Gender Interests and the Political Process:
The Case of the CO-MADRES of El Salvador

by

Cristine Denver

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Signature of Author...

Certified by..
Jonathan Fox
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted By...
Dr. Donald L.M. Blackmer
Chairman, Graduate Program Committee

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ABSTRACT

A case study of the CO-MADRES (Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Disappeared, and Assassinated Persons of El Salvador) was used to test the validity of theories that argue only *feminista* (feminist) organizations represent the strategic gender interests that challenge gender inequality. The case was constructed through interviews with Maria Teresa Tula (a representative of the CO-MADRES), internal documents (collected at the CO-MADRES D.C. office), and some secondary literature.

The results from the case study showed that the CO-MADRES, a non-feminist women's organization, politically represented strategic gender interests. Additionally, this particular case showed a strong correlation between the extent of political opportunities for the representation of strategic gender interests and the degree to which the CO-MADRES represented those interests. The case showed some of the fallacies in dominant theories about Latin American women's organizations, and some of the strengths of emerging alternative theories.

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Jonathan Fox
       Title: Associate Professor of Political Science

Introduction

During the nineteen seventies and eighties, while authoritarianism dominated the region, Latin American women's participation in political organizations became increasingly visible. Women participated in a wide range of organizations, conservative and progressive, some of which included men as well as women. The increasing number and visibility of political organizations that included only women, however, attracted attention within the academic community. Though run by women, the scope of issues addressed by these organizations extended beyond issues that primarily affected women: women's political organizations included human rights organizations, women's branches of labor unions, and popular economic organizations. Although some of the new women's organizations identified themselves as feminist, the majority did not organize around issues of gender inequality (Corocan-Nantes 1993: 139).

A dominant theme within the literature about contemporary Latin American women's organizations is the effect the different types of organizations have on the representation of women's interests. Scholars of Latin America as well as Latin American activists commonly distinguish between the *movimiento femenino* (women's movement)[1] and the

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[1] "Movimiento femenino" (or movimento femenina in Portuguese) is frequently translated to "feminine movement." This translation, however, is problematic because the term feminine in English carries connotations femenina does not necessarily carry in Spanish or Portuguese: although femenina, like feminine, can describe certain "womanly" characteristics, it is also used to describe gender. When the term is used to describe gender translating femenina to feminine is at the very least an awkward translation and at its worst, misleading. Consider, for example, the translation of Rama Femenina (of a political party) to "Feminine Branch." The translation is both more awkward and confusing than a translation to "Women's

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movimiento feminista (feminist movement).[2] Femenina organizations typically mobilize

within traditional gender roles (as good mothers and caretakers) when they engage in

political activity (Singer and Brant 1982: 16-17). Feminista organizations, on the other

hand, openly challenge the legitimacy of those traditional gender roles and the sexual

division of labor (Singer and Brant 1982: 16-17). Feminist scholars make a parallel

distinction between practical and strategic gender interests. In a seminal article about Latin

American women's movements, Maxine Molyneux defines women's practical gender

interests in terms of women's material needs as they fulfill their daily responsibilities:

acquiring sufficient food for family members often fulfills part of a woman's role as

caregiver, so Molyneux would consider this a practical gender interest (Molyneux 1985:

233). She defines strategic gender interests as interests rooted in the struggle for gender

equality: thus she considers equal treatment under the law a strategic gender interest

(Molyneux 1985: 233). Scholars generally expect femenina organizations to represent

practical gender interests and feminista organizations to represent strategic gender interests.

Because the femenina organizations generally organize within traditional roles as

mothers, wives, or caregivers, some feminist scholars argue that these organizations reify

rather than challenge gender inequality (Feijoó and Gogna 1990; Jaquette 1991; Perelli

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Branch." A women's branch of a party in the United States would not be called a "feminine" division. The
use of feminine branch might lead the reader to believe that the organization promoted certain types of
womanly behavior, whether or not it actually does. In order to avoid falsely attributing characteristics to
diverse organizations, I will use the Spanish terms femenina and feminista except when another scholar
translates the term to feminine (Conversations with Jonathan Fox, Sandra Aidar, Pablo Policzer and Marga
Gomez-Reino helped to clarify my thinking on this issue).

[2] This distinction addresses the question of difference between progressive women's organizations: the
categories do not include conservative women's organizations. Scholars of Latin American women's
organizations have generally neglected study of conservative women's organizations in recent years,
although there have been important exceptions (recent studies include Fisher 1993; Molina 1989). A
number of studies analyze the Poder Femenino (Women's Power) of Chile (see Chaney 1974; Crummett
1977; Mattelart 1975) but studies of more contemporary organizations, such as the Frente Femenina
(Women's Front) of El Salvador, have not yet received serious treatment by Latin Americanists. The bias
in recent literature towards the study of progressive women's organizations leaves the question of the degree
to which conservative women's organizations have created new and durable channels of representation for
women's interests not only unanswered but unasked.

1991). Other scholars see the dominance of immediate practical gender interests as an additional constraint on the ability of femenina organizations to identify and confront barriers to gender equality (Barrig 1991; Chiriac and Padilha 1982). These characterizations of femenina organizations lead some analysts to argue that the new organizations are part of a crisis mobilization of women: women only move into the political arena to fulfill domestic responsibilities during periods of political and economic crisis, and will abandon the political arena in favor of domestic responsibilities when the crisis subsides.

Recent case studies, however, indicate that femenina organizations can represent both practical and strategic gender interests, though these studies do not provide adequate analysis of the degree to which the organizations represent strategic interests *politically* (Stephen 1991,1992; Lind 1992; Schirmer 1988, 1993).[3] Recent studies focus on the *social* representation of strategic gender interests: challenges the femenina organizations pose to gender inequality through the transformation of individual women who participate in the organizations (Jelin 1990; Lind 1992). Though microresistance can play a critical role in transforming power relations within society, strategic gender interests must also be represented within formal political institutions in order to change laws and policies that underpin women's social and political inequality.[4] An argument that the femenina

[3]While nearly any question of power relations can be treated as a political problem, I will be using the term "political representation" to refer to the representation of interests which demand a response from the state. A more broadly defined conception of the political fails to distinguish between "social" representation of strategic gender interests through day-to-day practices and the representation of interests which specifically target political institutions as the agents of change. While social and political representation of strategic gender representation may overlap, this distinction is necessary to bring out the role femenina organizations play in challenging the policies and institutions which enforce gender inequality.

[4] Sonia Alvarez argues this point in *Engendering Democracy in Brazil* : "Latin American women's movements, like women's movements everywhere, have multiple cultural and social goals that cannot be pursued solely through the policy process; they seek attitudinal, behavioral, and normative changes that must be pursued within and outside the State and political society. But there are many changes in women's subordinate status that must be pursued primarily, if not exclusively within the confines of formal institutions-changes in the laws governing marriage, the family, conception and contraception, women's work, women's sexuality, and so on" (Alvarez 1990).

organizations created new channels of political representation for women's interests during the nineteen seventies and eighties should address the degree to which femenina organizations represent strategic interests within the political arena.[5]

A related absence in the literature is adequate analysis of the relationship between external political conditions and the capacity of femenina organizations to politically represent strategic gender interests. A few scholars suggest that dependence of femenina organizations on allies such as the Catholic Church establishes external constraints on an organization's capacity to represent strategic gender interests (Alvarez 1990; Chiriac and Padilha 1982). For the most part, however, feminist scholars have left the subject of external political constraints and opportunities unexplored: while the dominant literature neglects this issue because it assumes femenina organizations are inherently unwilling to represent strategic gender demands, the emerging alternative literature fails to address this question because it neglects femenina organization's political agendas.

I will address the following questions: To what extent can a femenina organization represent strategic gender interests politically? What is the nature of the relationship between external political conditions and a femenina organization's capacity to represent strategic gender interests? Under what conditions does a femenina organization politically represent strategic interests?

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[5] I define collective interests as the full range of objectives an organization embraces, whether those interests are publicly prioritized or not. An organization's objectives may range, for example, from providing new public housing to socializing medicine, but the full range of objectives may not be apparent to the general public. If those objectives are internally defined as collective goals, whether or not they are prioritized for action at any given time, then I would define them as an organization's interests. Whether or not an organization *represents* certain interests, however, is necessarily a question about their activism around an issue. If a group is not active around an objective which they embrace, I would not consider them to represent that interest. If a group does take action on a certain issue, then I would consider them to represent that interest. Although there are important variations in the degree to which organizations represent different interests (how much activity they devote to one issue as opposed to another) or the particular form the representation takes (whether it is political representation or social representation), the key distinction between a group which represents an interest and one which does not is whether they are acting on that interest at any given time.

The CO-MADRES of El Salvador pose a compelling "crucial case study" for the utility of existing theory about women's organizing in Latin America (Eckstein 1975: 189-119). CO-MADRES is one of many "motherist" human rights organizations which Latin American women established under authoritarian regimes.[6] CO-MADRES is best described as a femenina rather feminista organization because its members mobilize around their rights as mothers.[7] In recent years, however, CO-MADRES began to represent strategic gender interests politically while they continued to present themselves as a mother's organization rather than a feminista organization. As a femenina organization that represents strategic gender interests, CO-MADRES tests the boundaries of current theorizing about women's organizing in Latin America. In the case of CO-MADRES, political conditions provided significant constraints and opportunities that affected the range of strategies available to represent group interests and frequently provided different kinds of strategic opportunities or interests for varying types of interests.

The CO-MADRES demonstrated the capacity to represent strategic gender interests as political opportunities for representing gender interests gradually expanded. Resources from external sources and the construction of new channels of representation were critical to the expansion and politicization of the CO-MADRES gender agenda. In particular, the

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[6] Motherist groups are human rights organizations which base their challenge to human rights abuses of authoritarian regimes on their rights as mothers to protect and care for their children (Schirmer 1993). Motherist organizations utilize traditional gender roles in order to mount a powerful challenge to authoritarian states: "In their protest, these women fulfill traditional expectations and at the same time violate them. These are women who expected to live out an ideology of "separate spheres" in which men and women had complementary tasks. Whatever ideology of the sexual division of labor they may have espoused, their political circumstances , as well as the apparent greater vulnerability and conventionality of the men they lived among, required they act publicly as women" (Ruddick 1989: 229). Other examples of motherist organizations include the Argentinean Madres of the Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) and the Chilean Agrupación de Familiares Detenidos-Desaparecidos (Association of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared) (Chuchryk 1991; Feijoó 1991; Navarro 1989; Schirmer 1988).

