that would offer a more profound politics of “care” and “inclusiveness.” To do this, they used role-based discourses that strategically reappropriated the collective action frames introduced in Chapter Three – the defence of life, the family, and elder and child care. Role-based discourses were successful in the campaign: they portrayed Bachelet and Fernández as agents of economic change; they strategically interpellated women; and their male counterparts could be accused of “travestismo.” In addition, they were successful in getting policies that targeted women’s – especially mothers’ – practical needs in childcare and housing through Congress.

However, the down side was that in capitalising on “the gender factor,” their feminine performance was exposed to judgement on those same gendered grounds, resulting in accusations of their acting in “deviant” and “dangerous” ways (see “Mosciaatti”, Chapter Four). In addition, I describe this role-based discourse as a masking performance because it glossed over the fact that they were not advocating structural change in neoliberal or patriarchal constructions of women’s “natural” place in the home. These pledges did not deviate in any significant way from neoliberalism’s reliance on patriarchal normative gender constructs that limit women’s primary role to caring for the family and others. In Chile, these discourses masked the neoliberal state’s weak contribution to poverty alleviation. As I outline in the section on the feminisation of poverty, women were most disadvantaged by these models. I posit that these role-based frames had particularly negative consequences for poor women. Even though women’s traditional roles were politicised and resignified as ideals of democracy – the continuation of life, strengthening the community, and well-being – I
believe that they contribute toward a historical denial to women of their individual rights to economic autonomy. Role-based frames prevented the policies sampled in this chapter from becoming strategic rights-based social programmes that could better recognise the specific burdens borne by women in poor communities.

In conclusion, I posit two interrelated points: 1) that there was very little room for movement in the area of economic policy. To be successful, these policies had to be couched in role-based frames, a strategy which made salient the candidates’ reluctance to challenge the more conservative elite sectors of these two societies; and, 2) this discursive behaviour suggests a hidden rights-based agenda disguised as egalitarian role-based redistributive policy. As a result of this silent contract, any discussion of equality is limited to themes that have already gained wide consensus, and the models stay the same.

In my next chapter, I focus on feminist agendas that explicitly defend women’s individual rights as citizens. While Bachelet and Fernández did respond to some feminist demands by addressing women’s “practical interests,” my analysis demonstrates that they avoided one of the more controversial demands: women’s corporal right to full autonomy over their bodies and life projects.
CHAPTER V
FEMINIST POLICY CLAIMS

Argentine feminist, academic, and diputada for the City of Buenos Aires (2007-11), Diana Maffía, once defined the key difference between a gender agenda and the feminist agenda to which she aspires: the former “deals principally with inequality between men and women, endeavouring to have the State intervene in comprehensive yet specific public policies to the promotion of equality” (2010, 185). In contrast, a feminist agenda, recognises the naturalisation of multiple intersecting forms of oppression, which are materially supported through bodies, and [this agenda] is present across diverse political systems, where it denounces the patriarchal root of western democracy – which is sexist, and also racist, classist, heterosexist and adult-centric (ibid.).

The first of these two different agendas utilises the role-based discourse frames discussed in Chapter Four. By this definition, role-based discourses denote “practical gender interests,” and they tend to subordinate women’s “specific interests to the broader goals” (Molyneux 1985, 229-233), such as the social welfare of the family. In times of crisis, such as Argentina’s economic crisis, for example, women’s gender-based demands are subsumed by broader class-based demands in order to respond to immediate universal goals for social justice. Role-based discourses, then, promote policies located within a gender agenda, and by the displacement of ethically complex themes, such as sexual and reproductive rights, these frames soften the threat that “equality” may present to economic and political elites. Strategically, a moderate equality programme that does not agitate the status quo is more likely to gain broad political consensus. Conversely, a feminist agenda, even the mere use of the feminist label, consciously utilises rights-based discourse frames. Ideally, these frames take full account of practical gender interests – economic, political, and cultural – but they also recognise the “specificity of women’s oppression” (239). We may expect economic and political elites to react negatively to feminist discourses, as they are deliberately provocative and aim to be transformational. Molyneux argued that rousing a feminist consciousness among women who have surrendered their specific needs to a broader universal struggle for
social justice “constitutes a central aspect of feminist political practice” (1985, 234). By virtue of their strategic emancipatory goals – liberating women from their subordination within the sexual division of labour, breaking fabricated dichotomies that separate “non-political” from “political” spaces, and unmasking discursive fictions that pit the life of “the unborn child” against that of the mother – these discourses threaten hegemonic power.

In Latin America, feminist discourses threaten class-based economic privileges. In particular, they threaten the religious hierarchy whose own class-based privileges are at stake – such as the power balance held by the Church hierarchy over their traditional support base: women. Given that much of the Church hierarchy’s support is based in the popular classes, conservative political actors have found religious messages and frames to be the most successful means of recruiting voters.

In Chile, the ultra-conservative right-wing candidate Joaquín Lavín (UDI), a member of the Catholic Church’s most controversial sect Opus Dei,\(^{185}\) garnered a significant proportion of votes from popular-class women during his presidential bid against Lagos in the 2000 run-off election.\(^{186}\) He polled strongly again in this sector when he ran against Piñera, Bachelet, and Tomás Hirsch, in the first round of the 2005 elections. Numerous political analysts have suggested that Lavín’s “anti-politics” discourses resonated with his electorate (Luna 2010; Ríos Tobar 2008). I suggest that Lavín’s religious posture played a major role in framing this identity as non-political. Similarly, it has been well-documented that Menem enjoyed a mutually supportive relationship with the Opus Dei in Argentina throughout his decade in office in the 1990s (Wornat 2002). During his second and third presidential campaigns in 1995 and 1999, respectively, as criticism of his neoliberal economic policies from various sectors of Argentine society grew, including Catholic leaders (Wornat 2002), Menem turned to religious frames such as the “right to life from conception” and he instituted the “Day of the Unborn Child” to win the Vatican’s favour.\(^{187}\)

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\(^{185}\) Opus Dei’s close ties to the modern political world developed under the Franco dictatorship in Spain. Later this derivation of the Catholic Church was strongly promoted under the Southern Cone dictatorships, and developed an important connection with neoliberal economies around the world. Given its hegemonic presence within the fascist regimes in Spain, Chile, and Argentina, the privileged status it enjoys among political and business elites around the world, its connection to neoliberalism and specifically, to Menem’s neoliberal government in Argentina, and its sexist organisational design, many intellectuals have criticised Opus Dei’s teachings, as in Argentine historian Emilio Corbière’s “Catholic Totalitarianism” (2002) and writings by Spanish intellectual Alberto Moncada, an ex-member of Opus Dei.

\(^{186}\) In the 2000 run-off elections Lagos garnered more men’s votes (54.3%) than women’s (48.7%). In contrast, Lavin won 51.4 percent of the women’s and 45.7 percent of the men’s vote (Power 2002, 262). Also see note 148.

\(^{187}\) This institution remained in place under the De la Rúa administration and the Duhalde administration.
Interchangeably criticised as a “neopopulist” and a “neoliberal populist” (Weyland 2003), Menem carefully manipulated the media to create his “man of the people” image and present himself as a “political outsider” who struggled to the top but kept his religious faith. This ensured that, in parallel to Lavín’s bi-class electoral base (upper and lower classes) in Chile, Menem enjoyed disproportionate support among the poorest segments of the population and the middle-classes. Furthermore, Opus Dei both rewards and punishes; so the popular classes might have been both materially and spiritually rewarded for supporting Opus Dei leaders and punished for working against them. In a context of few or no labour protections, this could be a logical choice regardless of the amount of education one has.

Despite their lack of economic power, the unemployed and underemployed social sectors are an important group at election time. As a body of voters, the popular classes constitute a significant proportion of the population, according to Juan Pablo Luna’s analysis of the political strategies deployed by Chile’s UDI party (2010). UDI needed to maintain a healthy relationship with its “core constituency” of powerful business and religious elites because these hegemonic groups provided the party with its key “ideological and financial resources” (329). However, as these powerful – but small – groups do “not provide enough votes to turn the party into an electorally viable one, a special problem for conservative parties…,” it was necessary “to make significant electoral inroads into noncore constituencies,” namely, the popular sectors (ibid.). Luna suggests therefore that UDI has historically deployed a dual system of segmented campaign strategies, which helps to explain this elite conservative party’s electoral success among popular sectors of the Chilean population (2010). This relationship between political representatives and the poor masses is thus an important aspect of Southern Cone electoral politics. In turn, the essential role that religious frames play in this relationship makes political candidates less willing to advocate any feminist demands that go against Church doctrine, particularly at election time.

In a related point, scholars have shown that gaining political consensus in Latin America on polemical ethically-charged topics such as emergency contraception and the planned termination of pregnancy is a slow, long-term process, which requires carefully-planned discursive strategies and a high degree of compromise (Blofield 2010; Franceschet 2010; Molyneux 1985). Modifying laws that have such deep cultural roots requires much more than the will and determination of the executive and the politicians. This kind of policy change also requires the explicit support of a participatory and mobilised civic society. In theory, this consensus requirement defines an ideal participatory democratic political system. In practice, cultural change has shown to be a slow and tortuous process. In the Southern
Cone’s long national history, this consensus requirement has created the conditions for another important campaign strategy, commonly known as “dar la cara” (to show up). This strategy’s primary goal is to personalise the campaign. Political candidates visit shantytowns or attend local events in order to appear “in touch” with an economically marginalised sector and win this community’s respect.

In the late 1990s, Chile’s UDI party strategically sent young students from privileged Catholic universities to live for a few months with families in the shantytowns, to “see how poor people live in Chile and… understand the problems” (José Jara, quoted in Luna 2010, 350). In Argentina, Menem used a campaign bus, the “Menemóvil” – originally a converted rubbish truck – to circulate the in shantytowns, suburban peripheries, and football stadiums to reinforce his connection to the masses (Weyland 2003; Sarlo 1994). This strategy has its critics, who consider it a “populist” form of manipulation. Despite negative perceptions, this strategic demonstration of cross-class unity has been proven an effective way for powerful elite actors to build relationships and garner support at the popular base.

Southern Cone feminist activists – feminist NGOs in particular – are not often associated with this manipulative strategy. Although annual national and regional Encuentros Feministas (feminist conventions) have enjoyed increased participation from popular class and ethnically marginalised women, the objective of these Encuentros has never been to reach a homogeneous ideological consensus “among women.” On the contrary, the events’ organising committees advertise them as an open space for participatory debate from “the contradictory and different positions” of women (Alma and Lorenzo 2009, 39). Further, a growing number of interventions and attacks organised by Church hierarchies have reframed the plural spirit proposed for these events as one “of confrontation” (Carbajal 2003). Given Southern Cone feminism’s fractured state, organisations have been challenged to mobilise the popular classes. Still today, feminism in Latin America tends to be negatively associated with elite intellectualism and state, as well as foreign manipulation.188 Understood within this context, most feminist policies are contested due to their advocates’ perceived elite/middle-class status and the abstract out-of-touch stigma that is attached to it.

Because the campaign context is a determining factor in discursive decisions, most feminist analyses of women candidates’ presidential election campaigns stress the importance of broader ideological contexts. In discussing the 2007 Argentine presidential elections, for

188 As my historical review demonstrated (Chapter Two), internal tensions intensified after the political parties began to recruit feminist leaders and NGOs to head or manage projects of priority to the emerging democratic governments. For example, Georgina Waylen (2000) has highlighted the potential for clientelism between feminist NGOs and SERNAM in Chile.
example, Dora Barrancos suggested that “the loss of hegemony of the traditional political parties” yielded an overall sense of “dispassion” for politics that blunted reactions and created “a certain porosity” through which the appearance of three women presidential candidates, Fernández, Carrió, and Vilma Ibarra could pass as natural (“¿Cómo sucedió?” 2007). In Chile, the context surrounding two women pre-candidates, Bachelet and Alvear, has been described similarly, as a “crisis of [male] representation” that gave way to a shift in public perceptions of women candidates (Ríos Tobar 2008; Vera 2009). Correspondingly, I have also suggested that the discourse strategies used by Bachelet and Fernández to articulate “feminine” models of leadership drew on historical gender paradigms that responded to these unique ideological contexts. First, in Chapter Three, I pointed to a rich vocabulary created by a maternal legacy of strong women who, while fighting against past horrific events, continued to have an impact in the present and with whom these two presidential candidates could successfully claim kinship authority. Second, in Chapter Four, I demonstrated how these two presidential figures couched gendered aspects of their poverty alleviation policies in role-based frames, a strategy which made salient their reluctance to self-identify with back-grounded ideologies of the 1960s and 1970s such as socialism, communism, and especially feminism.\footnote{Despite the fact that Bachelet is a member of the PS, the Concertación government that she led self-identified as “progressive” and “centre left.” In 2010, Bachelet clarified her personal political ideology in an interview: “I have the same desires for justice and solidarity that I have always had but understanding that the world has changed...The words that I like to use are those that really can include. That’s why we have always said that the Concertación is centre-left; of people a little more to the left, more moderate, but all wanting something in common.” (Fernández 2010).} However, while I fully support the idea that these broad ideological shifts help us to understand why there were no knee-jerk reactions to the fact that these two candidates were women, and while I can see that it makes sense that the first few women to successfully bid for the presidency in the Southern Cone would try to mask rights-based agendas in their electoral campaigns, I believe these discursive decisions require greater scrutiny.

Role-based frames present a historical paradox: “the exclusion of the political subject ‘women’ and the inclusion of the symbolism of ‘the feminine’” (Vera 2009, 116). This discursive decision suggests that male candidates are assumed to represent a universal political subject (“everyone”), and women candidates will represent only a sector of society (“women”), not the whole. In competing for “masculine success,” Bachelet and Fernández had to negotiate a gendered double bind: the need to persuade a majority of the voters that they were both “competent” (strong universally representative leaders) and “feminine”
(caring, inclusive, different, and new). In examining how they were discursively constructed in their campaigns, it appears that these obstacles were addressed by emphasising their “female citizen” role and minimising the political implications of their election on “women’s rights as citizens.”

Considering the historical construction of the political world as a “masculine pursuit” (Trimble 2009), this is tough ideological terrain for women to negotiate. However, gender ideologies do not operate in isolation. In Argentina, Fernández faced a range of challenges. Gender-based attacks exacerbated the already difficult task of managing Argentina’s post-2001 economic recovery. In contrast to her second 2011 presidential campaign, Fernández’ first campaign was dogged by criticism of her marriage to Kirchner. Apart from having to negotiate a damaging “wife of” syndrome, further aggravated by that of “el dedo de Kirchner,” she also faced accusations that she and Kirchner were plotting a tandem dynastic rule. These contextual conditions rationalise Fernández’ ambiguity vis-à-vis feminism. The last thing Fernández needed was to provoke the religious-based attacks that Argentine feminists had experienced during their annual national Encuentros. In Chile, Bachelet’s self-identification as agnostic provoked a flurry of religious questions and reactions from the Church. Despite this excitement, Bachelet won a proportion of Lavin’s religiously conservative popular feminine vote in the run-off election. Considering that a usage of explicitly religious frames would appear contradictory to her practices, I believe that she garnered support from this sector through the deployment of traditional gender discourses that successfully competed with the Church’s discourse on the ethic of care: “She presented herself as a candidate closer to the people, one who could connect and listen to citizen’s demands… [and] she convincingly claimed to be an ‘outsider’…” (Ríos Tobar 2008, 514). These complex conditions of negotiation restricted the degree to which Bachelet could advocate for a feminist agenda.

Initially, it seems paradoxical that these women candidates assumed a narrowly defined range of “feminine” or “role-based” discourses in order to symbolically claim representation of the universal citizenry. In examining these gendered performances more

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190 The possibility that the conservative voters who shifted toward Bachelet may have risen above their own conservatism in order to support the candidate who provided the most relevant message works in contrary to my earlier argument regarding the Church’s influence in popular sectors. This counter-argument might suggest that a number of these voters were not so easily manipulated by populist propositions and religious frames. I however, support Tobar’s argument that a traditional gender frame worked in Bachelet’s favour among this particular sector of the voting population for whom “gender identification took priority over traditional ideological preferences: ‘Vota mujer’ (‘vote woman’) took hold of the Chilean female imagination” (2008, 518).
closely within the context of polemical and ethically-charged debates over emergency contraception and the planned termination of pregnancy, additional ideological battles are revealed that help us to understand this paradox. The Bachelet and Fernández debate positions reveal the degree to which patriarchal gender and religious ideologies competed to retain their historical hegemonic power over women. The political implications of Bachelet’s and Fernández’ potential presidency generated the conditions for an all-out ideological battle. Within this framework, the main driving force working against full gender equality stemmed from fears among economic, religious, and political hierarchies over the potential loss of economic power and political control. In policy areas where Argentine and Chilean societies clearly divide, debates over emergency contraception, and especially the planned termination of pregnancy highlight this tension. Further threatened by a global context of increasing secularisation, and amidst the emergence of the first highly publicised historical scandals of sexual misconduct and other abuse by priests and other church officials, on-going battles over these matters suggest that the last bastion of hegemony for Church hierarchies, in particular, is in their legal control over women’s bodies and life choices.

As discussed in Chapter Four, some believe a major difficulty with “feminine” role-based discourses is that they slow the process of change toward gender equality before the law (Blofield and Haas 2005; Pickup 2001). In this chapter, I apply this argument specifically to the case of “women’s self-determination over their bodies and sexual lives” (Roe v. Wade 2003). Within the broader context of sexual and reproductive rights, “abortion” is highly divisive, ethically complicated, and ambiguous. The language around the issue has polarised discussion because of the dominant terminology imposed by hegemonic groups; the dominant usage of “abortion” instead of “planned termination of pregnancy” or “voluntary interruption” is a case in point. In addition, the “right to life” movement’s development of terminology such as the “unborn child” instead of the foetus has reframed the debate. For religious fundamentalists, abortion and by extension the use of all contraceptive devices equates to “murder.” These ideological arguments have created a culture of ambiguous “double discourses” that prevent an open and honest discussion of a clandestine reality (Shepard 2000; Shepard and Casas Becerra 2007).

As the Argentine 2004 campaign slogan “I aborted” indicates, however, Latin American feminist activists have reappropriated this term (Carbajal 2005). The intent of this

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191 While I am very aware of the polemical effect that this may have on some readers, I have chosen to use the terms “abortion” and “planned termination of pregnancy” interchangeably. First, this decision is based on practicality and second, I believe that such reactions indicate a process of change and a site of struggle that should not be silenced.
and other pro-choice campaigns is to break the silence and to overcome the ideological obstacles to legitimate public debate. As most feminists argue, abortion is a reality in Argentina and Chile, affecting “women from all social backgrounds, ages, educational levels, sexual orientations and religious beliefs” (“Women’s Historic Demand” 2011). Instead of acting as a deterrent, the punitive anti-abortion laws that criminalise women and medical practitioners under any circumstances (Chile), and those that provide highly limited and ambiguous legal exceptions to what is otherwise categorised as a criminal act (Argentina), impose harsh “social injustice” against women as citizens (ibid.). Women who autonomously terminate a pregnancy are condemned to conditions of social stigmatisation and fear of legal prosecution (ibid.). These realistic fears of legal and social retribution endanger women’s health.

In the election periods analysed, other interrelated feminist-led debates such as gender parity, gender-based violence, and gender discrimination in the workplace received varying degrees of state-level attention. The parity debate, for example, was of significance in Bachelet’s candidacy. However, the electoral climate in Chile is not comparable with that in Argentina, where 30 percent gender parity was established by law in 1991. The leap to full gender parity joined a long list of non-issues during the Fernández campaign period.

By contrast, the abortion debate is of comparable cultural, social, and political significance to both societies. I have selected the abortion debate for in-depth critical discourse analysis because this is an area where Bachelet and Fernández differed most in their respective presidential campaigns and administrations. Bachelet’s sensitivity for women’s rights activism empowered and enabled her to implement practical changes that improved women’s material conditions, and while she explicitly defended gender parity and gave priority status to defence of the free distribution of the morning-after pill, a formal political discussion of “Legal, Free and Safe Abortion” is still pending in Chile. Next door, Fernández’ ambiguous position regarding reproductive and sexual rights resulted in her failure to fully address the legal, cultural, social, and political discrimination of Argentine women as citizens. Despite signing important legislation to improve women’s socio-economic condition, Fernández’ discourses ignored the strengthening voice of feminist actors, silenced a growing debate in favour of decriminalising abortion, and wiped the strategic defence of women’s rights from the political agenda. Critically, an escalating abortion debate was deleted from the official political agenda after Fernández’ election in 2007; it did not fully regain the ground it had achieved until 2010.
This analysis has revealed stark Bachelet-Fernández contrasts, differences indicative of diverse cultural, political, and especially economic contexts. In addition, the contrasts point to their differing individual commitments and political trajectories. In these political discourses, the contrasting extent to which they have related to the Southern Cone’s long history of women’s and feminist movements is revealed.

Returning to Maffía’s distinction of a feminist agenda from a gender agenda, I argue that neither of these presidents achieved the first. Legal discourse in Chile and to a slightly lesser degree in Argentina, continue to abuse women’s corporal rights by subordinating abortion laws to powerful Church doctrine on family life. Further, neither was able to free up a discursive space from which to contest the Church’s hegemonic power over women’s bodies and sexual lives. Ultimately, Bachelet was restricted to speaking from a traditional position of gender solidarity “with women,” as opposed to speaking strategically “from [the position of] women” (Alma and Lorenzo 2009, 174). Fernández’ disengagement with feminist activities propelled her into a completely different discursive space.

Fernández’ formulaic approach to improving women’s living conditions masked a high level of performance anxiety in complex debates. Although her discourse reveals a strategic attempt to forge gender bonds “with women,” she used moral claims to being “feminine” and not “feminist” to disguise the difficulty of positioning herself on abortion and other divisive issues. These comparative levels of identification and dialogue with the Southern Cone’s strong feminist cultural tradition played a relevant role in the distinctive discursive pathways taken.

FEMINIST DEBATES

Before examining these presidential candidates’ positioning of themselves in relation to the controversial abortion debate, it is useful to remember that ultimately, the open advocacy of a feminist agenda was strongly discouraged within both Chilean and Argentine political culture. In addition to this context, it is also important to note that a gender agenda fared only slightly better. Increasingly, research on gender and politics concludes that higher ratios of women office holders do not necessarily translate into the substantive representation of marginalised sectors, women in particular (Fernández Ramil 2007; Ponsowy and Niebieskikwiat 2009). Further, comparative studies demonstrate that despite “evidence of a rising tide of support for gender equality in over seventy societies around the world,” structural, institutional – and
especially cultural – barriers work together to slow the pace of change (Ingelhart and Norris 2003, 10).

Cultural barriers of particular relevance include Catholicism and its fundamentalist son, Opus Dei, which, as discussed previously, continue to influence policy-making decisions in both Argentina and Chile. This is particularly evident in legislative debates concerning gender roles and sexual health. During the 2009 Chamber of Diputados debates on a bill liberalising access to the morning-after pill, legislators frequently positioned themselves in relation to God. Sergio Ojeda, for example, who voted in favour of this bill, asserted, “We are not pro-abortion, nor are we criminals, we are pro-life. We are not against God. We are with God and I am sure that God put me here together with the people to legislate in their favour.” For this reason, the appearance of phrases such as “God wants” and “God commands” is not unusual in these debates. Nor is it perceived as unusual for legislators to read from the Bible and for religious representatives to join the commissions that discuss legislation. Despite the mitigating effects that gradual modernisation and secularisation have had on the values of younger Chileans and Argentines, conservative cultural values rooted in Catholicism and promoted by the elite sectors continue to act as barriers to women’s autonomy over their bodies and to their securing legal status as citizens with equal rights as men.

Conservative cultural attitudes toward gender equality have meant that in terms of institutional funding, staffing, and status, attempts to address the gender agenda have had to continuously fight against irrelevance, and at its extreme, the perception of illegitimacy. Such agenda initiatives are generally relegated to “women’s ministries”: for example, SERNAM in Chile and the Ministry of Social Development in Argentina, where they may be overshadowed by policy initiatives from the more “prestigious” or the more “serious” ministries (Phillips 2001; Piscopo 2010).

Maffía was particularly critical of this situation in Argentina. In 2004, after Fernández, Chiche, and Olga Ruitort, had vocally participated in an internal party dispute, Argentine cabinet chief Aníbal Fernández disparagingly used the metaphor of the “alta peluquería” (high-class hairdressing salon) to portray a political space wherein women engaged in banal gossip and slinging matches. Referencing this derogatory comment, Maffía also criticised the banality that Cristina Fernández and other politicians ascribe to a gender-sensitive agenda: “Cristina does not even want to hear talk of the women’s agenda because she agrees with

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many politicians in that these are minor insignificant questions, over which it’s not worth getting distracted” (quoted in Entrevista 2008).

In contrast to Chile, women’s political participation has been widely debated in Argentina; however, this would not have been a priority for Fernández’ first presidential campaign in 2007. Correspondingly, full gender parity formed no part of Fernández’ political agenda. As discussed earlier, Argentina has legislated candidate election quotas to the Senate, the Chamber of Diputados, and to positions at the sub-national level. As numerous studies have shown, this law had a rapid and significant effect on “the gender configuration of political representation” in Argentina (Archenti and Tula 2009, 2). In the 2009 parliamentary elections, women gained 39 percent of the Chamber of Diputados seats and 35 percent of the Senate seats. In adopting electoral quota laws, Argentina and Costa Rica became regional leaders in numbers of women in parliament in 2010 (with 38.5% and 38.6%, respectively). Comparing these figures to Chile’s 14.2 percent, it is clear that Argentina’s electoral law has resulted in a healthy electoral climate for women candidates.193

However, women’s rights’ groups have at least two good reasons to maintain their vigilance. The first concern, as Dora Barrancos expressed it, refers to the size of this quota: “Why should it have to be 30 percent, if we are half or more of the electorate?” (quoted in Di Marco 2009). The second concern points to the inconsistent implementation of this law since its inception. A range of gender-based studies of the implementation of the quota law in sub-national elections conclusively demonstrate that “the resistance of parties to open political spaces for women persisted even under law” (Archenti and Tula 2009, 3).

In my interview with Dora Barrancos in 2009, a third concern arose: “Argentina had seen a great performance by women in the political arena but wasn’t willing to recognise the attributes of women, in full, to the same degree as men” (Barrancos 2009). Fernández’ election may have, as Barrancos claimed, disrupted this historical neglect and allowed for these “feminine attributes” to be recognised in the “act of leading the country” (2009). However, to what degree does Fernández’ “feminine” performance respond to immediate “practical interests,” relative to the degree that this role-based discourse masks her unwillingness to address women’s “specific interests”? Clearly, addressing the immediate concrete needs of women under a “gender agenda” is not the same as addressing patriarchal gender and fundamentalist religious ideologies that oppress women.

In Chile, religious fundamentalists such as Opus Dei, conservative right-wing elites within the UDI and the RN parties, and conservative members of the PDC are aligned to a powerful, deeply embedded neoliberal culture that creates a significant impediment to gender equality. Critics describe it as a “trade off between efficiency and equity goals” (Kubal 2006, 106). For example, the bulk of the social services portfolios, such as education, health, and housing, within which gender demands are likely to arise, was shifted to domestic family-based civic organisations under neoliberal decentralisation efforts (Kubal 2006). The “soft” gender equality issue with its tension between a neoliberal efficiency demand and a democratic equity imperative failed to gain traction on Bachelet’s campaign platform in competition with masculinised economic and security public policy issues.

Of further use to a better understanding of the gendered campaign strategies of these two remarkable women candidates, is an examination and analysis of the ways in which they positioned themselves discursively with regard to the most salient feminist debate of the twenty-first century: the abortion debate.195

THE ABORTION DEBATE

In my Programa de Gobierno [platform] there is no abortion… As a doctor, I support the contraceptive programmes, among which there is the morning-after pill, because I am convinced that it is not abortive (Bachelet, quoted in Correa 2005).

While Bachelet and her campaign team dared to make the discrimination of women on gendered terms a key part of her campaign platform in 2005-6, her pro-equality agenda did not sufficiently address an end to state discrimination against women in all matters relating to their bodies and sexuality. Frequently articulated in feminist discourse as “an intrinsic part of corporal rights” (“September 28 Campaign” 2011), the Chilean government’s obligation to women in regard to “the right to safe, free and legal abortion” is still pending.196 Bachelet can

194 Important social policies such as education, health and housing are not necessarily back-grounded in the Southern Cone but they are considered “feminine” because “they manifest concern with helping children and disadvantaged” (Piscopo 2011b, 459).

195 This debate is as old as the feminist movement itself. However, I reference the twenty-first century here to highlight its escalating importance in the current moment.