[7] A consistent justification for the CO-MADRES political work is their right as mothers to find their children. The justification is deeply rooted in Catholic gender ideology: comparisons between Mary's suffering as she watched her son die and the suffering of the CO-MADRES are frequent in the organization's literature. From this ideology, the CO-MADRES claim special rights for mothers to oppose the state: through their suffering mothers have intimate knowledge of the injustice of state repression.

development of new, more independent coalitions of women's organizations created important new channels for representing women's gender interests. National political conditions in El Salvador changed substantially after the signing of the peace accordsin 1991: the government became less repressive and more responsive to opposition demands, and opposition leaders began to establish positions within institutional politics. Under these conditions, the CO-MADRES demonstrated increasing capacity to represent strategic gender interests.

I focus on two key variables in this project: (1) the effect of external political conditions on the CO-MADRES and the range of strategic choices available to them and (2) the interests represented by CO-MADRES as those conditions change. My analysis of political conditions relies on the secondary literature about Salvadoran politics, while I base my analysis of the effect of those conditions on the CO-MADRES and the interests represented by CO-MADRES mainly on primary sources (including newsletters, press releases, internal documents and interviews by the author). Interviews with Maria Teresa Tula, the U.S. representative of CO-MADRES, and internal documents have been critical to this project.

Chapter One provides a survey of the current debate about femenina organizations. The framework developed by Maxine Molyneux can provide useful analytical tools to distinguish between different types of gender interests. Other scholars who rely on her framework, however, frequently dichotomize the interests of femenina and feminista organizations by linking femenina organizations exclusively to the practical and feminista organizations to the strategic. An emerging literature relies on an alternative framework that treats strategic and practical interests as part of a continuum. Though a one-dimensional continuum does overcome the problematic dichotomization within the dominant literature, it is difficult to use to map change over time. I propose an alternative two-dimensional framework for analyzing the changing patterns of gender interest

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representation by women's organizations, which will prove more useful in illustrating change over time.

Chapter Two turns to three alternative schools of thought to explain the relationship between the development of grassroots organizations and external political conditions: *new social movement* theory, *resource mobilization* theory, and the *political process* model. Though new social movement and resource mobilization theories provide valuable insights as to internal and external influences on the development of movement organizations, only the political process model deals extensively and directly with the relationship between political opportunities and constraints and the development of movement organizations. A modified version of Sidney Tarrow's political process model provides the basis for my analysis the development of CO-MADRES agenda.

The remaining three chapters trace the development of the CO-MADRES agenda between 1977 and 1993. Chapter Three outlines the general political conditions in El Salvador from 1977 to 1981, years of considerable political turmoil and high levels of repression. The chapter also focuses on the specific consequences of those conditions on the CO-MADRES: how the increasingly political role of Archbishop Romero facilitated a strong alliance between the Church and the CO-MADRES; how the failure of government officials to respond to formal political institutions lead to the strategic choice to use extra-institutional channels; how, after 1980, increasing repression forced the CO-MADRES to engage in less public activity. During this period, the CO-MADRES used extra-institutional means with the assistance of its allies to advance a practical gender agenda, but did not advance strategic gender interests politically.

Chapter Four explores the impact of political openings that occurred through electoral liberalization, negotiations between the FMLN and the Duarte administration between 1982 and 1988, and international pressure. Although the openings provided something less than democracy, they did have a significant impact on the range of strategies

available to the CO-MADRES. Though the Church became a less consistent ally during this period, the CO-MADRES began to strengthen alliances with the domestic opposition and international actors. The new allies provided important material and political support for the expansion of their practical agenda and for the first political actions around a strategic gender interest.

The final chapter traces the development of CO-MADRES between the election of President Cristiani and the release of the U.N. Truth Commission's report. Though repression continued through this final period, there were significant openings in institutional politics: several parties of the left participated in the 1989 and 1991 elections; six officials of the left-wing Democratic Convergence were elected to the legislature in 1991; and the FMLN was recognized as a legal political organization in the peace accords. The CO-MADRES began to pursue new strategies during this period, the most prominent of which has been the development of coalitions of women's organizations that focused on influencing political party agendas and electoral outcomes. Through coalitions with other women's organizations, the CO-MADRES has increased its political activism around both practical and strategic gender interests.

Chapter One: A Re-evaluation of Women's Gender Interests

The distinction between types of gender interests greatly influences the analysis of contemporary Latin American women's movements.[8] The terminology provides a necessary vocabulary to describe variations in the women's interests: problems that arise from gendered inequality are not the only interests women's organizations address, though the label "women's issues" frequently refers only to those interests. Scholars commonly link the distinction between practical and strategic gender interests to the distinction between femenina and feminista organizations by arguing that femenina organizations represent practical gender interests and feminista organizations represent strategic gender interests. Recent critiques present a compelling argument that the analytical connection between feminista organizations and strategic gender interests and femenina organizations and practical interests inaccurately dichotomizes the interests of Latin American women's organizations: new case studies show that femenina organizations do not limit their agenda exclusively to practical gender interests. Some critics suggest an alternative framework that measures interests along a continuum between the practical and the strategic rather than within rigid and dichotomous categories. The continuum framework is difficult to use to map changes in an organization's practical or strategic interests over time: it does not

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[8] Similar distinctions, such as Temma Kaplan's distinction between female and feminist consciousness, are also used to discuss women's political participation in Western Europe and the U.S.

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provide clear guidelines for measuring the degree to which an organization represents practical or strategic interests. At the end of this chapter, I will present a two-dimensional framework with clear guidelines for measuring the strategic and practical interests women's organizations represent, with the intent to create a framework that allows greater flexibility than the dichotomy framework and greater utility than the one-dimensional continuum model.

Defining the Terms: Femenina vs. Feminista, Strategic vs. Practical

Paul Singer and V.C. Brant develop one of the most influential definitions of the popular distinction between femenina and feminista. If a group develops a critical perspective of gender roles, Singer and Brant consider the organization *feminista* . If the organization accepts gender roles, they consider it a *femenina* organization (Singer and Brant 1982: 116).[9] To determine if an organization is femenina or feminista, Singer and Brant ask if it connects the interests it represents to a critique of gender roles. An organization is not necessarily feminista because it prioritizes better child care: the organization may politicize this issue because economic realities prevent its members from remaining at home with their children rather than because they see child care as a necessary step towards a transformation of gender roles. In this case, Brant and Singer argue that the label *femenina* is more appropriate than *feminista* .

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[9] The definition provided by Singer and Brant could in fact be used to label some organizations associated with the movimiento femenino as feminist organizations as well as defining some self-proclaimed feminists as part of the movimiento femenino. While Singer's typology has greatly influenced how scholars interpret the intentions of femenina versus feminista organizations, however, the label used to describe particular groups is generally consistent with popular usage. Rather than stimulating a closer examination of the fit between popularly labeled feminine or feminist organizations and Singer's definition of the qualities of each type of group, one could argue that Singer's definition has often been used to attribute certain characteristics to different types of women's organizations.

Maxine Molyneux's distinction between strategic and practical interests bears many similarities to the distinction between femenina and feminista. *Practical gender interests* are "usually a response to an immediate perceived need, and they do not generally entail a strategic goal such as women's emancipation or gender equality" (Molyneux 1985: 233). An example of a practical gender interest is the material welfare of the family: women mobilize around this practical gender interest when they participate in cost-of-living movements, food riots, or popular economic organizations. *Strategic gender interests*, on the other hand, develop from an "analysis of women's subordination": examples of strategic interests are political equality for women, protection from violence against women, and a more equitable distribution of childcare and domestic labor (Molyneux 1985: 233).

Though the two sets of distinctions evolved separately, many scholars use the terms conjunctively. Sonia Alvarez connects the distinction made by Singer and Brant to the types of interests described by Maxine Molyneux. She defines *feminista* organizations as those that prioritize strategic interests, and *femenina* organizations as those that prioritize practical interests.[10] The strategic gender interests of feminista organizations challenge women's traditional gender roles. Femenina organizations, by contrast, "mobilized to defend their rights as wives and mother's, rights that the dominant ideology assures them in theory, but that the dominant political and economic institutions deny them in practice" (Alvarez, p.25).[11]

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[10] Alvarez translates femenina to feminine in *Engendering Democracy* (1990) and in "Women's Movements and Gender Politics in the Brazilian Transition" (1989). In a later work co-written with Nancy Saporta Sternbach, Marysa Navarro-Aranguren and Patricia Chuchryk (1992), Alvarez uses the Spanish terminology.

[11] Alvarez adds important elements to Maxine Molyneux and Singer's distinctions by emphasizing the fact that it is not only poor women who organize around practical gender interests: middle class women also organize around practical needs which do not necessarily challenge patterns of gender inequality. This is an important contribution to a typology that is often used to categorize poor women's interests as practical and middle-class women's interests as strategic without a close examination of the basis for those demands.

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While Alvarez links femenina organizations to the representation of practical interests, she does not claim that femenina organizations are incapable of representing strategic interests. Rather, she argues that in the Brazilian case femenina groups challenged the unequal status of women, and worked in coalitions with feminista organizations. Alvarez uses the categories of femenina and feminista throughout her analysis, but does not dichotomize femenina and feminista interests: overlapping interests between femenina and feminista organizations and the potential radicalization of women's organizations through the political process are key elements in her explanation of the growth and strength of women's movements in Brazil.

Femenina Organizations and Practical Interests

Theorists who draw on Alvarez's analysis of femenina organizations, however, frequently argue that femenina organizations limit themselves to practical gender demands. The connection between femenina organizations and practical interests is at the root of arguments that claim that femenina organizations have limited potential to challenge gender inequality. Carina Perelli's essay "Putting Conservatism to Good Use: Women and Unorthodox Politics in Uruguay, from Breakdown to Transition" and Maruja Barrig's "The Difficult Equilibrium Between Bread and Roses: Women's Organizations and the Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy in Peru," argue that the emphasis on practical rather than the strategic interests constrains the ability of femenina organizations to push for significant change in gender roles.

Perelli argues that women's organizations in Uruguay were incapable of becoming more than participants in a crisis mobilization because they focused too exclusively on their immediate practical needs. Women's organizations that formed under the Uruguayan dictatorship typically formed around a practical goal. The exclusive focus on particular,

practical needs led to the formation of disparate women's organizations, which had short life spans and limited impact beyond the immediate issues they addressed. The lack of more broadly framed strategic interests between the various women's organizations was a significant obstacle to the development of the kind of broad-based women's movements necessary to promote wide-spread social and political change in the status of women: "Seen from that angle, the groups were appallingly 'feminine.' The personal was political, but as always happens when the personal and only the personal becomes political, they never saw the forest because of the tree" (Perelli 1991:107).

Barrig criticizes femenina popular organizations in Peru for reifying barriers that exclude women from traditional political channels.[1][2] The dominance of day-to-day practical gender interests in femenina popular organizations, as well as the absence of links between practical interests and larger political issues, keeps women's struggles separate from mainstream politics. Femenina organizations reinforce the sexual division of labor by accepting the responsibility for obtaining practical needs, and by shunning standard political tactics and strategies (such as alliances with political parties). Rather than bringing women's organizations into mainstream politics, these tendencies accentuate "false dichotomies: political power is man's discourse, and the domestic sphere and the quality of life is women's concern, and traditionally undervalued" (Barrig 1991: 119).

Recent Critiques

Recent case studies studies, however, do not support the claim that femenina organizations do not represent strategic gender interests. New studies document femenina organizations which represent strategic gender interests in the course of their struggle to

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[1][2] Like Alvarez, Barrig translates femenina to feminine. Maria Del Carmen Feijoó and Jane Jaquette who make similar criticisms of femenina organizations also use the term "feminine."

obtain practical gender needs such as clean water and sufficient food for their members' families (Fisher 1993; Lind 1992; Schirmer 1988, 1993; Schild 1992; Stephen 1993a, 1993b, and forthcoming).[13] These new studies also show that the degree to which an organization represents strategic or practical gender interests fluctuates over time. Groups which at one point in time reject the label feminist may embrace it at another. Groups which prioritize the practical dimensions of their problems at a given point in time may come to adopt a more strategic view under different political conditions.[14]

The new studies criticize the dichotomous tendencies of the literature on Latin American women's organizations for obscuring complex realities. The claim that femenina organization's only represent practical interests while feminista organizations represent strategic gender interests presents a false dichotomy. It ignores the actual overlap between the agendas of femenina and feminista organizations: both types of women's organizations have politicized issues like day care, gender biases in land reform programs, and violence against women. Furthermore, the rigid categories for women's organizations and their interests ignores the actual changes within femenina organizations over time. Lynn Stephen argues:

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[13] These studies consistently claim that the feminine/practical and feminist/strategic dichotomy is a false dichotomy. Feminine and feminist identities and strategic and practical interests are not discreet, but overlapping. Feminine and feminist identities frequently overlap within women's organizations. A feminine organization, for example, may organize around traditional gender roles, but may adopt a critical analysis of those roles within the organization: feminine organizations, for example, may have internal discussions about the unequal division of household tasks (Stephen 1992: 5). Furthermore, organizations may adopt a feminist analysis of some issues (such as violence against women) but not of other issues (such as reproductive control or sexuality). Strategic interests and practical interests cannot be separated consistently either. Many issues--such as childcare, divorce, and reproductive control--may be part of a strategic agenda for feminists, but they are also practical day-to-day realities of many women (Craske 1993: 122). These kinds of interests can simultaneously be categorized as strategic and practical gender interests.

[14] Recently, several works have emerged which provide a better foundation to examine the conditions under which feminine organizations represent strategic gender interests on a political level. Yvonne Corocan-Nantes argues that, "The transformation of practical gender interests into strategic gender interests requires not only women's recognition of their power to represent their own interests but also that the space exists within the prevailing political system to pressure the state into recognizing those interests" (Corocan-Nantes: 144).

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> While such dichotomies may provide convenient topologies for trying to classify women's organizations at one point in time, they do not account for internal contradictions within women's organizations, changes that take place over the life-span of an organization in response to changing social and political circumstances, and the transformative potential of organizations on women's individual political perspectives.   (Stephen 1992: 5)

The agendas of women's movements, like other social movements, are not immutable. Movements politicize new issues from time to time, just as they abandon old ones. As agendas change, women's movements frequently challenge the rigid boundaries of the dichotomy framework: femenina organizations prioritize strategic gender interests without suddenly proclaiming themselves a feminista organization, while feminista organizations may eliminate some of the more strategically oriented gender interests in favor of practical ones without renouncing feminism.

An alternative framework presents women's gender interests along a continuum, with practical interests as one pole and strategic interests as the other. The continuum framework anticipates overlap between the practical and the strategic, and a potential for change over time. The usefulness of the continuum framework is evident in Jennifer Schirmer's 1993 study of the CONAVIGUA widows of Guatemala and CO-MADRES of El Salvador. Motherist and widowist groups politicize women's' traditional gender roles of mothers and wives and defend their right to care for their families, and as such fall into the category of femenina organizations. While these groups may not have organized around violence against women initially, they confronted gender-specific threats of violence on a daily basis as a result of their activism. Both CO-MADRES and CONAVIGUA connected their "practical" problem to the larger strategic struggle to end violence against women (Schirmer 1993: 61). The continuum framework allows overlap between the practical survival strategies devised by CO-MADRES and CONAVIGUA. A more static dichotomy framework would not be able to accommodate these kinds of

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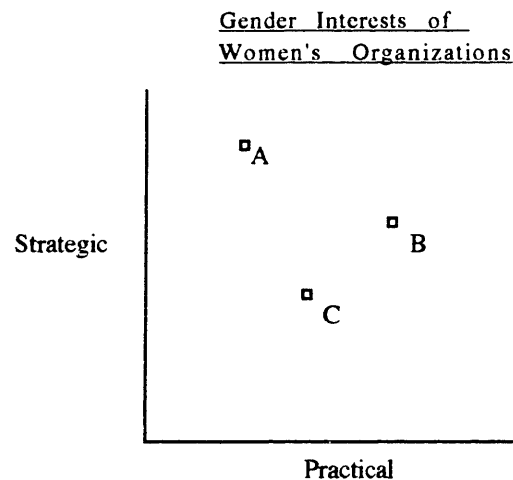overlaps or explain the transformation of practical survival strategies into strategic gender interests.

Towards a New Analytical Framework

Though the flexibility of the continuum model is an appealing alternative to the dichotomy model, it is difficult to use to map the transition of a group that organizes around practical gender interests but gradually begins to represent a gender agenda that is at once practical and strategic. One of the appealing aspects of the continuum model also makes it difficult to use: the line between what is practical and what is strategic is not clearly define. Clear definitions of strategic and practical gender interests are necessary in order to measure the degree to which an organization represents those interests. Furthermore, the continuum model seems to suggest that a group will move in one direction or the other (although changing directions from time to time) rather than increasing or decreasing their activities around both kinds of interests simultaneously.

I propose an alternative model that defines strategic and practical gender interests clearly while not treating the two types of interests as mutually exclusive. The model is two dimensional, with practical and strategic interests mapped along separate axes. Strategic gender interests directly challenge barriers to gender equality (violence against women, equitable pay, equal division of labor within the home). Practical gender interests are interests emanate from women's problems in their daily lives as they try to fulfill their socially ascribed responsibilities (caring for their children, managing a household, feeding their families). Interests can be strategic as well as practical: interests like day care may fill the criteria for practical and strategic gender interests. Rather than trying to place interests in two rigidly defined categories of analysis, I will explore the degree to which an interest

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the CO-MADRES represent fits either or both of the above definitions. At the same time, I will measure the degree to which the CO-MADRES *politically represent* those interests. The level of political activism (actions directed at political leaders and institutions) is the variable I will use to measure the degree to which the CO-MADRES represent an interest politically.

A two-dimensional conceptual graph visually represents the degree to which women's organizations represent gender interests, as the graph below illustrates:
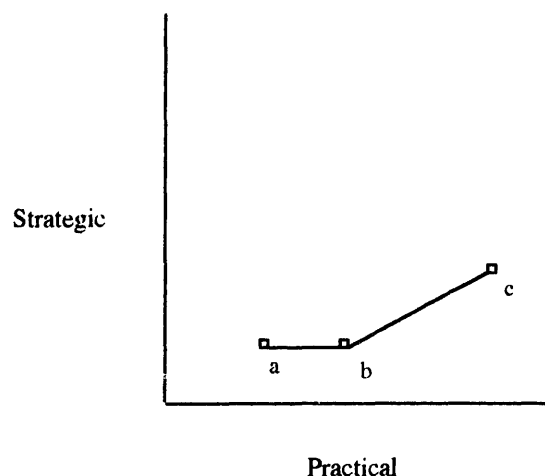
Gender Interests of
Women's Organizations

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        |
        |    □A
Strategic|
        |              □
        |              B
        |        □
        |        C
        |
        |_____
             Practical
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A) Women's advocacy groups: lobbying organizations which press for the elimination of discrimination against women.
B) Women's support centers: agencies which provide assistance for women with specific problems (organizations such as women's health clinics, shelters for battered women).
C) Women's neigborhood groups: groups in which women work collectively to satisfy material needs for themselves and their families (projects that collectivize domestic tasks such as cooking or childcare).

Women's advocacy groups that challenge legal barriers to gender equality represent strategic gender interests to a high degree. I consider the interests they represent strategic gender interests because they confront women's gendered subordination, and the degree to which they politically represent those interests would be high because they address those primarily, if not exclusively, through political channels. Women's support centers, on the other hand, may represent both strategic and practical gender demands, but their agenda is

less politicized than a woman's advocacy group. Women's health clinics, represent practical interests by providing affordable pre-natal care for mothers who could not otherwise afford medical care. They also represent strategic gender by providing information about various forms of contraceptives that allow women to make key decisions about whether and when to have children. Though a women's health clinic represents practical and strategic gender interests by providing services, the degree to which they politically represent those interests would depend on the level of political activity they engage in to represent those interests. On the above chart, I am measuring the degree to which a health clinic that occasionally becomes politically active around interests its group represents: the group is not highly political active, but does represent interests politically. Finally, a women's neighborhood group that provides women with basic material needs represents practical gender interests. When such a group does not politicize their work I would still consider them to represent practical gender interests, but the degree to which they politically represent those interests is low.

A two-dimensional graph is particularly useful to illustrate change over time. Over time, a group may go from low levels of political activity to higher levels, or vice versa. The graph below illustrates the changing degree of strategic and practical gender interests of a hypothetical women's organization:

Gender Interests of a
Women'sOrganization

Strategic

a   b

c

Practical

The above illustration charts the development of a women's organization as it politicizes it practical agenda, from point a to point b, and then gradually politicizes more strategic interests (between point b and c). An advantage of the two-dimensional representation of women's gender interests is that it does not present strategic and practical gender interests as competing: the illustration above shows a simultaneous increase in the politicization of practical and strategic gender interests.