196 Within UN human rights discourses, “corporal rights” are more broadly understood and documents generally reinforce family planning as the optimal way to protect women’s reproductive rights. While international treaties and documents do not define abortion as a form of family planning, the decriminalisation of abortion has been internationally recognised as integral to the protection of women’s reproductive and sexual rights, in particular, to preventing maternal mortality linked to
be credited with protecting women’s corporal rights by determinedly and successfully passing legislation legalising the morning-after pill. In that instance, she articulated policy that resonated with feminist demands for the freedom to decide over their own bodies: “Being able to choose is an essential value of democracy” (Bachelet, quoted in 2010). The enactment of this law, on January 18, 2010, has meant that public health institutions can legally distribute emergency contraception without the need for a doctor’s prescription and at no cost to the women who need it.

By October 2007, the Argentine political climate had opened for the discussion of sexual and reproductive rights, as three such bills had recently passed into law. The Sexual Health and Responsible Procreation Law (25.673) sanctioned in 2002, and the corresponding Sexual Health and Responsible Procreation Programme, which was sanctioned in May 2003, ordered the state to provide preventative measures, such as “reversible, non-abortive and provisional…” contraceptives, indiscriminately, on the grounds of the individual right “to define the possibility of having children, how many children to have, when to have them, and the interval between them.” Universal access to state-funded sterilisation methods of contraception such as tubal ligation to any person of legal age was established under the Surgical Contraception Law (26.130), which followed in August 2006, and the state-funded morning-after pill was incorporated into the Programme in March 2007 (Resolution 232/2007). After the introduction of the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy Bill in May 2007 (092-P-07), the Argentine Congress appeared set for another formal debate on women’s corporal rights. However, the arrival of an anti-abortion candidate as the primary presidential contender, combined with the cabinet changes that followed Fernández’ election, brought that momentum to a halt. To better understand what was happening in the realm of sexual and reproductive rights at the time of these two presidential elections, we have to return to the opening of those debates.

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clandestine abortion practices (United Nations 1995, 106k). The UN Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) “is the only human rights treaty to mention family planning” (United Nations 1979). As CEDAW signatory countries, Chile and Argentina have agreed to protect women’s and men’s “right to decide free, informed and responsibly whether or not to have children,” and the freedom to choose “the number of children and their spacing” (Torres 2006), as is stipulated in CEDAW’s Article 16 (e). For details, see http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm, last accessed December 2011.


198 In Spanish these laws are known as the Ley de Salud Sexual y Procreación Responsable and the Ley de Anticoncepción Quirúrgica. I would like to thank Jennifer Piscopo for providing me with her gender-based analyses of the legislative debates surrounding these two bills. For further reading, see Piscopo (2011a, 2011b).
Bachelet’s support for the free, legal and safe distribution of the morning-after pill followed a series of events that began in 2001, under the Lagos administration. Then active multi-sector campaigns such as the Forum-Network on Health and Sexual and Reproductive Rights (henceforth Forum-Network) using slogans such as “For the Freedom to Decide” formed part of the Movement for the Defence of Birth Control (2001-10).\textsuperscript{199} This resistance movement emerged in defence of new political actors, namely, the Public Health Institute, and the Ministry of Health, which were attempting to make the morning-after pill \textit{Postinal} available for purchase, with a doctor’s prescription.

In the 2001 conflict, these two actors lost in the Supreme Court to “pro-life” NGOs,\textsuperscript{200} which had positioned their arguments against the sale of \textit{Postinal} in the discourses of the Constitution. In a display of Catholic moral conservatism with historical links to the dictatorship, they appealed to Pinochet’s 1989 reform, which had made “the execution of any action which may provoke an abortion” a criminal offence under all circumstances.\textsuperscript{201} Nevertheless, the Supreme Court ruling applied only to the brand \textit{Postinal} and so by December 2001, \textit{Postinor-2}, another brand of the morning-after pill, was made available for sale in pharmacies with a prescription.

Throughout the two-year period in which Bachelet, a medical doctor, served as health minister (2000-2002), she established herself as a part of a heterogeneous culture of resistance. The then president Lagos, on the other hand, did not. Instead, he was heavily criticised for acquiescing to the comparatively homogeneous configuration of conservative forces (Maira Vargas 2010, 124). While Pedro Garcia of the PDC was serving as the health minister in early 2005, Lagos took an executive decision to postpone debate over extending the state-subsidised morning-after pill, out of fear of causing a rift within the Concertación coalition during the election year. In addition, he dismissed the undersecretary of health, Antonio Infante for announcing an intention to make the state-funded morning after-pill available to all women, not just those who had been raped. Organised women marched through Santiago’s streets to defend Infante, just as they had defended Bachelet in 2001. By November 2005, The Ministry of Health had managed to add \textit{Postinor 2} to the “essential

\textsuperscript{199} In Spanish: “\textit{Foro Red de Salud y Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos},” “\textit{Por la Libertad de Decidir},” and “\textit{Movimiento de Defensa de la Anticoncepción},” respectively.

\textsuperscript{200} According to Lidia B. Casas, these were the Front for Life and Solidarity Action; the Research, Training and Study of Women (ISFEM); the International Centre for the Study of Human Life; the Ages Youth Centre; the “Aniü-Küyen” National Movement for Life; and the World Mothers’ Movement (2003).

\textsuperscript{201} The Spanish text reads as follows, “\textit{No podrá ejecutarse ninguna acción cuyo fin sea provocar un aborto.}” In 1989, this clause replaced article 119 of the Health Code (\textit{Código Sanitario}), which had allowed therapeutic abortion since 1931 (Law 18.826).
medicines list,” which enabled the state to control and sanction pharmacies for failing to provide it at an affordable price.

As she had pledged during her presidential campaign, Bachelet’s administration gave special attention to the morning-after pill debate. In September 2006, her Ministry of Health issued state guidelines for family planning, namely, the “National Norms for Fertility Regulation” (Resolución Exenta Nº 586). Importantly, the state’s provision of the morning-after pill (free of charge) was extended beyond rape cases, to address all situations. As in the previous attempt in 2001, this action provoked nation-wide protest from both sides of the debate over the “right to life” as it is defined in the Constitution and “the condition of citizenship of fourteen-year-olds” (Maira Vargas 2010, 117). There was immediate reaction by conservative sectors, including mayors who used their authority over municipal public health centres to refuse to comply with these new regulations despite their legality. In response, Bachelet issued a supreme decree in February 2007 (48/2007), which consolidated the legal status of these provisions. In March, thirty-six conservative politicians challenged it, which led to a Constitutional Tribunal ruling in April, 2008. The Tribunal declared the drug unconstitutional and banned its distribution, except in cases of rape.

The Pildorazo, a massive nation-wide protest from the other side of the debate, ensued. The diversity of this movement was unprecedented. While led by feminist and women’s rights organisations, it also included health personnel, organised by their unions into stop-work action, videos, street performances, and a nation-wide march on April 22, 2008, in which an estimated “35,000 people” participated (Maira Vargas 2010, 126). Bachelet took advantage of her annual address to the nation, on May 21, to publicly defend the morning-after pill, drumming it home with the pledge to do everything in her power to achieve “equity”: “haré que la equidad llegue hasta donde mis facultades alcancen” (Bachelet 2008).

Finally, after lengthy public and parliamentary debate throughout 2009, the state’s universal provision of the morning-after pill was secured in a bill that was passed into law (20.418) on January 18, 2010. Claims over the so-called “abortive effect” of the morning-after pill were satisfied by medical evidence to the contrary. Subsequently, the document underwent minor modifications to a clause requiring practitioners who distribute the drug to minors under fourteen to inform the mother, the father, or a responsible adult.

202 Normas Nacionales sobre Regulación de Fertilidad
It is logical to assume that these Chilean groups were communicating with parallel campaigns across the region, including neighbouring Argentina, where the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion had recent success in reaching Congress. The Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito, as this campaign is known in Spanish, grew out of a mass assembly that formed part of the XIII national Encuentro in Rosario in 2003. On September 28, a mass rally followed to commemorate the Day for the Decriminalisation of Abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2004, the decision to fight for women’s right to decide over their own bodies was re-confirmed at the XIX Encuentro in Mendoza and the campaign was officially launched on May 28, 2005 with the slogan “Sex education to decide, contraceptives to avoid abortion, and legal abortion to prevent death.” As had been agreed at that first assembly in 2003, a writing commission was formed and an early form of the bill currently under debate in the Argentine Congress was authored and submitted on May 28, 2007 (0998-D-2010).

Shortly after the initial events of 2003, Fernández, then both a senator and the First Lady, provided a select elite group with an early indication of the Argentine government’s official position on abortion law. The context was a Paris, November 2003 private reception with distinguished Argentine expatriates, among them French human rights lawyer Sophie Thonon, an active member of the Campaña Nacional. Thonon took this opportunity to question Fernández on her personal “opinion as a senator and as a woman…” on the decriminalisation of abortion in Argentina (quoted in Coledesky 2003). In her well-publicised response, Fernández claimed “I am not progre, I am Peronist… I don’t think Argentina is ready for that… Furthermore, I am against abortion” (quoted in Pecheny). Given this forewarning, it should come as no surprise that women’s rights campaigners lost significant ground after Fernández’ election to the presidency in 2007.

This final claim is endorsed by numerous women interviewed for this thesis in 2009, in particular, Maffía, who observed this regression in three areas of the political agenda: the gender quota, sexual and reproductive rights, and in particular, the advancement toward the

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204 These national campaigns also articulate decisions made at meetings on the regional level such as the Red de Salud de las Mujeres Latinoamericanas y del Caribe, (RSMLAC), known in English as The Latin American and Caribbean Women’s Health Network (LACWHN).
205 Día por la Legalización del Aborto en América Latina y el Caribe
206 Educación sexual para decidir, anticonceptivos para no abortar y aborto legal para no morir
207 This statement reached major conservative Argentine newspapers such as La Nación, and Clarín. Mario Pecheny quoted an article published on November 23 in La Nación, which has since been blocked from public access. Pecheny explains the derogatory use of the shortened term “progre” as an attack against the middle classes, who “claim to be moderate left, have a poor awareness of social problems, and don’t dirty themselves with … real politik” (2006, 251).
critical legitimacy. A 2006 survey of 1600
sphere. Feminist organisations had begun to document public opinion polls that gave this
abortion conservative (discussed below). While her personal conviction, made clear in later interviews
is pro-choice (Ponsowy and Niebieskikwiat 2009, 206), she has been severely criticised for
this display of loyalty and obedience to the party line (Maffia 2010, 191).

Before it was dropped from the political agenda in December 2007, a reproductive
rights claim for the decriminalisation of abortion had been gaining momentum in the public
sphere. Feminist organisations had begun to document public opinion polls that gave this
debate a certain amount of legitimacy. A 2006 survey of 1600 “women living in Argentina’s
three largest cities” demonstrated that this claim was representative of a significant

decriminalisation of abortion (2009). Fernández’ presidential inauguration, in December
2007, was followed by the appointment of her first health minister, Graciela Ocaña
(December 2007-June 2009). With this act, feminist observers feared the demise of initiatives
of the previous health minister, Ginés González García (2002-07), who was in favour of
decriminalising abortion on the grounds of public health. Ocaña had acquired a reputation
for gender sensitivity as one of the Generalas, (defined on page 220) but in her role as
director of the National Integrated Medical Attention Plan, she had been known to disagree
with González García. Fears about Ocaña’s position on the abortion debate increased when
she said to Página/12 journalists that “abortion is a matter of criminal policy not health”
(Carabajal 2007). The planned distribution of González García’s Technical Guidelines for the
Care of Non-Punishable Abortions was halted after her arrival, and the Ministry of Health’s
new position on abortion was confirmed: “We are going to comply with the law that clearly
establishes the cases in which abortion is non-punishable, which are when the mother’s life is
at risk or in the cases involving the rape of a handicapped woman” (Ocaña, quoted in
Wanfield and Navarro 2007). Ocaña’s response exemplifies the most limited and
conservative interpretation of the infamously ambiguous Article 86 of the Criminal Code on
abortion law (discussed below). While her personal conviction, made clear in later interviews
is pro-choice (Ponsowy and Niebieskikwiat 2009, 206), she has been severely criticised for
this display of loyalty and obedience to the party line (Maffia 2010, 191).

208 Specifically, the publication of a comprehensive guide for clinical and surgical procedures for legal
abortions, namely, the Technical Guidelines for the Care of Non-Punishable Abortions (Guía Técnica
para la Atención Integral de los Abortos No Punibles), and a pledge to ensure the free provision of
contraception, including the distribution of the morning-after pill to emergency clinics around the
country.

209 Highly restricted access to legal abortion in Argentina forces women to use clandestine methods to end
most unwanted pregnancies. Numerous studies have shown that the principal cause of maternal deaths
in Argentina since the return to electoral democracy have been complications that occur as a result of
abortions carried out in unsafe conditions (Pantelides and Moreno 2009, 89-90). In 2006, Ministry of
Health figures demonstrated that complications during abortion caused 29 percent of maternal deaths
and that the risk of maternal death was proportionally higher in the poorer regions of Argentina such as
Jujuy, Chaco, Misiones, and Formosa (DEIS 2007).

210 Por una Argentina con Mayores Integrados (PAMI).
percentage of the urban female population (ELA 2007). Nevertheless, the state entered into a social contract – until at least after the mid-term congressional elections in 2009 – to not talk about abortion. According to Maffía, the debate over abortion was halted during this period because it is now well understood that it is not wise to talk about abortion during electoral periods (2010, 200). In 2009, pro-choice diputada Silvia Augsburger argued that the abortion debate setback hinged on a lack of courage within the “current composition” of Congress to advance on such a polemical issue (La Capital 2009). In any event, the presence of pro-choice feminist politicians in the official party Frente para la Victoria, such as Senator María Cristina Perceval (2003-09), and diputadas Juliana Di Tullio (2005-incumbent), Remo Carlotto (2005-incumbent), and former Senator (2002-05) Diana Conti (2005-incumbent) was not enough to correct the balance of the Fernández administration’s anti-abortion – and according to Maffía – “patriarchal” profile (2010, 201). “Pro-life” diputada Cynthia Hottón’s comment in regard to the first meeting of the Legislation Commission to discuss abortion law, on November 30, 2010 confirmed the Fernández administration’s “pro-life” composition: “There are more of us [in the Chamber of Diputados] who defend the right to be born” (InfoCatólica 2010). Soledad Vallejos, journalist for Página/12, noted in her interview with me that “something that [Fernández] is not doing is gender politics,” which in Vallejos’ opinion will only deepen what she considers an already extremely machista electorate. The media’s characterisation of Argentina’s first parliamentary debate on the re-introduced Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy [VIP] Bill, on November 30, 2010, as “historic” and “symbolic,” reveals the low success rate of feminist-informed bills reaching the congressional floor for parliamentary debate since Fernández became President. This contrasted to the relative degree of success that sexual and reproductive rights’ bills had under Kirchner, or more accurately, under his health minister González García. This VIP bill was inevitably heading for over-dramatisation in the public media and the goal – aptly described as “de-dramatising abortion” – was going to be a difficult one (Chaher 2011).