The new framework is more useful to describe the kinds of interests that femenina organizations typically represent than a dichotomy model: many of the interests they represent are difficult to categorize as purely strategic or practical. At the same time, the framework is more useful than a continuum, because it provides a clearer definition of practical and strategic gender interests. Finally, this model is more useful to my project than either of the competing frameworks because it provides the means to measure the degree to which a group represents those interests politically.

Chapter Two: Changing Interests and Political Representation

Much of the emerging alternative literature focuses on the internal dynamics of femenina organizations to illustrate the degree to which they represent strategic gender interests. The analyses focus on the transformative potential of political organization: how participation in political organizations builds self-esteem, develops political skills, and raises consciousness. These skills are vital to the on-going political participation of the women active in these organizations. In this sense, femenina organizations challenge the political marginalization of women. Women who participate in neighborhood organizations cite their lack of understanding of the connections between politics and their lives as the key reason they did not participate in politics previously.   Overcoming lack of knowledge about political things is a significant hurdle toward inclusion in political life.

With a few notable exceptions, the new theories neglect examination of the external factors that facilitate or impede the representation of different kinds of interests. Political allies may or may not provide assistance (through material resources as well as political support) to femenina organizations when they attempt to represent gender interests. The degree to which political alliances constrain or facilitate the representation of strategic gender interests is frequently left unexplored.

Social movement theory, on the other hand, explores the relationship between movement organizations and the political environment more thoroughly. Three schools make significant contributions: new social movement theories, resource mobilization

theories, and political process theories. While new social movement theories and resource mobilization theories highlight the potential role of allies in facilitating or constraining the representation of movement interests, the political process model provides the strongest analytical tools for explaining the relationship between movements and macro-political conditions.

New Social Movements Theory

West European scholars were primarily responsible for the development of new social movement theory. They began to develop it in order to explain the emergence of movements such as the environmental movement, the student movement, the women's movement, and the gay rights movement in the second half of the twentieth century. Because many of these scholars came from a Marxist academic background, the key problematic was explaining why these "new" movements were not class-based (Munck 1990: 24).

A central project of new social movement theory is to explain the relationship between the construction of identity and collective interests. Melucci defines collective identity as: "Nothing else than a shared definition of the field of opportunities to collective action: 'shared' means constructed and negotiated through a repeated process of 'activation' of social relationships connecting the actors" (Melucci 1986: p. 793). New social movement theorists securely link collective identity and the interests an organization represents. An organization must have some sense of purpose--some type of collective identity--that defines collective interests and the priority of those interests (Pizzorno 1985:50). What costs are acceptable as social movements represent their interests cannot be

determined without reference to the a collectivity's sense of purpose (Melucci 1988: 343; Munck 1990; 24-25).[15]

Although the focus in the new social movement theory is primarily on the internal dynamics of identity, some theorists explore the role the external environment plays in defining those interests. Though identity may provide the lens through which social movement organizations understand their environment, movements nonetheless respond to external stimulus, constraints, and opportunities. Collective interests reflect a movement's interpretation of those external conditions: the process of defining interests, while internal to the organization, responds to its particular context.

New social movement theorists often concentrate on the problematic aspects of the relationship between social movements and their environment: the emphasis tends to fall more often on the constraints of the external environment than the opportunities it offers. A theme that dominates new social movement literature is the question of autonomy versus co-optation. New social movement theorists consider autonomy necessary to the ability of organizations to make key decisions (to define interests, establish priorities, draw limits on the negotiability of certain issues) without undue pressure from allies. A co-opted organization's dependence on allies constrains its capacity to define goals and priorities. Social movement organizations that politically represent their agenda engage in a precarious balancing act: while they may not want to be co-opted by more powerful allies, they need the support of those allies to successfully represent their interests (Garreton 1986; 1989; Touraine 1988). The process frequently leads to internal conflicts and on occasion, the

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[15]One key issue raised by many new social movement theorists is that collective actors may at times consider certain interests to be non-negotiable (Mainwaring and Viola 1984; Munck 1990; Offe 1985; Touraine 1988). Social movement activists "often consider their central concern of such high and universal priority that no part of it can be meaningfully sacrificed...without negating the concern itself" (Offe 1985: 830). While what is negotiable and what is not may change over time, it is necessary to recognize that there are frequently internal constraints on strategic decision making.

weakening or breakdown of movements and movement organizations (Mainwaring and Viola 1984: 53).

Though the issues of autonomy and co-optation merit investigation, much of the discussion romanticizes autonomy. Judith Alder Hellman calls this phenomenon "the fetishism of autonomy" (Hellman 1992: 54). Because scholars who study movements often have a strong preference for autonomy, they tend to conflate many types of relationships with elites or parties as "co-optation." This analysis masks the real gains organizations may be making, as well as denying that a group whose actions may now be more constrained has preserved even a limited degree of autonomy. Although the discussion of autonomy adds an important dimension to any analysis of social movement organizations' relationships with allies, the absence of adequate analysis of the beneficial aspects of alliances creates a distorted picture of that relationship.

Resource Mobilization Theories

Resource mobilization theory, on the other hand, focuses on questions of strategy and explores the positive elements of a social movement organization's interaction with the external environment more extensively. The U.S. based resource mobilization school developed in response to social-psychological analysis of social movement actors that treated the movements as irrational (Cohen 1985: 673).[16] One of the main departures of resource mobilization from social-psychological theory is the argument that social movement activists are rational actors (Ferree 1992: 29). Movement activists are able to make calculated cost-benefit analysis decisions based on the external constraints and

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[16]Until the 1970's, the social psychological paradigm dominated US studies of collective behavior. Within this paradigm, mass-society theory and Smelser's structural functionalist model of collective behavior have been singled out for criticism by resource mobilization theorists for their treatment of social movements as irrational, spontaneous phenomena (Cohen 1985:673).

opportunities present.[17] Through strategic choices, social movement actors are able to acquire resources and make strategic alliances in order to represent their interests.

While new social movement theorists at times seem to exaggerate the dilemma of autonomy versus co-optation, resource mobilization theories treat alliances as simply another strategic choice. Allies are a source of political support and material resources. Establishing alliances may require some trade-offs or compromises, but social movement organizations are capable of making those kinds of strategic choices through a rational decision-making process. In resource mobilization, the definition of rationality is a narrowly instrumental one: organizations demonstrate rational behavior when they make strategic choices that help them attain their goals (Gamson and Fireman 1979). Strategic alliances are judged by their utility to attaining movement goals. Dependence on allies is not necessarily a problem if collective goals are being attained.

The instrumental conception of collective logic that underlies resource mobilization leads to an understatement of the problematic nature of the relationship with allies. The instrumental logic within resource mobilization theory leads to an emphasis on how organizations represent their interests rather than how they define their objectives. Resource mobilization theories do not generally give adequate treatment to the potential drawback of a strategic alliance because they focus more on the capacity of movements to

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[17]An example of a resource mobilization approach to explaining strategic choices of social movement organizations is offered in Jo Freeman's "Resource Mobilization and Strategy: A Model for Analyzing Social Movement Organization Actions." Freeman attempts to develop a structuralist analysis which "would look at the confines within which a movement's strategy develops, the resources it can realistically mobilize, the limits on the uses of these resources, and the environment that molds the possibilities for effective action" (Freeman 1979: 168). The model she develops has four components: "mobilizable resources, constraints on those resources, SMO [social movement organization] structure and internal environment, and expectations about potential targets" (Freeman 1979: 170). Each of these components shapes movement strategy through the obstacles and opportunities it presents. An organization whose resources include access to the media and to legislators has different opportunities for strategy than a group which has little or no access to traditional media or policy makers. While some organizations are structured hierarchically and decisions flow from the top down, others are loosely structured and do not have a clear chain of command: the kind of strategies each organization can effectively carry out will be determined at least in part by the degree of centralization. Finally, how an organization perceives its "reference publics" (Lipsky 1970: 2) or targets of influence will shape what they believe will be an effective strategy.

fulfill their objectives than on their capacity to set their agenda independently. If an organization is so dependent on an ally that they cannot articulate specific interests, the relationship is indeed problematic.

An additional weakness of much of the resource mobilization literature is its inattentiveness to the constraints political systems impose on the range of strategic choice. Perhaps because the majority of resource mobilization theorists are North American and study North American movements, liberal democratic norms are often assumed. Theories do not explore how the process of building "resources" such as elite support, money, media coverage, or alliances with other movements and organizations would be affected by a different type of regime. The presence or absence of an open democratic political system and guarantees of rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of association surely change the range of strategic choices available to movements. Even within a democratic system, however, changes in the political climate may affect the capacity of an organization to represent certain interests, and merits thorough inquiry.

The Political Process Model

The political process model, an offshoot of resource mobilization, explores the extent to which political conditions shape the range of strategies available to movement organizations. The works of Eisinger (1973), Tilly and Rule (1975), Jenkins and Perrow (1977), and McAdam (1982), provide the foundation for the political process model. In contrast to much resource mobilization literature, these works treat external political conditions as a source of substantial constraints and opportunities for movements and

organizations. Those conditions change over time, and different political opportunity structures emerge. Social movement organizations may be able to articulate interests under certain conditions and not under others.

Though there are variations in the details of political process models, the basic tenet is that the political context directly effects the development of political movements. In *The Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*, McAdam argues:

> First, in contrast to the various classical formulations, a social movement is held to be above all, a *political* rather than a psychological phenomenon. That is, factors shaping institutionalized political processes are argued to be of equal analytical utility in accounting for social insurgency. Second, a movement represents a continuous process from generation to decline, rather than a discrete series of developmental stages. Accordingly, any complete model of social insurgency should offer the researcher a framework for analyzing the entire process of movement development rather than a particular phase (e.g. the emergence of social protest) of that same process.
>
> (McAdam 1982: 36)

McAdam considers social movements to be political phenomena, that are effected by the same dynamics that shape the actions of more conventional actors.[18]   Movement's define objectives and strategies within the constraints and opportunities the political context establishes.[19]   The political process model explicitly engages the question resource mobilization fails to address: how changes within the political system affect movement actions.

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[18] As Sidney Tarrow argues "If collective action is a form of politics, then as in conventional politics, there must be a set of constraints and opportunities that encourage or discourage this kind of behavior and lead it towards certain forms rather than others" (Tarrow 1991: 32).

[19] The key difference between the political behavior of social movement organizations and more conventional actors stems from the position of social movement activists as outsiders or "challengers" to the political system. Because of their position as outsiders, "Movement organizations do not simply prefer collective action to institutional politics: they use it because it is only in the interaction between themselves and their mobilization potential that they can prove themselves and attract a following, challenging opponents and impressing authorities with their prowess." (Tarrow 1991: 38). Because of their position as outsiders, movement activists have to attract the attention and the assistance of insiders in order to influence policy outcomes. This is similar to a point Alain Touraine raises in *Return of the Actor:* he argues that while social movements can provide the stimulus for political change, they do not often control the direction of change because they are excluded from the decision-making process.

McAdam's political process model signals four determinants of the generation and development of a movement. He argues:

> It is the confluence of expanding political opportunities, indigenous organizational strength, and the presence of certain shared cognitions within the minority community that is held to facilitate movement emergence. Over time these factors continue to shape the development of insurgency in combination with a fourth factor: the shifting control response of other groups to the movement"
> (McAdam 1982: 59).

Political opportunities, organizational strength and collective consciousness fluctuate over time. As movements emerge, social control responses frequently develop as well. McAdam's model presents a dynamic relationship between the external environment and movements: while external constraints are at least partially determinative of movement development, movements have the potential to change the external environment (McAdam 1982: 56).

One of the weaknesses of the political process model, however, is the vagueness of the definition of "the structure of political opportunities." In the original use of the term, Peter Eisinger provides the following definition:

> The elements of the [political] context are conceived of as components of the particular *structure of political opportunities* of a community. That is to say, such factors as the nature of the chief executive, the mode of aldermanic election, the distribution of social skills and status, the degree of social disintegration, taken individually or collectively, serve in various ways to obstruct or facilitate citizen activity in pursuit of political goals. Other environmental factors, such as the climate of government responsiveness and the level of community resources, help establish the chances of success of citizen political activity. In short, elements in the environment impose certain constraints on political activity or open avenues for it.
> (Eisinger 1973: 11-12)

The definition Eisinger provides is quite broad: the range of components that make up the political environment seems nearly infinite. The definition also does not clarify whether political opportunities must be perceived as such in order to affect movement development. Sidney Tarrow argues that, "Scholars have not been clear on whether they regard political

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opportunities as objective or subjective factors: the term structure usually refers to forces that operate independent of actor's consciousness; but if collective action is strategic, doesn't a political opportunity have to be perceived in order to affect an actor's behavior?" (Tarrow 1991:39). Although the political process model offers useful insights, the term "political opportunity" needs further clarification.

Femenina Organizations, Gender Interests and the Political Process

The political process model, although imperfect, provides the best framework to understand the relationship between external political conditions and the range of strategies available to femenina organizations as they represent their interests. New social movement theories highlight the question of autonomy, but do not adequately explore the degree to which allies help social movement organizations represent collective interests. Resource mobilization theories present alliances as potentially beneficial to social movement organizations, but do not explore the extent to which dependence on allies may constrain the ability of organizations to represent certain interests. The political process model allows for an interpretation of strategic alliances that includes their potential to constrain and facilitate interest representation. The degree to which allies constrain or facilitate interest representation depends on the particular structure of political opportunities at a given point in time.

A clear definition of political opportunity structure is necessary to use the political process model effectively. Sidney Tarrow provides a sufficiently clear definition. He separates the concept into four components: "The degree of openness or closure of the polity; the stability or instability of political alignments; the presence or absence of allies and support groups; and divisions within the elite or its tolerance or intolerance of protest."

(Tarrow 1991: 34).   I will explore the responsiveness of government officials to opposition demands, the use of repression against the opposition, and the level and nature of opposition organization.

Each of the factors is a potential source of constraints on the range of strategies available to social movement organizations, as well as a source of opportunities. The degree to which the government responds to the opposition determines which strategies are likely to be effective. The degree to which a government uses repressive mechanisms may make certain strategic choices more costly to the organization at some points than at others. Finally, the strength and degree of dependence of the opposition determine the degree to which allies can support or limit the agendas of opposition organizations. These three factors produce conditions under which an organization may be more or less able to represent certain interests: some strategies may be more viable or more costly at different points in time, and the organizations may be more or less dependent on allies as the range of strategies and potential allies changes over time. Although an organization must ultimately choose whether or not they will represent certain interests at one point rather than another, and may in fact perceive constraints and opportunities differently, their capacity to do so may be judged based on an objective assessment of these factors.

Chapter Three: Genesis of a Femenina Organization, 1977-1981

CO-MADRES began as a group of nine Salvadoran women in December 1977. In spite of their initial small size, their influence in the political arena expanded rapidly. The

CO-MADRES efficacy in the late seventies is attributable to innovative extra-institutional tactics and alliances with the Church and other opposition organizations. After 1980, however, increasing repression limited the range of viable public opposition and weakened many of the CO-MADRES allies. As the costs of open protest escalated and strategic alliances with other opposition organizations became less viable means of representing their interests, the CO-MADRES carried out fewer public activities and developed ties internationally.

The CO-MADRES entered the political arena to represent a practical gender interest: the right to care for and protect their children and family members. The support of the Church and opposition organizations was critical to the CO-MADRES ability to politicize these maternal rights, as well as to their capacity to politicize a broad human rights agenda. The CO-MADRES also discussed strategic gender interests to some extent: they discussed problems such as domestic violence and developed tactics to help individual members escape abuse. The CO-MADRES generally confronted domestic violence when it became a problem for an individual member and their tactics generally relied on social pressure rather than political action. Although the CO-MADRES worked on solutions to problems caused by domestic violence and other barriers to women's equal participation in politics during this period, they did not politicize these strategic gender interests. The CO-MADRES depended on the support of the Church and the organized opposition in order to politically represent their practical gender interests, but those allies did not provide the same political or material support for strategic gender interests.

When the CO-MADRES voiced their first political demands, they encountered an exclusive and repressive political elite.[20]   Although progressive elites instituted some reforms under the civilian-military juntas of the late seventies and early eighties, hardliners in the junta escalated violent repression against the opposition. As repression increased and clandestine activities and guerrilla warfare became the only channels for opposition groups, the FMLN-FDR began to consolidate control over the opposition.

Regime Responsiveness and Repression, 1977-1981

A political system crisis developed in the seventies as opposition to political repression and economic inequality grew stronger. In the sixties and seventies, priests and nuns influenced by liberation theology began organizing peasants in the countryside (Berryman 1984: 98-106; Montgomery 70-76). At the same time, urban organizations gained strength. Although some opposition groups were strictly non-violent, others, such as the Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), founded in 1970, advocated armed insurrection.

Powerful sectors of the elite and the military promoted greater repression in response to the growth of the opposition. In 1977, the Salvadoran government was run by the military through President Carlos Humberto Romero. The Romero government took a hard line against the opposition and politically motivated violence escalated during his term (America's Watch 1991: 6). In addition to coersion carried out directly by the military,

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[20] The historically exclusive nature of El Salvador's political system is illustrated by the common reference to "los catorce," meaning the fourteen families that dominate El Salvador's political system and its economy. More than fourteen families make up the oligarchic elite, but the reference captures the distortion of power relations.

paramilitary units connected to the wealthy landowners and the military (known as the death squads) conducted campaigns against the opposition and the progressive church.

Progressive officers, on the other hand, advocated moderate reform to mitigate the growth of the guerrilla forces (America's Watch 1991: 7). Younger officers with reformist inclinations received positive signals from the U.S. and orchestrated a coup d'état on October 15, 1979 (Arnson 1982: 39). The new junta endeavored to create a moderately progressive regime with joint governance of civilians and military officials. The first junta, led by Colonels Majano and Gutierrez, included progressive elites such as Guillermo Ungo of the social democratic National Revolutionary Movement (MNR), and Rubén Zamora and Hector Dada of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC). Salvador Samoya (then a professor of philosophy), and Román Mayorga Quiróz, rector of the Jesuit university (Armstrong and Shenk 1982: 117-121; North 1985: 81).

Although the Democratic revolutionary junta aspired to reform El Salvador's political system, obstacles to reform were numerous. Military hardliners continued to occupy key positions and vetoed reform programs they percieved to be radical. The Democratic revolutionary junta initiated some reformes, but they were limited in scope and were often not fully implemented. Frustrated by the constraints imposed on their power to implement reforms, five progressive civilian officials resigned on December 29, 1979 (Armstrong and Shenk 1982: 129). Hectór Dada and Ruben Zamora remained and became part of the second junta. Early in 1980, Dada and Zamora resigned as well. José Napoleón Duarte returned from exile to become the civilian head of the third junta on March 5, 1980 (North 1985: 83).[21]

Between 1980 and 1981, repression reached a new apex. The new junta declared a state of emergency on March 6, the day after Duarte took office, suspending freedom of

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[21] Duarte, who ran for president in 1972 on an opposition ticket, had fled the country after being tortured and receiving death threats.

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movement, assembly, and expression (America's Watch 1991: 143). The assasination of Archbishop Romero occurred just three weeks after the new junta ascended to power, on March 24, 1980. Four North American churchwomen were raped and killed by the National Guard on December 2, 1980 (Americas Watch 1991: 144). Military and paramilitary units arrested, tortured, and killed political activists. Between March 1980 and March 1982, an estimated 25,000 civilians were killed in political violence (Popkin 1991: 60).

Development of the Opposition, 1977-1981

Under Archbishop Romero, the Salvadoran Church became an outspoken advocate for human rights. Liberation theology heavily influenced the Salvadoran Church theology. Between 1968 and 1977, priests and nuns established hundreds of Christian Base Communities. Priests and nuns became especially active in organizing the poor in rural areas (Montgomery 1983: 79). The activism of the Church incited great hostility within members of the landed elite and the military. As early as May 1977 fliers with the slogan "Be a Patriot! Kill a Priest" were circulated in San Salvador (Montgomery 1983: 80). The threats were not idle and death squads assassinated a number of priests. Archbishop Romero responded to the attacks on the Church by condemning the attackers rather than the work of activist priests. He condemned human rights abuses in masses that were broadcast throughout the country on the church radio station, YSAX (Montgomery 1983: 79). He established a legal aid office to help victims and family members of victims called the Socorro Jurídico. Romero also provided moral and material support to human rights organizations, including the Salvadoran Human Rights Commission (CDHES).

Though Romero promoted a path of non-violent resistance, other opposition activists turned increasingly to violent insurrection. By the end of the seventies, there were five

main guerrilla organizations, known as the revolutionary parties: the Communist Party of El Salvador, or PCS; the Popular Liberation Forces, or FPL; the People's Revolutionary Army, or ERP; the Armed Forces of Resistance, or FARN; and the Central American Revolutionary Workers Party, or PRTC. These revolutionary parties advocated radical changes in the Salvadoran political and economic system and promoted armed insurrection as the path to a transformed society.