Overall, family planning policies in both Argentina and Chile continue to advocate the family first and prioritise what they continue to successfully frame as the “rights of the

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211 According to the ELA survey, eight out of every ten women interviewed supported “some degree of decriminalisation.” Of the total number of women interviewed (1600), 47 percent felt that abortion should be legal “in certain cases,” 31 percent felt that abortion “should not be illegal” at all, and 19 percent felt that its illegal status should remain unchanged (2007, 105). This survey showed that levels of education, participation in paid labour, place of residence, and religiosity had a clear influence on opinions. Correspondingly, women who had higher education, lived in Buenos Aires, participated in paid labour, and did not frequently practice any form of religion were more likely to advocate the “decriminalisation of abortion” (109).

212 Ley de Interrupción Voluntaria del Embarazo.
unborn child” over women’s freedom to decide autonomously over their own bodies and lives. A case in point was the 12-year old Argentine girl, who after being raped by her stepfather was forced by the restrictive abortion laws to maintain the pregnancy. As Maffia pointed out, “because the embryo is sacred… this girl’s body is nothing more than a vessel, and the only thing that seems to matter is the preservation of the embryo.” (quoted in Entrevista 2008). The irony of this case, as Maffia convincingly argued, is that “when that embryo develops and is born, if it is born, and if it is a girl, when that girl reaches twelve years of age, her body no longer has any value” (ibid.).

Few have been the shifts within official discourses away from the days when powerful, dogmatic Catholic Church hierarchies strongly influenced anti-choice policies across the Latin American region. In terms of prohibitions and sanctions, these nineteenth-century “sins” were reframed into modern crimes and codified into constitutional laws. In addition to permitting Church and state to legally exert control over women’s bodies and life decisions, this codification process has had serious consequences for medical practitioners who are asked to terminate pregnancies. In Chile, the Criminal Code equates any act that “maliciously causes an abortion,” to a crime “against family order, against public morality and against sexual integrity.” There was an attempt to change this to equate abortion with homicide, which “in 1999 was defeated by a narrow margin on the Senate floor” (Htun 2003, 167).

While the Argentine Criminal Code has recognised “therapeutic” abortion since it was revised in 1922, the text is legally ambiguous. The punctuation of this code’s infamous Article 86 has been the topic of debate ever since its passage. Despite several attempts at clarifying the article’s ambiguity, none has survived the will of conservative pressure groups to block any moves toward the liberalisation of abortion laws. Some argue that the second phrase of the citation below is missing a vitally important comma, and this omission suggests that non-punishable abortion in the case of rape is incorrectly limited to mentally handicapped women. The two cases where abortion is “non-punishable” are “1) to avoid endangering the mother’s life or health when it cannot be avoided by other means [and] 2) when the pregnancy results from the rape [.] or attempt against the decency of a woman who

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214 On March 13, 2012, the Argentine Supreme Court determined that “all women who are the victims of rape have the right to abort without judicial authorization, whether or not they have a mental disability” (Gender Justice 2012). Nevertheless, certain provincial governments have refused to back this ruling. In Mendoza, for example the governor declared the province “pro-life” and refused to comply with the Supreme Court ruling, arguing that it “applies only to one particular case and can not be replicated” (quoted in Iglesias 2012).
is mentally deficient or suffers from dementia.” The ambiguity has meant that medical practitioners are reluctant to carry out an abortion without prior legal authorisation and “there have been several cases in which women have had to go to court to receive [authorisation for] even abortions permitted under the law” (Kohen 2009, 93). Women who choose to seek legal authorisation run the risk that authorities can stall so long that the unwanted pregnancy may proceed into dangerously late stages of foetal development, making the procedure physically unsafe. Given these conditions, there is little incentive for women to work within an ambiguous system of laws that trap them in prolonged debates between doctors and judges reluctant to make a final decision.

In retrospect, and no doubt in comparison to other leaders, Bachelet has been commended for her “commitment… to sexual and reproductive rights” (Díaz Fernández and Shiappacasse Faúndes 2010, 40). While such praise is silent on Bachelet’s avoidance of abortion and gay marriage discussions, it recognises the “obstacles generated by conservative politicians” (ibid.). The resistance and veto power demonstrated by the Concertación coalition’s centrist members itself is one of many barriers to presenting bills on these two issues. Despite this internal party tension, however, other members of the Concertación have authored and supported liberalisation of abortion bills. Since the return to electoral democracy in Chile, there have been a total of nine attempts to have therapeutic abortion legally restored, but none of these bills have reached parliamentary debate. In addition to these, a liberalisation bill called the draft Framework Law on Sexual and Reproductive Rights co-authored by the NGO Forum-Network and a broad range of diputados was presented to the Health Commission in 2000 (2608-11). While this bill did not include therapeutic abortion, it did demand the “humane treatment for unsafe abortion and confidentiality by medical personnel” (Maira, Hurtado, and Santana 2010, 32). This bill also failed to reach the parliamentary debate stage.

During the Bachelet administration, ten bills dealing with the topic of abortion were presented to Congress. Of those ten, only five were in favour of liberalising Chile’s strict

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215 The Argentine Criminal Code, Article 86 reads as follows, “El aborto practicado por un médico diplomado con el consentimiento de la mujer encinta, no es punible: 1) Si se ha hecho con el fin de evitar un peligro para la vida o la salud de la madre y si este peligro no puede ser evitado por otros medios. 2) Si el embarazo proviene de una violación o de un atentado al pudor cometido sobre una mujer idiota o demente.” For details, see http://www.infoleg.gov.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/15000-19999/16546/txexact.htm#1, last accessed January 2012.

216 Concertación members introduced the first bill (499-07) in the Chamber of Diputados in 1991 and the most recent was presented to the Senate in December 2010 (7391-07).

abortion laws (4751-11; 6420-11; 6522-11; 6591-11; 4845-11). The remaining five included attempts to increase sanctions, strengthen existing laws, or authorise the construction of monuments paying homage to the “innocent victims of abortion” (4818-24). One of the pro-liberalisation initiatives was authored by a team of diputados, headed by Marco Enríquez-Ominami, a member of the Partido Socialista at that time, and René Alinco, of the Partido por la Democracia (4845-11).\(^{218}\) Essentially, they updated the draft Framework Law on Sexual and Reproductive Rights bill presented in 2000, to include therapeutic abortion. While it is not so clear that this team was motivated by Bachelet’s campaign pledge to return this bill to the legislative agenda (Bachelet 2005c, 89), they were clearly guided by SERNAM’s Gender Agenda 2006-10, which extended Bachelet’s campaign pledge with a recommendation to update the content of the original 2000 bill.\(^{219}\) Lacking the executive’s explicit advocacy, this bill also failed to reach parliamentary debate during the Bachelet administration.

DEBATE ANALYSIS: STARKLY DIFFERENT PERFORMANCES

Looking back retrospectively from the change of government in 2010, a human rights adviser to the Bachelet administration, María Luisa Sepúlveda,\(^{220}\) described the ex-President’s legacy as one of “protection, [and] concern for real problems and cercanía [approachability]” (quoted in, Pezoa 2010). This was in response to the question: “Was it important for the first time in the history of Chile to have a woman as president?” (Pezoa 2010). As discussed previously, the essential and broad contextual factors here are the post-dictatorship moment and the crisis of male representation that followed. Without ignoring this context, one reading of this response is informed by the perspective of Difference Feminism and the identity politics to which this feminist camp ascribes. The examples presented throughout this thesis demonstrate that difference feminism describes ways that women identify themselves through their shared biological knowledge. For the purposes of my analysis, however, I find it useful to broaden this school of thought to include less essentialising conceptualisations of womanhood, based on lived experience, otherwise known as experiential knowledge. In

\(^{218}\) For details, see http://sil.senado.cl/cgi-bin/index_eleg.pl?4845-11, last accessed June 2011.

\(^{219}\) In Spanish: “actualizar el contenido y reactivar el debate parlamentario para la aprobación de la ley marco sobre derechos sexuales y reproductivos” (SERNAM 2007, 71).

\(^{220}\) Sepúlveda was the president of the Comisión Asesora Presidencial para las Políticas de Derechos Humanos. This commission was created by Bachelet to advise the government on matters “relating to the location and identification of people detained or kidnapped between September 11, 1973 and March 10, 1990” (BCN 2006).
particular, I rely on Linda Alcoff’s conceptualisation of socially constructed “positionality” (1988), which defines women according to their location within externally restrictive conditions. As discussed in Chapter One, this theoretical concept offers fluid and intersecting formulations of “women” as a separate group for analysis. An articulation of the female subject according to her “habits, practices, and discourses” within “a constantly shifting context…” (Alcoff 1988, 431-433) obviates the need to affirm that women have a superior set of innate attributes, as is common within Difference Feminism. Recognising “the woman subject’s ability to alter her context” (435), Alcoff’s theory posits that choosing to be identified as a woman is to reappropriate gender as “a position from which to act politically” (433).

WOMEN AS DIFFERENT: BACHELET

According to difference feminists, women position themselves as a collective group through discourse codes that correspond to a maternal biological condition: social inclusion and social responsibility, or caring for those who cannot take care of themselves. Of course, all discourses occur within and intercommunicate with contextual factors. Responding to societal factors, ex-Chilean presidents Lagos and Frei self-identified with the masculine expert, technocrat, and economist figures. Similarly, Bachelet’s self-identification with a “feminine” model of leadership, wherein she defined herself in terms of her “difference” to men, was her response to society’s expectations. In one of her first interviews as president-elect, for example, she differentiated her leadership style from the “more masculine style, of giving instructions…” (quoted in Correa 2006). Chapter Four documented a profoundly caring approach to socio-economic needs in statements that summarised her campaign platform for social protection. Bachelet’s campaign pledge to “leave, as a mark of her government, a consolidated system of protection that is effective from the tenderest infancy until old age” is one of several examples that reference the archetypal mother-figure discussed at length throughout this thesis (ibid.). Gender and economic discourses intersect with Bachelet’s biography as successful cabinet minister, doctor, solo mother, and as victim-survivor of the Pinochet dictatorship to inform her “feminine difference” narrative. That narrative is further informed by her various ideological identities, for example, as agnostic, which marked her as an outsider, lacking the institutional protection benefitting those reliant on religious frames (c.f. Lavín and Piñera in Chile, and Menem in Argentina). Rather than weakening her chances of election, these diverse biographical characteristics strengthened
discursive constructions of Bachelet as a woman citizen who would represent – and as I have argued in previous chapters “care for” – all of Chile. Nevertheless, when feminist CDA problematises this broad citizen frame, we can see how it masks Bachelet’s limited ability to strategically defend women’s rights.

In terms of this all-inclusive role-based frame’s symbolic strengths, there is evidence that it cultivated the support of a cross-class range of women and girls. While it is unlikely that these collectives were ethnically very diverse, they were so in terms of age and social class. Media reports emphasised the broad cross-range of ages and social sectors that participated in marches around the country throughout January 2006. In early January, women in the northern cities of Arica and Iquique manifested their gender identification by donning the presidential sash and marching through the city streets in support of Bachelet’s candidacy before the second round of the presidential elections.221 Again, on her January 15 electoral victory, a large group of the women citizenry marched through Santiago’s streets, once more donning replicas of the presidential sash to show their identification with her. Mimicking sash-wearing beauty queens, these women chose an identification process that carried a high level of “feminine” discourse coding. Media descriptions of the sash-wearing events do not report seeing men donning the symbol of a presidential triumph, clearly indicating an avoidance of the exclusionary “feminine” coding.222

The gendered coding underlying women’s collective embrace of Bachelet challenged some men, who found her election to the presidency difficult terrain to negotiate. This situation highlights one of the political risks of using a gender frame. In an interview, feminist NGO leader, Carmen Torres provided anecdotal evidence of a gender struggle. A taxi driver told Torres that “the [women’s] party won’t last much longer.” Later, she witnessed a verbal altercation on a bus between a man, who was loudly complaining about the new Transantiago public transport system and a woman who took it as a personal attack and defended saying, “what have you got against president Bachelet?” (2009). Torres argued that “in the imagination of many men, we [women] have been privileged in this government, so, when Bachelet goes, things are going to return to their [normal] place” (2009).223 When

221 For images see http://www.elmorrocotudo.cl/admin/render/noticia/1868, last accessed January 2012.
222 Another way in which to define this “feminine” coding as exclusionary lies in the shared socio-cultural construct of beauty queens as young ethnically European or mestiza women with strong European characteristics.
223 In retrospect, the latter half of Torres statement points to one of the main fears reiterated by feminist observers of the Piñera administration. Since his election in December 2009, feminists became wary of a return to the high levels of gender inequality that existed before the Bachelet era. Mid-2011, feminist groups in Chile broadened their vigilant approach to the Piñera administration in support of a re-
much of the female population visibly embraces a woman leader, men may feel excluded, insignificant, and dispensable. In this sense, pursuing what may be perceived as an exclusionary gender identity – one that does not take other forms of discrimination into account – does not necessarily advance enhanced gender relations. Instead, the potential for a large sector of the population to reject a woman leader because of her biological difference to them, and to view her as a temporary aberration in an established system, endangers not only her hopes for full legitimisation but it also undermines her potential to empower other women to follow. Viewed in terms of the political costs, there is strategic reason to downplay any discourse that might be interpreted as exclusionary, such as a feminist agenda, and there is solid argument for constructing a broad “social justice” agenda or a “gender” agenda that is stripped of any specific political identity.