Social organizations developed close ties with the revolutionary parties. The revolutionary parties created a number of social organizations in order to mobilize particular sectors of the Salvadoran public. For example, the FPL founded the Women's Association of El Salvador (AMES). AMES central objective was the integration of women, especially poor, urban women, into the struggle for "national liberation" (Golden 1991: 110).[22] Existing social organizations strengthened ties to the revolutionary parties. The United Popular Action Front, an umbrella organization of peasants, urban workers, teachers and students, established an alliance with the FARN. The Popular Revolutionary Block (BPR) united labor unions and peasant organizations affiliated with the FPL. The Popular Leagues 28th of February (LP-28) and the Popular Liberation Movement (MLP) affiliated with the ERP and the PRTC respectively (North 1985: 77).

As repression escalated in the early eighties, social organizations and left-wing political parties untied in a series of coalitions. The BPR, LP-28, FAPU and the Nationalist Democratic Union (UDN--a progressive political party) first formed the Movement for Popular Unity, and then became part of the Revolutionary Coordination of the Masses in 1980. Finally, popular organization and opposition parties came together in the FDR in April 1980. The FDR united the MNR and the MPSC (the Popular Social Christian

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[22] Although I focus here on the case of AMES, other women's organizations were formed by revolutionary parties and worked closely with the FMLN. The Association of Progressive women of El Salvador was formed in 1975 by the Communist party, and three other organizations were formed by the other three revolutionary parties in the early eighties. The five women's organizations joined together in the Union of Salvadoran Women for Liberation "Melida Anaya Montes" (UMS).

Movement, a splinter group of the PDC), the popular organizations of the Revolutionary Coordination of the Masses, and the political arms of the revolutionary forces under the Politico-Diplomatic Commission (Radu 1985: 682). The five main guerrilla forces formed a unified directorate coordinated by the leaders of each faction, known as the FMLN after November 1980 (Radu 1985: 675; Waller 1991: 15). The FDR and the FMLN established a formal alliance to coordinate activities of the armed and unarmed opposition.

The FMLN-FDR consolidated its influence within the opposition. Religious activists continued to be persecuted, as were labor union leaders, human rights activists, and student organizers. Some organizations were destroyed while others were forced underground. Under the leadership of Archbishop Rivera y Damas (Romero's successor), the Church hierarchy was more reticent to confront the junta or openly support opposition activities (Berryman 1984: 155-58). Many organizations could continue their work only with the clandestine help of the guerrilla forces. At the same time, persecuted activists began to perceive armed insurrection as the only viable means of opposition. Disillusioned members of the first and second juntas, such as Rubén Zamora, Román Mayorga, and Guillermo Ungo joined the FDR after their resignations (Armstrong and Shenk 1982: 153).

Constraints and Opportunities: The Development of CO-MADRES, 1977-1981

The external political environment provided both constraints and opportunities for the CO-MADRES. The lack of institutional mechanisms to hold the government accountable prompted the CO-MADRES to develop innovative extra-institutional tactics to effectively voice their demands. Severe repression, however, constrained their ability to publicly

oppose the government. The Catholic Church provided critical resources and support for the CO-MADRES, but could not completely protect them from government sponsored violence. After the death of Archbishop Romero, the Church continued to provide certain key resources, but it backed away from its previous advocacy role. The loss of their patron and the increasing repression deeply affected the CO-MADRES, and by the early eighties their activities were less visible.

Regime Responsiveness, Repression and the Tactical Development of CO-MADRES

The CO-MADRES encountered difficulties representing their demands through institutional channels to government officials. The CO-MADRES drafted a letter to then President Romero four days after they held their first meeting. The letter gave the names of twenty-one of the detained-disappeared, and demanded that these relatives be returned. President Romero did not respond (Schirmer 1993: 32). One CO-MADRE described the failure of their legal tactics: "We tried to legally petition the Minister of Justice and the President, but we were told, 'Women, your relatives are in such-and-such a place [outside the country]. Or they would tell us, 'Your son is fighting in the mountains as a guerrilla'" (Schirmer 1993: 40). The CO-MADRES repeatedly failed to find information about their children or secure their release through these formal channels.

The CO-MADRES resorted to extra-institutional tactics out of frustration. In a 1988 testimonial, Miriam talks about the CO-MADRES decision to use extra-institutional tactics:

> At first, we would just go to the barracks and police stations to inquire about the victims. Since that didn't work, we realized that we had to make the largest number of people find out in the shortest amount of time that someone has been captured. If a kidnapping is publicized immediately, the person has a better chance of survival. So little by little, we realized that we had to be more active and visible. That was when we started taking our public spaces, like churches or government offices. The point of these actions was not only to take the place in a non-violent way but to make sure that it was full of people, especially children. This way they

became our "hostages," and through them we acquired some strength to make the government hear our voices. (Acosta 1993: 135)

Another CO-MADRE provided a similar testimony for Jennifer Schirmer: "But these legal actions didn't evoke any response, so we thought about public marches in the streets two or three times a week and sitting on the steps of the cathedral and in the market places" (Schirmer 1993: 40). Early in their development, they denounced the government publicly, through marches, occupations of public spaces, and paid advertisements in Salvadoran newspapers such as El Diario de Hoy, La Prensa Grafica, and Diario Latino (Tula 1993).

Government repression, however, constrained the ability of the CO-MADRES to use extra-institutionalized tactics. As repression increased through 1980 and 1981, marches became more dangerous. The military sometimes attacked marches directly, but frequently picked up demonstrators in the days after the march. The newspapers began to refuse to print the CO-MADRES advertisements (Tula 1993). In 1978, the CO-MADRES received their first death threat in a letter, and they continued to receive threats from then on.[23] A bomb exploded in their first office in 1980, and another bombing occurred in 1981.

The CO-MADRES created innovative tactics to balance their need to voice their demands and the need to avoid regime retaliation. They developed clandestine tactics to spread their message. In one instance, they put notices in egg crates which they then sold in the marketplace (Acosta 1993: 136). They visited factories and schools, asking for donations of food and clothing for the political prisoners. The CO-MADRES found that this tactic proved effective in increasing awareness about the political prisoners as well as in gathering the necessary supplies (Acosta 1993: 136). Though political conditions of El Salvador at

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[23] One of the more public threats was made by Robert D'Aubisson, mayor of San Salvador and head of the death squads: he threatened to decapitate every one of the CO-MADRES (Schirmer 1993: 39; Sentir Con El Pueblo 1993).

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the time forced the CO-MADRES to voice their demands through extra-institutional, clandestine channels the CO-MADRES continued to voice their opposition to the regimes abuse of human rights by using creative, adaptable tactics.

The Role of Allies

The support of allies, especially the Catholic Church, was critical to the CO-MADRES. The Church was the most outspoken and dependable ally until the assassination of Archbishop Romero, and provided CO-MADRES with much needed material resources as well as political support. Until the repression of 1980-81, opposition organizations also provided valuable political support. After the assassination of Romero and the assault on the urban opposition, however, relying on domestic allies a became less viable tactic. After 1980, the CO-MADRES increasingly channeled their demands through international allies.

Archbishop Romero and the progressive sectors of the church provided important moral support for the CO-MADRES. Romero was personally involved with the group, and met with them to receive updates on their work and offer moral support (Tula 1993; Stephen Forthcoming: 117). The Archbishop gave the CO-MADRES access to the Church run radio station, YSAX, to issue their denunciations, and provided some financial support for the CO-MADRES (Tula 1993). CO-MADRES worked closely with the two other church sponsored human right organizations, the non-governmental Human Rights Commission (CDHES) and Socorro Jurídico: both organizations provided legal assistance and helped with the documentation of human rights violations.

Labor unions and popular organizations also became important allies. The CO-MADRES work on specific human rights cases involving union members and political activists, such as the capture of the leaders of the Electrical Workers Union in 1980, earned

the political support of unions and social organizations (Tula 1993). FENESTRAS (the National Federation of Salvadoran Workers), in particular, supported the CO-MADRES by appearing in solidarity at CO-MADRES' demonstrations and occasionally donating material support (Tula 1993).

The CO-MADRES also developed relationships with political leaders and organizations outside El Salvador during this period, as well as with international human rights organizations. In 1978, CO-MADRES was invited to the World Conference of Peace in Costa Rica because of the publicity their work had received (Stephen Forthcoming: 128). While there, they met with Costa Rican organizations to encourage solidarity. They also began to work with FEDEFAM, a Latin American federation of human rights organizations (specifically of groups of relatives of victims) after meeting with other Latin American human rights activists at the conference (Tula 1993).

The CO-MADRES called on their allies in order to pressure the government to respond to their demands. The occupation of the Red Cross, for example, became a vehicle to call on their allies for support. Maria described the occupation of the Red Cross: "Ten mothers entered the Red Cross and stood by the door. We told the people inside that this would be a peaceful taking and that they would not be allowed to leave until the government heard our demands. Another group stood outside the Red Cross and denounced the violation of human rights" (Tula 1993). As an international organization charged with neutrality in protecting the rights of all peoples, the Red Cross was an ideal site to attract international and domestic attention to their demands and at the same time to protect the CO-MADRES from immediate retaliation. As the word spread, their allies began to pressure the government. The Archbishop responded to the occupation of the Red Cross by praising the courage of the mothers in his homilies, and trade unions showed solidarity with CO-MADRES (Stephen Forthcoming: 123). The political prisoners of all the jails announced a hunger strike in solidarity with the CO-MADRES.

By 1980-81, appealing to domestic allies became a less feasible tactic. Although Rivera y Damas continued to support the CO-MADRES by allowing them access to the Church radio station and quietly confronting the military when they made it too dangerous for the CO-MADRES to work in the Archdiocese, he was never the outspoken champion of human rights that Romero had been. Many social organizations were struggling to survive due to government repression. FMLN activity was increasing, but open ties to the FMLN would have subjugated the CO-MADRES to even more military repression, and would have jeopardized their relationship with international human rights activists.

In the absence of other tactical choices, the CO-MADRES enlisted help from various embassies. The CO-MADRES distributed packets of denunciations of human rights abuses on a bimonthly basis. While they occasionally chose not to visit the embassies because the danger was too great (the embassies were observed by the military) they continued to distribute the packets even during the height of repression after 1980-81. Some embassies, such as the Mexican embassy, assisted the CO-MADRES by denouncing human rights violations and providing visas for the CO-MADRES. Others, like the U.S. embassy refused to acknowledge the validity of the CO-MADRES charges of human rights violations and denied visas to the CO-MADRES (Tula 1993).[24]

Human Rights and Gender Interests from 1977-1982

The variation in the types of gender interests the CO-MADRES represent and the degree to which they politicize specific interests reflects the range of opportunities within the

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[24] While the embassy was somewhat responsive to the general issue of human rights when Robert White was ambassador under the Carter administration, it became increasingly hostile under the Reagan appointee, Deane Hinton (Americas Watch 1991:121)

particular political context. Initially, the CO-MADRES politicized a practical gender agenda: they confronted the state as mothers who were trying to fulfill their traditional role and care for their children. Archbishop Romero and numerous opposition organizations provided vital political and material support that enabled the CO-MADRES to politicize their practical gender agenda. At the same time the CO-MADRES confronted some issues that would be considered strategic gender interests, such as domestic violence. Although the CO-MADRES were able to address strategic gender interests within their community without substantial support from their allies, they did not politicize those interests. There were fewer political opportunities to politicize strategic gender agenda during this period. Ultimately, even the space available to represent practical gender interests contracted, and the CO-MADRES public activity around practical gender interests declined.

The CO-MADRES began as a group of mothers who were searching for their own children, but soon politicized a broader practical gender agenda. Initially, they politicized their own particular practical gender interests by confronting the state and demanding their children be returned. The CO-MADRES soon expanded the range of practical interests they represented beyond demands that their own children be returned: they began to extend their demands on the state to include an end to all violations of human rights, not just the ones that effected their children. The role of motherhood was still important in the CO-MADRES interpretation of their collective purpose. Miriam, a member of the CO-MADRES since 1979, offered this interpretation of the CO-MADRES work: "We are the mothers of the people. We started looking for our children and loved ones, and now we do for others what they cannot do for themselves." (Acosta 1993: 132). The importance of

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their status as mothers transcends their own family, and becomes a symbolic motherhood of all those who suffered under government repression.[2][5]

Archbishop Romero provided vital support to the CO-MADRES efforts to represent their practical gender interests. Romero was a key figure in mobilizing the CO-MADRES, and it would be difficult to overstate his influence on the organization in its formative years. He was instrumental in creating the organization, and continued to meet with the CO-MADRES frequently until his assassination. The CO-MADRES maternal role was central to his vision of the organization's purpose. He preached to the CO-MADRES about the interest they had as mothers in caring for their children, and the special pain mother's feel upon losing a child.[2][6] He suggested the organization be formed in order to alleviate that pain and represent their maternal interest: he told them to "abandon their separate struggles and unite forces in a single voice by forming a single organization" (Sentir Con El Pueblo 1993: 2). In weekly meetings with the CO-MADRES, he counseled them to speak for the rights of all the mother against the violence that caused their common suffering (Tula 1993).

Romero offered more than moral support to the CO-MADRES as they pursued their practical agenda. The resources he provided, including the access to the Church radio station, YSAX, and financing of newspaper ads, were instrumental to the CO-MADRES ability to publicize their practical gender interests. His weekly masses, in which he praised the CO-MADRES and publicly supported their demands, provided another important source of publicity for the CO-MADRES' practical gender interests.

Student organizations, trade unions, and other social organizations also supported the politicization of the CO-MADRES practical gender interests. These organizations

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[25]Another manifestation of the expanded interepretation of motherhood was the CO-MADRES projects: the CO-MADRES organized projects to care for their family members in prison and for the families of the victims.
[26]A common analogy he offered was between the pain of the Virgin Mary when Christ was taken and the pain of Salvadoran mothers (Tula 1993).

participated in marches the CO-MADRES organized to demand the return of their children. They showed support by their presence outside buildings the CO-MADRES occupied to pressure the government to release their children and other political prisoners. Finally, humanitarian organizations, such as the Red and Green Cross, supported their expanding practical agenda by supplying material aid, such as food and medicine.

The support the CO-MADRES found from their allies when they mobilized around practical gender demands was critical to their capacity to make those demands. The Church and other allies provided the CO-MADRES with essential resources in a political context with few viable means of representing opposition demands. Those resources allowed the CO-MADRES to take advantage of the limited space available to protest government activity: while few government officials were responsive to the CO-MADRES when they used formal institutions to demand their children be returned, the support of the Church and other allies allowed the CO-MADRES to apply pressure more effectively through extra-institutional tactics.

As the repression increased, the reliability of the CO-MADRES allies declined. Allies provided less assistance: assaults on the Church and opposition organizations limited their ability to provide substantial political support for the CO-MADRES demands. Material support from the Church and humanitarian organizations continued to sustain their organization, but overt political support for the CO-MADRES demands all but disappeared. The CO-MADRES, however, were unable to politically represent their practical gender interests publicly, because the cost of repression was too high.

While the degree to which the CO-MADRES politicized practical gender interests fluctuated with the availability of resources and political allies, the CO-MADRES did not politicize strategic gender interests. The CO-MADRES did confront problems with domestic violence and unequal division of labor in the home. These issues would normally be considered part of a strategic gender agenda: the problems of domestic violence and

unequal division of labor in the home would typically be considered part of a strategic gender agenda because these problems reinforce women's gendered subordination. The CO-MADRES began to confront these problems as they became obstacles to their political work. Some of the husbands objected to their wives being gone, and either ordered them to stop their work or threatened them with force if they continued their work. Other CO-MADRES found little support at home when it came to helping with domestic chores and childcare. The CO-MADRES responded to these problems by developing tactics that confronted the problem on an individual basis. When a CO-MADRE did not show up for a few days, another CO-MADRE would go to see what the problem was (Stephen 1993: 13-15; Stephen Forthcoming: 1331-137; Tula 1993). If it was a problem with the husband, the visiting CO-MADRES would confront the husband. In the case of domestic violence, a group of CO-MADRES would go to confront the husband, often publicly berating him for abusing his wife. These tactics effectively confronted the problems they faced in doing their political work, but during this period, the problems were treated as individual problems and not as a political problem linked to lack of legal protection for women within marriage.

Had the CO-MADRES attempted to politicize issues like domestic violence and unequal division of labor in the home, such an agenda would probably not have been supported by the CO-MADRES allies, particularly the Church. Although Romero and other progressive Church leaders encouraged women to participate in the Church and in progressive political organizations, they encouraged this as an extension of women's traditional role rather than as a transformation of it. Advancing a political agenda that overtly challenged female subservience to men would have been more likely to have been opposed by the church than supported.[27] Furthermore, at least some of the leadership of the CO-MADRES perceived

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[27] Throughout Latin America, women who participate in Church activities note the Church's role in enforcing female subservience. Laywomen and nuns speak about the machismo of the priests they work

the organized left as hostile to such an agenda. Men and women in the organized left saw issues like the unequal division of labor within the home and domestic violence as potentially divisive issues that could fray the unity necessary for a successful revolution: men who were union members and members of the organized left were among those who abused their wives and expected domestic chores and childcare to be the full responsibility of the wives (Tula 1993).

The degree to which the CO-MADRES represented gender interests during this period fluctuated as political conditions changed. The graph below illustrates the general changes in gender interest representation between 1977 and 1981:

CO-MADRES   Representation
of   Gender   Interests,1977-81

Strategic

1981 □_____□ 1980
□
1977
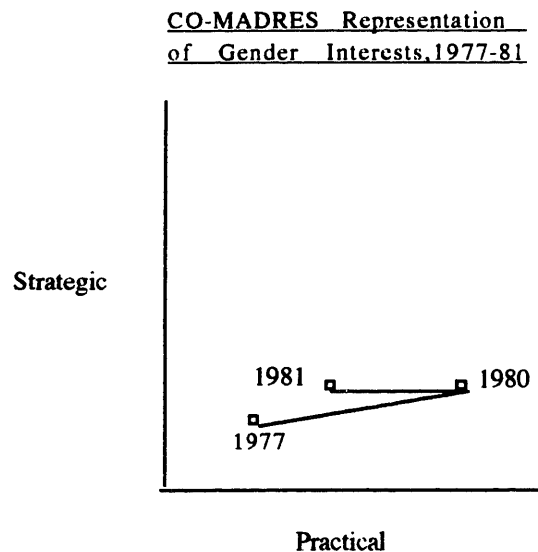
Practical

Between 1977 and 1980, a rapid increase in the politicization of practical gender interests and a gradual increase in their actions in the community to address strategic interests took place. Between 1980 and 1981, there was a decline in political representation of practical gender interests and a continuation of the CO-MADRES activities within the community

with (Golden 1991: 50). Women often make up the backbone of the Christian Base Communities and other Church organizations, but they rarely occupy positions of power (Gilfeather 1979: 202). Perhaps because of the Church's continuing role in the subordination of women within its own organizations, liberation theologists have been slow to address the problem of gender inequality.

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around strategic gender interests. The CO-MADRES demonstrated a capacity to represent strategic gender interests at a social level without substantial support from allies throughout this period, but their capacity to politicize practical gender interests shifted as allies became less able to give political support and repression increased.

Chapter Four: Domestic and International Alliances and the Representation of Gender Interests, 1982-1988

Between 1982-1988 the Salvadoran government liberalized electoral laws while the military continued to violently repress opposition. Increased military aid from the U.S. allowed the Salvadoran military to escalate the war against the rebels. During this same period, however, the Duarte administration initiated the first formal negotiations with the FMLN. Within this volatile context, the space for opposition activities increased slightly. Social organizations began to re-emerge in urban areas and overtly oppose the Duarte administration.

The CO-MADRES were among the first of the opposition organizations to publicly protest after the massive repression of 1980-81. Once again, they politicized practical gender interests. By 1985, the CO-MADRES began to politicize strategic gender interests: they politicized the problem of rape as a form of torture. Material support from U.S. based solidarity networks and political support from opposition organizations provided critical support for the politicization of both practical and strategic gender interests.