Returning to the mobilising power and symbolic capital of a resonant gender-based discourse, numerous feminist accounts of the sash-wearing event suggested that this visible embrace evoked a feeling of sisterly solidarity (Maira Vargas 2010; Silva 2010; Torres 2009). One feminist observer who felt excluded recorded that on seeing women marching “triumphant through the grand avenues [of Santiago]… [she] would like to have celebrated with them” (Vera 2009). Some interpreted this all-women event as a collective expression of hope for the future advancement of women’s specific rights as citizens in Chile. These women clearly felt that they were entering the Moneda with Bachelet. However, in an election night interview, when Bachelet was asked for her reaction to this visible expression of gender identity, she attempted to downplay its political implications for women’s rights and for women politically identified with the Left. Although Bachelet’s statement aligned her electoral success “with” a cross-class alliance of women, she carefully re-framed the message: “I think the fact that I am a woman also influenced [the vote]: there were women from the Right who supported me. The message [was] that if I entered the Moneda, it was the citizens who were entering. It was very moving to see so many women that night with the presidential sash” (quoted in Correa 2006, my emphasis).

Feminist double-bind theory is useful in interpreting this statement (Murray 2010). In this instance, Bachelet needs to demonstrate that she is empowered by her kinship relationship with women, and capable of representing all citizens simultaneously, not just those on the Left. Bachelet addresses this difficult negotiation with a resonant narrative: “I represent all of Chile,” which is framed by a broad understanding of “citizenship.”

emerging student movement. As the public debate over education gained momentum, feminists also began to denounce hard-core exclusionary neoliberal politics (Valdés 2011).
to Butler’s conceptualisation of parody and disguise, this broad “citizenship” frame serves as a mask (1990). Correspondingly, Bachelet had no difficulty expressing her sense of duty to “the citizens” because this broad term strips individual identities of their political significance. In Latin American politics, the rare act of positioning oneself as “woman” is perceived as exclusionary. However, by downplaying the election’s political implications on the advancement of women’s rights, Bachelet masked an important message. Had she claimed this moment of gender solidarity, her words might have opened up a discursive space for the strategic defence of women’s specific interests. This was an early sign of the broad “social justice” frame that would guide communication strategies throughout Bachelet’s mandate, while indicating her distance from the Left.

The example above shows the difficulty of representing a plural collective of women from the specific position of gender. While Bachelet made strategic gestures throughout her campaign to recognise the multiple forms of oppression that are compounded by gender subordination, she relied more heavily on a broader “pro-equality” narrative. A subsequent – April 2008 – demonstration of gender solidarity led by feminist and women’s organisations mobilised following a legal battle over the morning-after pill (discussed above). Described as “the largest mass mobilisation of support for the governmental leadership in almost two decades” (Matamala Vivaldi 2010, 159), this event was so notable that the media coined a familiar-sounding term to nickname it the Pildorazo. At once this term linked the demonstration to street protests common in the Southern Cone and gender-coded it through association with the historic 1971 women-led Cacerolazo (discussed in Chapters Two and Three).224 Viewing this as an opportunity “to reach a broad legislative triumph in the way of sexual and reproductive rights…” some feminists questioned why, instead of opening up a space for this visibly mobilised social force to advance its social policies of concern to women, Bachelet had “allowed it to dissolve in the air” (Matamala Vivaldi 2010, 159). While Bachelet was credited with making the morning-after-pill freely available to economically marginalised women, a response not only to gender interests but also economic need, Matamala Vivaldi’s criticism focused on her failure to democratically represent the will of these mobilised citizens and recruit them to advance the therapeutic abortion debate.

224 According to the Collins Spanish dictionary, the term Pildorazo also carries a militaristic meaning: “burst of gunfire” (Pildorazo 2003), and re-historicising this term within the anti-Allende messages of the 1971 Cacerolazo, would suggest a different sphere of discourses. By my interpretation, the –azo suffix unwittingly connects these terms with two militaristic attempts to intimidate the democratically elected governments of Allende and Aylwin, the “Tancazo” (1973) and the “Boinazo” (1993), respectively. However, further discourse analysis of these four particular events might reveal a conscious attempt to discredit the 2008 Pildorazo by linking it to a darker antidemocratic history.
Nevertheless, there were plenty of reasons for feminist and non-feminist women’s rights groups to look beyond Bachelet’s reluctance to co-opt provocative strategic feminist discourses which would force topics such as therapeutic abortion and gay marriage into the public sphere. Bachelet’s decision to position herself as a citizen rather than exclusively as a woman was not viewed negatively or as an obstacle to women’s rights. Instead, this strategy was valued for its productive possibilities. By opening up a “feminine” discursive space at the executive level of politics, Bachelet put herself in a position to respond to some of the more widely-supported and more immediate “practical interests” of women. Subsequent feminist scholarship suggests that on the level of “communicational power,” Bachelet could achieve “a new form of media representation. The feminine installed in the daily life of national politics…” (Silva 2010, 59). Some even saw Bachelet as “a transformational voice” in that she was “building a corpus of women’s talk from the most privileged location” (ibid).

In material terms, it was believed that Bachelet’s pro-equality agenda would make a significant difference to the daily lives of “the political woman, the mother and the working woman” (Maira Vargas 2010). Feminists vocally supported Bachelet’s unwavering determination to nominate a cabinet of ten women and ten men, which was strongly challenged by political elites. Her pledges to support mothers who were working or returning to work (Crece Contigo), and to those who had never worked (Pension Reform), cannot be underestimated, even though, as I argued in Chapter Four, they did not adequately promote a culture of co-responsibility in the home. In regard to the Bono por Hijo aspect of the overall pension reform, some feminists later applauded what they considered to be “the recognition of reproductive work through an allowance for mothers” (Maira Vargas 2010, 127).

Bachelet may have pursued a quid pro quo strategy of low-level “feminist silence” in exchange for government support on more easily “achievable” issues. Looking back from 2011, when the mass student movement awakened a spirit of rebellion in Chile, this interpretation makes sense. In view of this radical turn of events, for example, Florencia Aróstica, the president of the National Association of Rural and Indigenous Women (ANAMURI), asserted that ANAMURI’s previous “concern was that the Chilean people and the social movements were asleep” (quoted in Gutiérrez 2011).

There are also two interrelated points that help us to understand why these women’s corporal rights policies might have been considered “unachievable” at that time. Clearly, the time constraints of a non-renewable four-year presidential mandate limited Bachelet’s chances of completing the prolonged participatory legislative process necessary to pass a bill into law. Again in terms of timing, the structural limitations of having to negotiate with the
powerful conservative PDC members within the Concertación, as well as the powerful right-wing bloc, within a four-year mandate reduces the likelihood of achieving the required consensus. As the abortion debate shows, religious political elites have historically served as a major obstacle to gender policy change. Since 2001, the ultra-conservative UDI party has been the largest political party in Congress and thus successfully used their numerical and economic power to contest controversial bills. Considering these constraining factors, the more controversial debates, such as women’s corporal rights, presented an understandably difficult challenge to the Bachelet administration.

This “feminist silence” on controversial matters such as abortion was echoed in the dominant national print media. The three most widely circulated newspapers, El Mercurio and its subsidiaries La Segunda and La Tercera are widely criticised for having conservative and antidemocratic leanings, and the autonomy of another major newspaper, La Nación, is generally discredited for being state-funded and having a narrow circulation among “public servants” (Torres 2009). Their failure to cover events around the country on one of the few emblematic days of the feminist calendar, September 28, is evidence of the print media’s conservative and antidemocratic bias. On this day, feminists across the region march for their corporal rights in commemoration of the Latin American and Caribbean Day for the Decriminalisation of Abortion. A range of feminist websites show that alongside a number of country-wide consciousness-raising initiatives including public and university information tables and forums, the Forum-Network organised a march in Santiago on September 28, 2005. However, in a review of three major Chilean newspapers, El Mercurio, La Segunda

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225 For an interesting discussion of the UDI’s power structure, candidate selection processes, and its explicitly traditional attitude toward “women’s historic roles as wives and mothers,” see Magda Hinojosa (2009).

226 These three newspapers belong to the media conglomerate El Mercurio S.A.P, owned by Agustín Edwards. It has been revealed that Edwards received covert funding from the CIA in return for setting the stage for their 1970s campaign against Allende (Church Report 1975). He has also been accused of having “direct involvement with the DINA [Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional] and the CNI [Centro Nacional de Informaciones] in fabricating stories that hid the murder of leftist militants…” during the Pinochet dictatorship. These and other accusations constitute the documentary film “El diario de Agustín.” For details, see http://www.eldiariodeagustin.cl.

227 This campaign was established in 1990 at the Fifth Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter, and feminist organisations from around the region take it in turns to coordinate the event on a regional scale. The campaign is founded on the ideals “of human rights and democracy,” and defines abortion as a matter of public health and social justice, and relates it “to the defense of the secular state” (“Women’s Campaigns” 2010). The inclusion of the secular state as a central point confirms that the principal obstacle is religious fundamentalism and the state’s reluctance to confront the continued power of the Church over family law.

228 At the time of writing, there was no website available for the Forum-Network. For details on the events taking place around Chile and the region see, http://www.iidh.ed.cr/comunidades/DerechosMujer/
and La Nación, I found no record of the campaigns or marches that took place in Chile on this date. The same is true for the seminar that followed in October 2005, under the title “If we talk about rights, let’s talk about abortion.” On another of these emblematic days, May 26, 2005, the International Day of Action for Women’s Health, Chilean media were focused on negotiations between Bachelet and Soledad Alvear, after the latter stood down from the pre-candidacy race.

Clearly, the media’s silence on feminist events, or on any other event that threatens oligarchical power, does not necessarily mean that nothing took place or that feminists were silent. Instead, it indicates that these conscious-raising events were inadequately supported and that they were neither visible nor loud enough to create a sensation and spark public debate. In view of Chile’s consensus politics and the difficulties that Southern Cone feminists have experienced in mobilising the masses in support of controversial topics, this finding is unsurprising. To date, pro-rights campaigners have not yet managed to legitimise the debate on abortion. In contrast, an unprecedented number of women’s rights campaigners marched on November 25, 2005, in support of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women to voice their demands. Action on violence against women had received wide support throughout the year. It was a key theme at the national feminist Encuentro in June 2005, and stimulated significant investigative research, which led to numerous publications, further seminars, and fora.

This widespread attention seems to have convinced politicians to address domestic violence. There were three major achievements for women in 2005 in terms of legislative reforms dealing with long-pending issues. Following the implementation of the 2004 Civil Marriages Act (19.947), which legalised divorce, sexual harassment in the workplace was criminalised through modifications to the Labour Code in March (20.005). Then, in September, gender-based violence in the home was criminalised under modifications to existing domestic violence legislation (20.066).\(^\text{229}\) Finally, there were also a number of regional and international events such as the UN Beijing + 10 Conference, and the regional progress in regard to sexual health, including Argentina (discussed above). However, despite the bids of two women presidential aspirants to represent the Concertación coalition in the

\(^{229}\) Specifically, this reform meant that gender violence in the home, previously defined as a “misdemeanour” (falta), was legally redefined as a “crime” (delito). Once again, rape was reduced to a crime that takes place in the family space, rather than against an individual woman’s body in any location.
approaching elections, something – be it controversy, conservative media blocking public debate, or a perceived sense of impossibility – undermined the potential for greater progress. Perhaps a combination of these factors weakened feminist activists’ ability to either force a public debate over therapeutic abortion and gay marriage or to exhort presidential candidates to take a formal political position on women’s sexual and reproductive rights.

Matamala Vivaldi suggests a second way of reading Chile’s non-discussion of repressive abortion laws: it could be interpreted as the government’s “silent acceptance of regressive political pressures” (2010, 158). In any event, this stalemate would have carried some social cost. Certainly, it has become clearer since the change in leadership in 2010 that little of what Bachelet did achieve for women in practical terms was structurally supported by a transformation in the asymmetrical power relationships that underlie gender inequality. Women are still disproportionately held responsible for childcare and family well-being, doubly burdening those who also participate in the workforce (Hardy Raskovan 2010). Chile’s neoliberal economic model continues to generate a gendered poverty gap (feminisation), and gender discrimination against working women, migrant women in particular, is still reflected in women’s over-representation in poorly paid, unprotected jobs, and dangerous working conditions (Gutiérrez 2011). Most telling, the mandatory gender quota bill that Bachelet revived in 2007 has yet to gain the support it needs to become law in Chile.230

With regard to whether Bachelet “silently” capitulated to conservative pressure groups, few feminist thinkers would deny that Bachelet’s undeterred effort to increase access to the morning-after pill was transformational. This was significant, given Bachelet’s medically-based claim that the morning-after pill was “not abortive,” which played into the hands of moral arguments that Catholic and conservative groups had been using against its distribution (quoted in Schiattino and Pereda 2005; Correa 2005). Interestingly, the bill extending access to all women came into effect as her mandate drew to a close, on January 18, 2010. Bachelet’s cabinet had set a crucial example of gender parity at the beginning of her mandate and the morning-after pill became universally available at the end of her term; thus, Bachelet began and ended her mandate defending women’s rights, leaving as one feminist

230 At the time of writing, there had been four gender quota draft bills presented to congress since the first in 1997. This first bill (1994-07), limited candidates for popular election of either sex to a maximum of 60%, the second in 2002 (3020-06), required that at least 30% of candidates on the lists be women, and the third (3206-18) in 2003, repositioned the same quota of 60% as in 1997. In 2007, Bachelet signed a draft bill that changed the maximum quota to 70% for both candidate lists and executive state offices.
observer asserted, “a social collective much more aware of their discrimination” (Maira Vargas 2010, 137).

These two symbolic performances alone highlighted the prominence that Bachelet’s administration gave to a gender agenda. While none would define Bachelet’s efforts, at least not in Maffía’s terms, as a feminist agenda, her determination in implementing these two major advances enabled feminist critics to overlook the fact that her clarity on policies regarding women did not extend to more contentious issues such as abortion and gay marriage. Moreover, the respect that feminist organisations showed toward Bachelet during her mandate appears to have deepened following it.

WOMEN AS VICTIMS: FERNández

In contrast to Bachelet’s silent contract with women’s rights groups, Fernández showed little or no esteem for Argentine feminist organisations, and this sentiment appeared to be mutual. Even before Fernández began her first presidency, feminist organisations had begun to investigate her position on gender equality. Their findings are critical to understanding this state of affairs. In 2008, a comparative feminist analysis of the 2007 electoral platforms presented to the Federal Electoral Court revealed the Frente para la Victoria platform’s absolute silence on issues regarding the advancement and protection of gender equality. The report stressed that this “extremely brief political platform of three pages… makes no mention of the terms ‘gender’ or ‘women’…” (Thiteux-Altshul 2008). In 2009, a feminist NGO analysed Fernández’ first one hundred presidential speeches (Gonzáález and Gherardi 2009). Focusing on her occasional references to gender – in eighteen out of one hundred speeches – this study concludes that Fernández regularly recurred to a victim narrative, in which she attributed attacks against her as president to her identity as a woman (115). While gender features prominently, this study concludes, it does not form a “specific axis of her policies” (117, emphasis in the original).

Entering into dialogue with feminist groups would logically involve a mutual exchange of ideas and discourses vis-à-vis feminist and formal politics. There were early attempts to form an alliance with a small range of women politicians who symbolised a growing level of gender diversity in Congress and an earnest intention to create a gender agenda. Mid-way through the Kirchner administration, a group of Peronist women politicians, María Cristina Perceval, Graciela Ocaña, Patricia Vaca Narvaja, and Juliana Di Tullio formed the Movimiento de Mujeres Evita (The Evita Women’s Movement). The group became
known as the *Generalas*, and its primary goal was to ensure that “women participate in the preparation of the public agenda” (Schurman 2005). From the outset, these political figures assumed a partisan role; supporting the Kirchner project, Fernández’ candidacy to the Senate in 2005, and finally, her candidacy to the presidency in 2007.\(^{231}\) As president, Fernández appointed two of these high profile women to her cabinet. Among the women politicians appointed to cabinet posts, Nilda Garré retained her role in Defence and Graciela Ocaña was appointed to Health. Reflecting the group’s initial expectations for a woman president and claiming it as a further sign of gender advancement in the political arena, the *Generalas* then presented a project entitled “The Gender Agenda 2008-2010.” Containing thirty-six points relevant to gender relations, this agenda had been agreed to by members of the political opposition and women’s rights’ groups for political debate.

However, this modest enterprise was destined for a quiet life under Fernández. Aside from the debate and sanction of two important bills,\(^{232}\) in 2008 and 2009, respectively, a majority of the points remained back-grounded until international human rights organisations called the Argentine state’s attention to its failure to comply with its obligations in early 2010. For example, CEDAW met with an Argentine delegation in July 2010. At this international meeting, a number of experts from around the world questioned the president of the *Consejo Nacional de la Mujer*, the state agency established in 1991 to monitor all government policy that specifically relates to women. Criticisms centred on this institution’s inadequacies, including the lack of a comprehensive plan of action and its inability to produce gender-disaggregated data for the evaluation of new programmes (Committee 2010). By extension, this particular set of criticisms mirrored a widely held sense of disapproval of Fernández for failing to provide the Consejo with adequate economic support.

President Fernández’ resistance to strategically advocating a rights-based agenda resulted in the worst moment for the Consejo. As discussed in Chapter Two, the fragility of this institution means that its survival depends on the will of the government. As such, the Consejo suffered a demotion under the Kirchner administration. It was shifted from answering directly to the executive to the Ministry of Social Development as “Coordinated Social Policies.” It was overseen by the president’s sister, Alicia Kirchner, the then minister.

\(^{231}\) For more detail, see http://mujeresevita.blogspot.com/2008_02_01_archive.html, last accessed, February 2012.

One consequence of this demotion was the drastic reduction of its budget. Subsequently, Alicia Kirchner maintained her position under the Fernández administration, thus continuing the downgrade.

In 2011, this situation remained dismal. According to the US State Department, “human rights organizations in the country as well as the UN Human Rights Committee criticized the low budget” (2010 Country Report 2011). The State Department claimed that the Consejo “had a 2010 budget of six million pesos ($1,495,000), while just one program, a domestic violence telephone hotline in the province of Buenos Aires, required three million pesos ($747,000) to operate” (ibid.). In 2010, numerous feminist and women’s organisations created a shadow report in response to CEDAW’s conclusions. They were equally critical, arguing that “weaknesses at the national level facilitate their reproduction in provinces and municipalities, repeating the same structures… with little or no budget at all…” (Derechos 2010). Likewise, Gherardi told me in her 2009 interview that the Consejo received a smaller budget than the Argentine Public Libraries Management Board (Dirección de Bibliotecas Populares de la Argentina) (Gherardi 2009).

Vallejos (2009) outlined some of the repercussions of this dire situation: conservative provinces block the free distribution of the morning-after pill, offensive media advertising, and women earning 30-40 percent less than men doing the same job.233 Another consequence mentioned in previous chapters references the cost to women’s rights of embedding gender-related policies in role-based framing. Maffía has criticised the Fernández administration’s reinforcement of “women’s responsibility in the task of caring” (2010, 200). To exemplify this argument, Maffía referred to the Family Plan for Social Inclusion, launched in October 2004. Similar to the Crece Contigo programme in Chile, the beneficiaries of the Family Plan were almost exclusively women.234 According to the discourses surrounding this programme until 2007, the primary holder of the benefit was defined as the mother. She would receive subsidies in return for making sure that the children attended school and had regular health checks (Campos, Faur, and Pautassi 2007). In particular, Maffía contrasted it to Argentina’s first cash transfer programme, the Unemployed Female and Male Heads of Households Plan. Dating back to its 2001 implementation, this programme provided a subsidy to each applicant head of household in exchange for work or study. In this way, it encouraged re-inclusion into the labour force and education, without reinforcing stereotypical gender roles (2010, 200).

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233 This statistic corresponds to the US State Department, 2006 Human Rights Report. For details, see http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78877.htm.
234 For a robust analysis of these discourses, see http://www.cels.org.ar/ common/documentos/programa_familias_web.pdf.
Although Chapter Four called attention to the adaptation of the Family Plan’s most recent successor, the Universal Child Allowance (AUH), with its more gender-neutral terms of eligibility criteria, these developments were mitigated under Fernández by its alignment with Plan Nacer. In parallel, there is further evidence on The Ministry of Social Development webpages of the continued predominance of “pro-natal” family planning. According to the homepage, this Ministry divides its attention between the “family” and “work.” A quantitative analysis of the news items listed under “family,” between September 14, 2010 and August 11, 2011, reveals that out of the 230 featured events, only three concerned themselves with women’s rights. Notably, these three reports were limited to one awareness-raising initiative that called on men to unite against gender violence, “260 Men against Machismo.”235 In parallel to Chile, this result corresponds to the finding that political elites consider it less costly to address gender-based violence than to discuss topics such as the planned termination of pregnancy.

Given the increasingly strong public support for an abortion bill congressional debate, it is significant that Fernández made no attempt to address this demand during her 2007 campaign. Nevertheless, her guarded reticence makes it difficult to know what Fernández thinks on more controversial issues. There are important social groups who may very well have had a stake in her explicitly declared anti-abortion stance. For example, a large proportion of her broad social support base is poor, working class, and Catholic, which may explain why she was not willing to take on the Church. For the same reason, her ambiguity on sexual and reproductive rights may say more about her putting “social-class issues” before specific “women’s issues.” Fernández’ ambiguous discourses may also be interpreted as an attempt to mask her anxiety at having to negotiate the polarised positions of feminist rights advocates and rigid Church hierarchies.

The government’s relationship with Catholic Church leaders, the Vatican in particular, was clearly a hot topic at the time of the presidential elections in 2007. Two days before the election, the media coverage of a range of last minute interviews focused on Fernández’ position on the then current sexual and reproductive rights debates. By framing her relationship with the Church in ambiguous and even conflictive ways, these media reports suggest her anxiety in having to state her position on these complex issues. Several media

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235 The said articles are entitled as follows, “Mendoza against Gender Violence” (December 24, 2010); Alicia Kirchner Launched the Campaign “260 Men against Machismo” (March 1, 2011); “More than 7,800 Men will Join Forces to Eradicate Violence against Women” (March 2, 2011); “[Mariano] Recalde Joins “260 Men against Machismo” (March 15, 2011). For details, see http://www.desarrollosocial.gov.ar/Novedades/Noticias.aspx?la=3, last accessed August 2011.
outlets quoted a range of Fernández’ responses verbatim: “I have always defined myself against abortion…” (“En el final” 2007). Other media outlets interpreted these comments as the reconciliation of strained relationships between the Vatican and the government: “The last signals as candidate and the first as president elect... went down well with the Church” (Rubín 2007). One Catholic media outlet assured its readers that Fernández was “against abortion but would not commit to stopping it from becoming legal” (“Contradictory” 2007). In contrast to a majority of the reports, this Catholic outlet suggested that Fernández had the capacity to put the collective mandate before her personal morals and before those imposed by Church hierarchies. Then, in a complete departure from suggesting an alliance with the Church, these reports highlighted Fernández’ full support for another debate that had sparked controversy during her campaign year: “I believe in the freedom of sexual choice for all men and women in Argentina” (“En el final” 2007).

This latter statement is a reference to Vilma Ibarra’s Equal Marriage Bill, proposing modifications to the civil marriage legislation so that gay couples could marry and adopt. Interestingly, this bill was presented to the Senate in the same year – 2007 – as the abortion bill.\(^{236}\) As media coverage of these last minute interviews in October 2007 had predicted, Fernández later made a progressive and decisive leadership move when she signed the gay marriage bill into law on July 21, 2010. These two different responses suggest that abortion and gay marriage do not threaten political, economic and religious elites to the same degree. Indeed, the sanction of this bill under the Fernández administration provided no hint that Argentina’s head-of-state would be as decisive or willing to openly defend women’s corporal rights. As Fernández approached the real possibility of a second mandate in election year 2011, she stayed well away from the abortion debate that had reached enthusiastic levels in Congress. Following the precedent set by the successful passing of the gay marriage law earlier that year, the decriminalisation of abortion debate shifted for the first time into Congress, on November 30, 2010.\(^ {237}\) While some observers may have expected one successful policy outcome to follow immediately on from the other, Fernández showed no intention of challenging the Church in regard to abortion. Instead, Fernández’ discourses during the second campaign echo those of her first, reinforcing the notorious proclamation that she was “feminine” not “feminist” (Fernández de Kirchner 2007d, 351). In other words, Fernández made no strategic moves in support of the demands that organisations such as the

\(^{236}\) *Ley de Matrimonio Igualitario* (3218/07).

\(^{237}\) It is interesting to note that the women leaders of both lines of the *Madres* and the *Abuelas* were among the 400 figures who signed the petition for this debate to shift into parliament.
National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Free and Safe Abortion had made increasingly vocal during the 2011 election year. Instead, Fernández appeared to be elsewhere, promoting her administration’s “pro-life” stance. She was seen to make her personal position on abortion more explicit than before, both in her own words and by sending Juan Manzur, the Fernández administration’s second health minister, to the media to reiterate the message. Throughout July and August 2010, numerous media were quoting Fernández’ statement “you already know that I am opposed” and Manzur’s follow-up message “we have already said, we are against abortion, even the President has made this very clear” (quoted in “La Presidenta” 2010). The material implications of Fernández’ position on abortion were made manifest when Manzur refused to legitimise the revised Technical Guidelines for the Care of Non-Punishable Abortions as a Ministerial Resolution on the grounds of Fernández’ ideological beliefs. In response, members of the National Campaign for the Right to Safe, Legal and Free Abortion argued that “in public policy, personal beliefs cannot be put ahead of women’s human and civil rights” (“3,000 Argentinean Women” 2010).

There is clearly no consensus on how a woman president should respond to an abortion debate. Nevertheless, for many women’s rights campaigners, Fernández’ explicit anti-abortion statements have provoked some harsh criticisms over her years in public office. In 2005, Maffía described Fernández as “a typical case” of women politicians “who don’t represent other women, [and] don’t want to be seen as representatives of the feminine gender” (quoted in Walger 2005). In November 2007, an abortion rights campaigner wrote that the president elect was “closer to the Church, further away from women” (Zetnik 2007). While these two affirmations sound simplistic and they perhaps unjustly suggest that Fernández’ biological condition should necessarily direct her decision-making away from her religious or ethical beliefs in regard to abortion, they highlight the important role that personal or strategic beliefs play in political decision-making.

PRO-WOMEN CONTEXTS: FEMININE NOT FEMINIST

In Chapters Three and Four, I argued that Fernández’ often passionate display of appreciation for women-led human rights groups such as the Madres and the Abuelas, and her advocacy of their work in the protection of human rights linked to the dictatorship and socio-economic rights was one of many important discursive campaign strategies in 2007. In her inaugural
speech, for example, Fernández acknowledged the guidance provided by women leadership models such as “Eva Duarte de Perón and by the women who ‘dared [to go] where none had dared [to go before]’ in relation to the Madres and Abuelas” (Waigandt 2007). Far from trying to convince observers of her commitment to women’s rights, this appeal to gender solidarity was more of an attempt to align Fernández’ candidacy with a legacy of strong women leadership models. Fernández makes no attempt to mask the fact that her acknowledgment of women-led social movements does not extend to those that advocate sexual and reproductive rights. Successfully, Fernández used this gender-based frame to disguise the level of pressure that a tense debate between feminist groups and the Church had placed on her as a woman leader.

When speaking at pro-women events, Fernández likes to interpellate her fellow “compañeras de género” (gender companions) or her “hermanas de género” (gender sisters). However, in parallel to the “citizen” frame, these broad terms fail to include a significant group of women. While there must be a broad social base of conservative women who feel represented, for others, Fernández’ gendered discourses go against the grain or seem hypocritical. For those women with a feminist consciousness, for example, it would be apparent that Fernández rarely backs up this interpellation of women as a collective by recognising the work being championed by feminist and women’s rights groups. A close reading of the few speeches that Fernández made around the four International Women’s Days celebrated during her first mandate reveals a conscious disconnection with contemporary feminist debates. Instead, these debates are often back-grounded when Fernández brings her own personal victim narrative to the fore, positioning herself as a woman struggling against impossible odds like the Madres and Abuelas before her.

On March 6, 2009, Fernández paid homage to twelve pioneering women in the newly inaugurated Salón Mujeres Argentinas del Bicentenario (Bicentenary Hall of Argentine Women), where their portraits hang today.239 While she commended these “suffering” women for “having had the courage to oppose the conventionalisms of their time” (2009), she made no mention of the challenges, demands, debates or even the achievements of contemporary Argentine women’s movements. Instead, she alluded to her own suffering – in the third person – as “a political militant… a woman who simply… wants to fulfil this moment in history by reinstalling in Argentina some questions that have to do with true

239 Among the names listed were independence heroine Juana Azurduy, jazz singer-turned-journalist Paloma Efron “Blackie,” Mapuche singer Aime Painé, artists Lola Mora, Alfonsina Storni and Tita Morello, writer and journal editor Victoria Ocampo, suffragette Cecilia Grierson, and, of course, Eva Perón.
essence…” (ibid). While the historical women privileged in this Bicentenary exhibition broke with convention, they no longer pose any threat. Fernández’ statement of self-defence confirms a strategic decision to avoid the controversy surrounding proactive feminist women in the present.

Next, in 2010, Fernández selected March 8 to announce her introduction of a new bill to Congress. It is of huge importance to a gender-based collective of ethnically and socially marginalised women in that it is designed to protect the basic employment rights of domestic workers on the same terms as the current labour laws protect other workers. In terms of the class implications of this bill, it is not surprising that Fernández openly supported it. Her historical ties to Peronism would have taught her that the “regulatory state” requires a broad support base. Signing and in many ways appropriating a bill that fits well within her social justice agenda, Fernández was assured of that continued support. Given that Fernández is unlikely to have experienced ethnic or class oppression, a discrimination frame would seem to contradict her privileged social status. Nevertheless, an examination of her discourse reveals that Fernández sought common ground by appealing to a shared sense of experiential knowledge: gender discrimination. Given that misrecognition is experienced differently by poor and indigenous women, this advancement in the protection of women’s labour rights was somewhat trivialised by the “victim frame” that Fernández chose for its announcement. Fernández once again reminded the audience of the day when she proclaimed that her role as president would be made more difficult “by the simple fact of being a woman” (2010). By qualifying her claim as “a bit feminist” (ibid.), Fernández seemed to contradict her infamous non-feminist position. However, a closer analysis reveals that this statement corresponded more closely to a biological sisterhood claim that she had made earlier in the speech: “fundamentally, independent of whatever role we fulfil [in life], it is our condition as mothers that bonds us all” (ibid.). Finally, although this bill was “elaborated by the labour minister and presented by the president” (Reconocerán 2010), Fernández would have had very little to do with its historical development. It is therefore significant that Fernández completely failed to mention the protagonist role that feminist and women’s organisations had played over many years of campaigning for women’s labour rights. However, this “feminine difference” framework corresponds to Fernández’ determined effort to disconnect this bill from feminist politics.

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240 On March 16, 2011, this bill granting domestic workers the same entitlements as other workers was passed by a unanimous vote through the Chamber of Diputados (Mensaje Nº 0327, Expte. 10-PE-10); for details, see (Jorquera 2011). For a comprehensive account of the laws currently protecting domestic workers, see (Cortes 2009).
The one discursive element that seems to undermine any appeal that Fernández may have attempted to make to domestic workers on grounds of their shared condition as “discriminated women” is her position of elite social status. Nevertheless, this victim frame reappeared again one year later, during a speech delivered during a tardy celebration of International Women’s Day, on March 18, 2011. Positioning women, in the context of “great suffering and great pain,” Fernández commended “the women of Argentina” for having been “the bastion during the hard times” and lamented that “it is not easy being a woman, much less when we have the immense responsibility, as I do, to lead the country” (2011c). Considering the post-dictatorship context and the Madres legacy, there is strategic reason for Fernández to draw such gender parallels. However, her choice of that particular moment to reinforce her “pro-life” stance was problematic. While paying special homage to the thousands of women volunteer social workers who drive the national “pro-natal” support programme for mothers, Plan Más Vida, Fernández stressed, “we support life above all things” (ibid.). This was a timely statement given the abortion debate in Congress at the time. However, the fact that Fernández chose to draw such a close parallel between the Madres’ “life” discourses and those of the “pro-life” groups reinforces her strategic use of essentialist discourses to create a mythical cross-class alliance of women.

Fernández’ ambiguous position in regard to feminist-led debates was again demonstrated on July 6, 2011, when she signed a decree that prohibits all media from advertising sexual services, which recognised and addressed the Argentine media’s commercial exploitation of women. While this was a pro-rights move, Fernández’ claim to having “saved 2,221 people” from prostitution recalled the moralistic beneficence societies of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries that worked to reduce and control the high levels of prostitution in Buenos Aires (see Chapter Two). Again reverting to the victim frame, Fernández condemned the media’s exploitation of “the most formidable and shameful… humiliation of the feminine condition” (2011a). By linking this to her own situation, Fernández suggested that the media had also victimised her “as a woman,” explaining that “in nine months I have passed from being the puppet of a double command to a chronic depressive, sedated and medicated…” (ibid). Once again, Fernández seeks common ground

241 It is interesting to note that on March 8, 2011, the Madres paid homage to Fernández and Evita together by hanging a large banner onto the fence surrounding the Casa Rosada containing images of both of these icons. In Bonafini’s words these are “the two greatest women the country has ever had” (Homenajeada 2011).

242 As mentioned in Chapter Four, this same message was accentuated in her “strong commitment to life” framing of changes to the Asignación Universal por Hijo de la ANSES (AUH), in 2011 (Fernández de Kirchner 2011b).
with other women on exclusively gendered terms, in a way that masks her ethnic and class privilege.

Comparing Fernández’ words to those that Bachelet chose to use within pro-women contexts reveals the very different degrees to which these two political figures advocate the protection of women’s rights. While Bachelet’s medical discourses and words of solidarity met expected norms, her actions transgressed them. For example, on August 2007, Bachelet reflected on her first chance as president to celebrate International Women’s Day at The Tenth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, August 6-9, in Quito, Ecuador. She began by defining womanhood as a series of innate attributes: “Being a woman is loving life and expressing it on being moved [vibrar], laughing, crying and loving, with the richness that these emotions bring” (2007). She then positioned this gender construction within the domestic sphere: “Being a woman is relating to others, with an immense capacity to put oneself in the place of the other. And these feelings, with all their intensity, have the private world as their natural environment of expression” (ibid). She later shifted toward a rights-based frame, removed the mask, and began to advocate the act of “breaking through this limit and spreading [those feelings] in the political sphere” which she described as “a new adventure, at times hard and difficult, but tremendously gratifying…” (ibid). Bachelet’s self-positioning within an “adventurer frame” or “pioneer frame,” which presents the “breaking through” experience as “difficult” but “gratifying,” helps to explain why her political profile appealed to feminist sensibilities.

Bachelet and Fernández both seem to turn to broad or ambiguous interpretive frames when negotiating complicated ideological debates about women’s rights. The key difference seems to be that while Fernández’ ambiguous non-feminist claims delegitimise the strategic discussion of women’s rights, Bachelet locates her public role within prudent role-based frames with a strategic aim of gaining consensus for women’s rights in a non-threatening way. The presence or lack of a discursive relationship with any type of feminism corresponds to the diametrically different ways in which Bachelet and Fernández present their capacity as women political figures to advance women’s rights. In contrast to Fernández’ non-relationship with feminist agendas, Bachelet’s nomination to head the newly formed United Nations organisation, UN Women, after her mandate ended in 2010, suggests that she was able to put forward policies that benefitted women’s rights disguised as strictly social

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243 This statement is corroborated by the range of criticisms that this camp makes of Fernández. Maffía, for example, perceives of Fernández as having a “patriarchal leadership style” (2010, 201) and Dora Barrancos is not alone in questioning Fernández’ ambiguity “on the question of gender” (quoted in Di Marco 2009).
advancements, and as such, this allowed her to maintain a healthy relationship with women’s rights organisations in Chile. This international standing further legitimises her performance as president among those who are struggling for gender equality on the global stage.

Likewise, in contrast to Fernández’ lack of support for the Consejo, Bachelet had a positive relationship with SERNAM.\(^{244}\) This enabled this agency’s efforts to advance well beyond what the \textit{Generalas} had been able to achieve in Argentina. In addition to increasing SERNAM’s budget every year, Bachelet reinforced the elaboration and enforcement of SERNAM’s second Gender Agenda (2006-10), which advocated a similar range of legal reforms to improve gender equality at all levels of life in Chile. One year into her mandate, CEDAW congratulated Bachelet on her commitment to the gender agenda, noting “with satisfaction the strength of the national machinery for the advancement of women…” (Concluding Comments 2006). At the end of her mandate, feminist analyses of her leadership style commended her for “breaking away from patriarchal schemas that did not conceive of women in power” (Alejandra Flores, quoted in Pezoa 2010), for “better sensitising society” to pending tasks in respect to the condition of women in Chile (Carolina Tohá, quoted in Pezoa 2010), and for “developing a more integrated and cooperative leadership” (Fernández Ramil 2010). In particular, feminists praised Bachelet for not hesitating “in developing a discourse in the name of gender” (Fernández Ramil 2010). Highlighting the positive long-term implications that these discursive shifts might have on gender relations, if they had not been eclipsed by a switch to conservative neoliberal rule in the 2010 elections, feminist observers asked if cultural change might re-emerge after “cooking on a low flame” (ibid). Reflecting on the reversal of certain advancements one year into Piñera’s presidency, the most obvious being gender parity in cabinet, Fernández Ramil lamented, “we women have passed from being subjects with rights, a vision inspired by the international human rights regime, to value bearers, within an essentially productivist schema” (2011).\(^{245}\)

While I do not fully agree with Fernández Ramil’s statements above, I do believe that Chileans were made more aware of their rights as citizens during the Bachelet era. As testament to this awakening, the three centre-left candidates bidding for the presidency in 2009, including Enríquez-Ominami, converged “with different emphasis” on the need to debate the decriminalisation of therapeutic abortion (Ominami and Rubilar 2010). In addition,

\(^{244}\) As stated in Chapter Two, SERNAM is the “state body charged with designing, proposing and coordinating policies, plans, measures and legal reforms leading to equal rights and opportunities between women and men” (SERNAM 2007, 48).

\(^{245}\) For more feminist critiques, see Pezoa Navarro (2011).
a group of five Concertación senators presented the first bill addressing the topic of Gay Marriage in August 2010 (7099-07). More recently, in September 2011, after considering three separate bills for the liberalisation of abortion, the Health Commission voted, with three votes in favour and two against, to “legislate on therapeutic abortion in Chile” (“Comisión de Salud” 2011). The timing of this most recent development in the abortion debate makes it difficult to link this small victory to the Bachelet era as it did not happen under her watch. Instead, in July 2010, while speaking from the “safety” of her position as ex-President, at the presentation of ¿Género en el poder?, a book analysing her mandate from a gender perspective, Bachelet reminded her audience of an unfulfilled campaign promise. However, in contrast to her previous endorsements for a public and formal debate on family planning, this time, Bachelet specifically advocated a discussion of therapeutic abortion in Chile: “it is necessary to continue promoting the draft Framework Bill on Sexual and Reproductive Rights, which was elaborated with broad participation from civil society; [and] to deepen the debate over therapeutic abortion…” (Bachelet 2010). It may be too late for Bachelet to stake a claim in this feminist-led victory for corporal rights but she will nevertheless go down in history for her participation in the fight for gender equality.

CONCLUSION

It’s not enough to plant women’s faces in the electoral franja [televised campaign spot], without stating your position on the inferiorisation of women, which the electoral discourses themselves often reinforce with their ofertones [grandiose promises] to ‘la reina del hogar’ [the domestic queen] (Soledad Rojas, quoted in González 2005).

Bachelet and Fernández were clearly expected to operate within gendered frames. Given this expectation, few were surprised by their appropriation of role-based discourses on motherhood, the family, and the ethic of care. In addition, these leaders were expected to respond appropriately to the post-dictatorship moment. Precisely because the AFDD and the

Three related “therapeutic” abortion bills were considered together by the Health Commission. The first of these was presented by Senator Camilo Escalona in May 2009 (6522-11). The other two were presented to Congress in December 2010, one by Senators Evelyn Matthei and Fulvio Rossi for the decriminalisation of abortion “for medical reasons” (7373-07), and the other by Senators Guido Girardi, Ricardo Lagos Weber, Jaime Quintana and Eugenio Tuma for the decriminalisation of abortion for “therapeutic, eugenic or ethical-social reasons” (7391-07). For details, see http://www.senado.cl/appsenado/templates/tramitacion/index.php#, last accessed September 2011.
Madres had responded to the violent atrocities of the military dictatorships, it was impossible for Bachelet and Fernández to subtract themselves from that powerful national legacy of discourses on the continuation of life, strengthening the community, and well-being. By comparison, it would have been unprecedented to introduce either of these candidates as a defender of women’s rights. While this would have legitimised a part of history that explains women’s presence in the political arena (feminism), it would have backgrounded a unique history of narratives that had gained a wide consensus in the post-dictatorship moment. However, as Soledad Rojas’ criticism of the presidential campaign in Chile reminds us, some hoped that these women presidential candidates would explicitly champion women’s rights.

I have argued that there was as visible an avoidance of feminist discourses in 2005 as there was in 2007. Rojas is not alone in suggesting that formal political discourses are not adequately addressing women’s oppression. The ways that women’s roles and rights are constructed through law, in health and criminal codes, and in the campaign platforms examined in this chapter demonstrate that official discourses in Chile and in Argentina are still failing to protect women’s corporal rights. Although the pace of cultural shift is too slow to measure, evidence of a time lag appears in the disjunction between official campaign discourses on the “female citizen” and feminist counter-discourses on “women’s rights as citizens.”

This chapter has reversed the argument that a strategic reappropriation of role-based framing helped prevent a conservative backlash and asked why feminists did not mobilise against the conservative gender agendas presented in these two campaigns. From a feminist perspective, much of this compromise met a need to set achievable goals within the highly limited parameters of a fractured political movement. At the same time, however, feminist activists lost an opportunity to construct a discursive political space from which to address long-pending demands to end the violation of women’s right to autonomously control their bodies and lives.
CONCLUSION

When the first two women presidents of Chile and Argentina were elected in 2005 and 2007, many people wondered if “being a woman” played a determining role in their electoral success. There was wide consensus at this point in history that the electorate in both cases wanted “new” leadership but there was no agreement over whether or not the “gender factor” mattered. This thesis focused on the political discourses used in the presidential campaigns and gender-related policies of Michelle Bachelet and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in order to examine how gender was negotiated in defining this new leadership, and uncovered the perhaps unsurprising continuity of historically “feminine” discourses.

Using feminist critical discourse analysis to problematise this observation, I came to understand these discursive events as a gender performance, which, in turn, revealed the presidential candidates’ anxieties at having to negotiate double binds that plague women in politics across the world: having to prove their uniqueness, newness, and defend their “femininity,” when these traits simultaneously imply a lack of experience and competence. The danger, I suggested, was that in staging “the gender factor,” these candidates exposed themselves to accusations of “deceptive” and “unnatural” gender performances. However, I proposed that this was a calculated risk because apart from responding to societies’ immediate practical interests, these gender performances also served to avoid associations with back-grounded figures and traditions. At the top of the “do-not-do” list, was the association with socialist discourses that had been so severely repressed under dictatorship, along with the explicit use of rights-based discourses and feminist agendas, which, I argued, would have been perceived as threatening and potentially “dangerous.”

In their campaigns, these leaders avoided certain discourses and embraced others. In considering the history of leadership models available to them, I have analysed the quiet development of a women’s style of leadership in the Southern Cone over time. Beginning with the early-nineteenth century, I highlighted how Southern Cone women’s organising has developed according to intersecting gender, class, and religious ideologies through to the late-twentieth century. By the mid-1970s, a unique model of women’s political leadership had visibly emerged in the defence of human rights: the AFDD and the Madres. Further analysis demonstrated how these women’s political discourses persisted under democracy – the Madres embraced anti-neoliberal struggles and the AFDD never stopped acting in
defence of memory, truth, and justice. Their actions in the defence of democracy highlighted the failings of successive masculine leaders and, I suggested, redirected hopes for change toward the presidential elections of two women for the first time in Chile’s and Argentina’s national history.

This process is not obvious to most observers. In researching women in politics, most analysts have studied the politics of representation in the formal field of government (legislative processes and outcomes by and for women, the subject of much of Chapter One); and the politics of recognition in the fields of humanities (stereotypes and frames, the subject of much of Chapters One and Two). In a separate disciplinary context, the politics of redistribution tends to be discursively housed in the social sciences (social justice, the subject of Chapters Three and Four). These separate disciplinary divisions have their own discursive conventions and do not offer a comprehensive understanding of leadership by women in this region of the world. My study brought these three forms of politics together and suggested that the women-led human rights organisations began a long apprenticeship in leadership by calling for a new politics from their role-based positions in the family, and they created what Ramsay called “maternal legacies.” Thus, this project has revealed a rich history of women’s political leadership that “set up political mothers as role models to compete with founding fathers” (2003, 252). Specifically, this “maternal legacy” challenged “paternal authority” by gender sensitising political discourse without the majority of the population or the analysts of these processes becoming aware of this.

To bring a more rigorous approach to the analysis of how these processes work, feminist CDA employs a multidisciplinary methodology to explore the cognitive processes that manifest as scripts and frames. I used feminist CDA to tie together a selection of interpretive frames that reveal the unique ways in which women leaders’ identities, actions, and strategies were constructed in the Southern Cone. Then, I used a comparative approach to tease out their differences. The latter played an important role in Chapter Three, where I contrasted the Madres singular maternal identity to the AFDD’s foregrounding of “absent men,” and in Chapter Four, where it aided an understanding of the role-based frames that Bachelet and Fernández used to disguise or avoid specific rights-based economic policies. In Chapter Five, comparative analysis revealed the starkly different relationships that Bachelet and Fernández had with feminist traditions.

In considering how the research on women leaders explains the politics of representation faced by women in comparison to men, Chapter One outlined the current women-in-politics literature to reveal the benefits for political women of positive
discrimination measures known as gender quotas. In the field of recognition politics, much of the literature focusing on stereotypes of women in politics has documented the delegitimisation of women whose access to the political sphere was authorised by a male patron. These two examples suggest that quota women are labelled “mujeres de” and women electoral candidates supported by males are discredited for having been nominated by “el dedo.” In considering how women leaders confront the politics of recognition, this literature also highlighted the negative effects of the dichotomous double binds that force political women into compromising negotiations of gender beliefs, in particular, the problem of remaining “feminine” and appearing “competent,” when these are perceived as mutually exclusive.

In considering political leadership by women in this specific region, I responded to calls for women-in-politics’ analyses to pay more detailed attention to “how past and present women’s movements might provide particular openings for women presidential candidates” (Thomas and Adams 2010, 127). In Chapter Two, this study centred on the unique ways in which “feminism” and “womanhood” were defined in the Southern Cone, particularly in eras of collective action, such as the first (suffrage) and second wave (democracy) of women’s movements. This brief review offered some insight into the specificity of discursive codes and ideologies that construct women as political subjects in Chile and Argentina today. In particular, it revealed that the current vilification of “feminism” as middle-class and bourgeois and the default association of “feminine” with “motherhood” and “whiteness” have a long history. In highlighting the terms and discourses that organising women historically rejected or disguised (feminist, middle-class, bourgeois, and partisan), this review demonstrated the continuous development of a women’s leadership style that framed women’s collective identities, strategies, and actions as feminine, maternal, nurturing, virtuous, and by extension “apolitical.” In addition to documenting how these women leaders were subordinated to patriarchal masculinist world views and artificial spatial divisions under dominant national political movements, I demonstrated how they were influenced by global movements, such as rising anticlericalism, fascism, WWII, socialism, and the Cold War, which relegated women’s specific claims for representation to a secondary concern. Ironically, given the relatively more violent repression experienced under the military dictatorships and the hypermasculine narratives that invisibilised women’s militancy, a highly visible “women’s politics of resistance” emerged in the dictatorship eras.

In Chapter Three, I follow the development of a political leadership model emanating from women’s experience of this extreme repression. Once fundamental rights were violently
removed, people were forced to return to the basics. This highlighted the importance of all that was previously relegated to the sphere of “women’s work”: motherhood (the continuation of life), the family (community), and care (well-being). At that point it became evident that these were collective interests. Women leaders visibly led the struggles to recuperate life and dignity under repression with their experiential knowledge. Over the approximately thirty-year period studied in my analysis of the AFDD and the Madres, people grew accustomed to seeing women publicly defend the population’s fundamental human rights. Moreover, these women leaders responded to the population’s immediate needs under dictatorship with unique performativity. As opposed to applying received academic knowledge, these experiential epistemologies returned to the basics. As they transcended the private-public divide with their bodily discourses, women’s traditional roles in the family – motherhood, elder and child care – were resignified. In doing so, these women leaders united a long history of obvious “feminine” agendas with invisible “political” agendas. Previously subalternised by an equally long history of masculine patriarchal politics, women’s “collective action frames” feminised the political sphere. Through a process that feminised political leadership, traditional roles began to represent immediate nation-wide interests, the continuation of life (motherhood), strengthening the community (family), and well-being (the ethic of care) and all that was previously defined as “women’s interests,” took on an evident political meaning.

To clearly demonstrate the correspondence between these collective action frames and the two political campaigns studied, I organised my findings into four new frames: 1) The “feminine sensibility” frame that drew on positive stereotypes historically associated with “feminine difference”; 2) the first experiential knowledge frame that positioned women at the heart of the family-as-nation metaphor; 3) the non-threatening luchadora frame that presented women as non-conflictive and responded to calls for a politics of care; and 3) the second experiential knowledge frame that influenced the different ways in which Bachelet and Fernández represented social trauma.

Contextualised by the post-dictatorship moment and a growing discontent with neoliberalism, my analysis of the presidential campaigns in Chapter Four showed the present consistency of feminine role-based frames. This focus highlighted a widespread sense of malestar, and disillusionment with one elite masculine figure in particular, the neoliberal expert. Although positively valued during the heady days of neoliberalism, “meritocracy” was later exposed as a fallacy – of the equal playing field – when Argentina’s neoliberal economy crashed in 2001. HROs, NGOs, and popular organisations, acting in defence of
marginalised peoples – among others, women, indigenous, and poor – exposed the neoliberal model’s failings and overemphasis on the individual. Unwittingly, these actors also highlighted the failings of the masculine figures that embodied this economic model. By default, those seeking change and “newness” returned to historical constructions of “feminine difference.” Through its association with women, this construct aided a discursive process in which the state could be resignified as “feminine.” Feminising the state, in turn, reinforced a “politics of care” carried forth by a more affable female face. My thesis, therefore, built on these existing studies by offering a three-dimensional critical discourse analysis that linked the politics of representation and recognition with redistribution, leading to an explicit consideration of socio-economic contexts and class identities when understanding women in politics. I did not find, however, that these leaders consistently offered substantive representation to all women on all issues affecting them.

While retaining the neoliberal doctrines of efficiency and internationalism, Bachelet and Fernández endeavoured to create the illusion of a “feminine economy” that incorporated “care politics” and was led by a “mother-president.” I presented this strategy as problematic in that it exposed these two political women candidates to “denaturalisation” attacks that focused on how they deviated from traditional gender roles. I also suggested that this role-based frame exposed these women to rights-based arguments, led by indigenous, environmental, and student organisations. Nevertheless, both the state and these protest movements left the “feminisation of poverty” largely unchallenged. While analysing a selection of redistributive policies affecting women in the home that Bachelet and Fernández pledged and implemented (childcare, superannuation, and housing), I argued that role-based frames provided men with no incentive to assume “co-responsibility” for reproductive labour, which, combined with neoliberal attack on social services, forced working women to assume a triple responsibility. The explicit defence of women’s right to economic autonomy in the home remained in the hands of feminist actors alone, who were marginalised by these leaders.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I foregrounded the continuing struggle to strategically address women’s specific rights through a fully-feminist agenda. Working on the premise that hegemonic discourses invisibilise feminist collective action and slow the expansion of gender equality, my analysis revealed a disjunction between dominant narratives on the termination of pregnancy and feminist counter-discourses on women’s corporal rights. I suggested that feminist discourses were considered an assault on the Church hierarchies’ last bastion of hegemonic legal power over women’s bodies and life choices. Consequently, I proposed that
this disjunction makes it extremely difficult for political actors to defend women’s corporal right to terminate an unwanted pregnancy.

Following feminist theory, I re-introduced “the masquerade” as a symptom of the ideological battle straining relations between economic, political, and religious hierarchies and fractured feminist groups. Given that in-power elites have historically dominated and reframed the terms of the abortion debate, the demands expressed by out-of-power activists who lack popular support at the base are largely delegitimised. Their claims are also contextualised by a lack of consensus on how women politicians should respond to this ethical debate. These ideological conditions forced Bachelet and Fernández into a difficult negotiation with narrow parameters. First, I suggested that they masked their anxiety with broad totalising frames such as “feminine solidarity,” “pro-life,” and “citizenship” to brush over women’s specific interests. These gendered frames marked a shift from the universal “social justice” and “solidarity” frames that had gained wide consensus under Lagos and Kirchner as the politically correct way to construct the nation’s interests. However they were heavily restricted to women’s central role in the family. Second, I used feminist CDA to problematise these role-based frames and reveal how they glossed over a very uneven playing field and create an illusion of “sisterhood” that does not exist.

LIMITATIONS, STRENGTHS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Lacking access to women leaders in popular classes and to indigenous feminists, my sources for Southern Cone women’s history were largely limited to urban middle-class feminist academics and NGO leaders. It is for this reason that the Madres’ and the AFDD’s experiential knowledges (interviews, archives, publications) proved so valuable (see Appendix). The scope for future research that considers previously ignored sources of history is wide. An in-depth feminist CDA of visual texts of women in politics is important because strategies that limit women to a narrow range of visual representations are common in transnational advertising. In Latin America, the most innovative forms of leadership today are by indigenous peoples. In the new constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia, for example, a concerted effort has been made to interpellate women with gendered word endings – as in campesinas; therefore, women indigenous leadership is a field that needs to be analysed by indigenous women scholars and others. Their testimonial accounts under the dictatorship and neoliberalism as well as in the current moment, recorded in many media forms such as
narrative, music, weaving, protest discourse, and the domestic economy of food would certainly reveal important examples of women’s leadership.

More comparative feminist research needs to be done in order to demonstrate cross-cultural influences, intercommunication among nations, and their continuities over time. A comparative approach is currently reconsidering nineteenth-century “feminists” more closely for how they produced new knowledge through their travels, either in exile or for the purposes of higher education. From Argentina, Juana Manuela Gorriti (writer) and Juana Manso (journalist, editor, and educator) need to be more frequently analysed by all scholars of the independence and national era. If the “feminine” frames deployed in the Argentine context were reconsidered as a mask, feminist CDA might reveal hidden feminist genealogies that provided political leadership models often dismissed by positivist gatekeepers in the social sciences. Likewise, using feminist CDA to compare the political discourses developed by or about anti-bourgeois militant women who played important roles in recent history – such as Violeta Parra or Gladys Marín in Chile, and Norma Arrostíto in Argentina – could reveal feminist agendas as forms of knowledge that are often hidden behind the discourses circumscribing the class-based demands for which these women are better known.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Recent developments in Latin America provide exciting areas for further feminist critical discourse analyses of women in high political office. In 2010, Dilma Rousseff was elected to the presidency in Brazil, and Laura Chinchilla was elected president in Costa Rica. One year later, Fernández was re-elected for a second term in Argentina. As this study has demonstrated, for better or for worse, women’s election campaigns are embedded in a wealth of experiential knowledges uniquely acquired through their condition as women. Therefore, these new case studies demand a multidisciplinary, comparative, and critical examination of how gender was negotiated and differed across the diverse times and spaces that define these culturally-specific campaigns.
APPENDIX

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

ARGENTINA, BUENOS AIRES

Nov. 30, 2009_Soledad Vallejos: journalist, Página 12/ Las 12.
Dec. 07, 2009_Juana de Pargament: Co-director-treasurer, Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo.
Dec. 08, 2009_Dora Barrancos: Sociologist; Director, Instituto Interdisciplinario de Estudios de Género de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, University of Buenos Aires (UBA); Profesora Titular, Latin American History, Faculty of Social Sciences, UBA.
Dec. 12, 2009_Diana Maffía: Diputada Civic Coalition/ARI (2007-2011); Director, Instituto Interdisciplinario de Estudios de Género de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, UBA.
Dec. 16, 2009_Hebe de Bonafini: President, Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo.
Dec. 15, 2010_Cristina Cravino: Anthropologist; Research-professor, Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento and autor of several books on Argentina’s villas miserias.

CHILE, SANTIAGO DE CHILE

Nov. 12, 2009_María de los Ángeles Fernández Ramil: Executive director, Fundación Chile 21.
Nov. 13, 2009_Jaime Baeza Freer: Political Scientist; Research-professor, Academia Nacional de Estudios Políticos y Estratégicos, Universidad de Chile.
Nov. 16, 2009_José Aylwin: Human rights lawyer; Co-director, Observatorio Ciudadano.
Nov. 18, 2009_Gabriela Zuñiga: Co-director-communications manager, Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos (AFDD).
Nov. 23, 2009_Carmen Torres: Executive director, Fundación Instituto de la Mujer.
Nov. 24, 2009_Nancy Yañez: Human rights lawyer; Co-director, Observatorio Ciudadano.

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