The Political Context

The civil war in El Salvador escalated during the eighties, despite elections and negotiations with the FMLN-FDR. For its part, the FMLN-FDR began to develop

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conventional war tactics during the early eighties: larger brigades were instrumental in the FMLN-FDR control over large areas of the countryside (known as the zones of control).[28] The Salvadoran army, with U.S. military aid and advising, began massive aerial assaults in military campaigns such as Operation Phoenix.[29] The U.S. gained greater leverage in Salvadoran politics as the war escalated: as the Salvadoran military became more dependent on U.S. military aid, the United States was able to use the aid as leverage.[30]

In 1982 and 1984, under pressure from the United States, the Salvadoran government held elections for the legislature and the presidency. In 1982, the Reagan administration pressured the High Command of the Salvadoran to allow elections so the reluctant U.S. Congress would authorize millions of dollars in military aid. The Reagan Administration hoped to use the elections to demonstrate to the U.S. Congress that El Salvador was a 'fledgling democracy' under siege by Soviet controlled revolutionary forces (Sundaram 1991: 141). Much to the chagrin of the Reagan Administration, the right-wing ARENA (Nationalist Republican Alliance) party, not the reformist PDC (Christian Democrat Party), won the elections for the Constituent Assembly (Norton 1991: 198). ARENA, a party with fascist tendencies, hardly presented the image of a party committed to reform and democracy.[31] The Reagan administration intervened through the military to prevent Roberto D'Aubisson, the founder of the ARENA party, from becoming provisional

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[28] The boundaries of the territory controlled by the FMLN continued to fluctuate throughout the war. By 1982, the FMLN controlled areas north of the departments of Cuscatlán, Morazán, Chalatenango, Cabañas, and San Salvador, as well as San Vincente-Volcán Chinchontepec. The control of the FMLN in those departments continued to expand through the eighties, both in terms of the geographic expansion of the zones of control, and in terms of the FMLN's increasing political control as well as military control. (Alvarez 1988: 85).

[29] Operation Phoenix began in 1986 in the department of Chalatenango. Aerial bombing preceded a sweep of the territory by five thousand ground troops in an operation which had the main objective of cutting the FMLN off from civilian support in that area (America's Watch 1991: 57).

[30] One example would be then Vice President George Bush's December 1983 visit to El Salvador. Bush relayed a threat from the Reagan Administration to cut off aid unless the death squads were brought under control.

[31] D'Aubisson, founder of the ARENA party, stated that the party was modeled on the Nazi party (NACLA: July 1989:18). Although the party began taking a more moderate turn in the late 80's, D'Aubisson remained a powerful influence within ARENA until his death in 1992 (Munck 1993: 84)

president (Norton 1991: 199). The Reagan Administration then pressed for presidential elections, which took place in 1984. This time, the PDC candidate, José Napoleón Duarte, won 53.6% of the vote (Acevedo 1991: 28).

Shortly after being elected, Duarte took small steps towards negotiating with the FMLN. In a speech given before the U.N., Duarte invited the FMLN-FDR to a series of negotiations in La Palma (Karl 1986: 30). Although the negotiations quickly came to a standstill, they were an important turning point: the Duarte administration treated the subject of dialogue with the FMLN openly and seriously. Duarte rejected other attempts the FMLN to continue the dialogue between 1985 and 1986, but returned to the negotiation table in 1986 (Barry and Castro 1991: 117). Duarte signed the regional Esquipulas peace plan sponsored by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias on August 7, 1987, which obligated the Salvadoran government to seriously pursue dialogue with the FMLN as well as to take specific steps towards reconciliation and democratization (Child 1992: 179).

Regime Responsiveness and Repression

The electoral liberalization that began in the early eighties was not sufficient to create a government that was responsive to institutionalized democratic channels. Though Duarte and the legislature exercised some of the powers vested in their offices, the veto power of the military curtailed the power of the civilians. Duarte was able to institute reforms in the area of military and death squad conduct, but the military did not abide by those reforms. The civilian government lacked the capacity to enforce laws without military consent: "The armed forces have the last word on the subject, and that includes the power to veto or violate the new measures or simply ignore them" (NACLA 1986: 29).

El Salvador's democratic credentials were essential to the continuation of military aid from the U.S., however, and the need to maintain at least a superficial appearance of

democracy created a slight increase in the Salvadoran government's tolerance of and responsiveness to dissenters. In 1981, the U.S. Congress established a certification requirement for the continuation of foreign aid: the administration had to issue a biannual report that, "the Salvadoran Government was 'making a concerted and significant effort to comply with internationally recognized human rights' and 'achieving substantial control over all elements of its armed forces' in order to end human rights abuses" (Americas Watch 1991: 120).[32] In order to improve the appearance of the electoral process, the Reagan administration helped to curb the death squad activity and pressured the military and the right to allow more open activity by the opposition (Karl 1986: 27). Duarte managed to institute some reforms, including strengthening the judicial system and establishing investigatory commissions to handle complaints against the death squads and the military (NACLA 1986: 29). Coercive tactics changed to rely on selective repression of opposition leadership, rather than overt attacks on protest marches and demonstrations.

The Shape of the Opposition, 1982-88

Opposition organizations began to re-emerge in the mid-eighties. Initially, the Duarte administration allowed unions and organizations that supported the PDC to mobilize. The Popular Democratic Union (UPD), which united campesino and urban trade unions signed a social pact with the PDC in 1984 (Zamora 1991: 185).[33]   Eventually, however, organizations that opposed the PDC began to represent their demands openly. For example, urban women's organizations re-emerged in the late eighties. Some of the most

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[32] Although certification was no longer a pre-condition for military aid after the 1983 Presidential veto, many Congress members continued to oppose sending aid based on the flagrant abuse of human rights (America's Watch 1991: 132).

[33] The PDC's incapacity to fulfill campaign promises created a serious rift within the UPD by 1985, and in 1986 a faction of the UPD joined with opposition unions and organizations to form the National Unity of Salvadoran Workers (Zamora 1991: 188).

prominent urban women's organizations were: the Women's Committee of the National

Federation of Salvadoran Workers (CO-FENESTRAS),[34] the Institute for Research

Training and Development of Women (IMU), and the National Coordination of Salvadoran

Women (CONAMUS).[35]   All of these organizations openly opposed the Duarte

administration and the PDC.

By the end of the eighties FDR leaders were attempting to build a legal political coalition

that would represent a united popular opposition. The Esquipulas II plan allowed the

leaders of the FDR to return to El Salvador. In November 1987, two opposition parties,

the MPSC and the MNR, joined to form the Democratic Convergence (CD). The CD's

platform included four main proposals: the negotiated end of the war, a program for socio-

economic recovery, democratization, and a non-aligned foreign policy (Zamora 1991: 192).

The Church facilitated the coalition-building by sponsoring the National Debate in the

summer of 1988. Archbishop Rivera y Damas brought sixty organizations, ranging from

the center to the left, together to discuss an agenda for the opposition.[36] By the end of the

summer, they produced an agenda that included a negotiated solution to the war, respect for

human rights, and a mixed economy and created a permanent commission to continue the

debate (Blachman and Sharpe 1989: 114).

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[34] CO-FENESTRAS is the women's branch of FENESTRAS, the National Federation of Salvadoran
Workers. Like other women's branches of unions, CO-FENESTRAS was created not only to represent
specific concerns of women workers, but to bring more women into active participation in the unions.Kelly
Ready presented a similar analysis of the women's committee of the public hospital worker's union
(COFASTISS) in "Las Ciganbas: The Salvadoran Women's Movement," a paper presented at the 1993
National Women's Studies Association.
[35] CONAMUS, created in 1986, established a women's health clinic and a legal aid clinic which deal
specifically (although not exclusively) with domestic violence and rape (Golden 1991: 113). The IMU was
founded by female academics from the Jesuit University of Central America, and helps women to develop
projects which provide solutions for the day-to-day problems they face in their life. Both CONAMUS and
the IMU are explicitly feminist.
[36] The National Debate included students organizations, labor unions, small business associations, human
rights organizations, and churches.

Until 1983, Alicia Sayalenda, a small restaurant owner, led the CO-MADRES. In 1983, a directorate was elected for the first time (Schirmer 1993: 37). The precise number of women in the directorate fluctuated as the movement expanded and the leadership structure changed.[3][7] By 1986, the CO-MADRES included approximately 700 women (Acosta 1993: 132; Enough Crying of Tears 1986). Approximately fifty of the members worked on a full-time basis for the CO-MADRES.[3][8]

The growth in membership and institutionalization of decision-making procedures occurred amid a political context that allowed limited degree space for opposition activity. The CO-MADRES took advantage of and created new opportunities as repression diminished. Their ties to U.S. solidarity networks and domestic opposition provided key support for the expansion and politicization of their agenda, which included both practical and strategic gender interests.

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[37] Each officer took primary responsibility for the various commissions within the organization as well as taking part in decisions which effected the movement as a whole. By 1988, the Commissions included: the Organizing Commission, in charge of recruitment and providing food and clothing for the mothers; the Public Relations commission, responsible for producing documents to send to international organizations; Publications and Projects Commission, which produced public statements, recorded testimonies, and made up packets for international delegations; the Finance Commission, which received financial aid from all international and domestic sources and allocated funds; and the Commission on Refugees and Displaced Persons which organized visits to refugee camps and provided assistance to refugees (New Americas Press 1989: 61).

[38] Because of the rapid increase in active members, CO-MADRES developed an informal political training program for its members. Some of the older CO-MADRES noticed that it was always the same women speaking at public events or taking responsibility for the more complicated tasks. Particularly in the case of public speaking, they attributed this to a lack of confidence. Before certain events newer members were asked to be responsible for a part of the presentation. While the older members would assist if the newer ones ran into serious problems, they expected the new members to take primary responsibility for the day's event. After the event was over, they would work with the new members on improving their abilities (to speak loudly and clearly, not to fidget, and look confident in what they are saying). However, the most important part of this "training" was to give the new members the push to speak in public so they could begin to develop confidence (Tula 1993).

Late in 1983, the CO-MADRES began to publicly protest once again (New Americas Press 1989: 29). They adopted a uniform: they dressed in black with white scarves and a red and white carnation.[39] As the presidential elections of 1984 grew closer, the leadership of CO-MADRES perceived presence of international observers and media representatives as an indication that the military would be less likely to repress their demands. They also expected to receive greater international attention by protesting in the presence of international observers (Tula 1993). They began to stage bimonthly sit-ins at the U.S. Embassy, the Ministry of Justice and the Legislative Assembly (Acosta 1993: 133).

After Duarte's election, the CO-MADRES found there was more room for open political activity. On November 5, the CO-MADRES organized a march of 3,000 people through San Salvador. The military did not interfere with the march, although military police arrested many of the leaders a few days after the march. Later in November, the CO-MADRES and other human rights groups organized a human rights conference in San Salvador (Thompsen 1986: 149).

If the new government was less apt to violently repress public protests, it was not responsive to the CO-MADRES when they used institutional channels to represent their demands. In the summer and fall of 1987 they presented 120 habeus corpus appeals to the supreme court that went unanswered. A telegram from the Minister of Justice also demonstrated the non-responsive nature of the Duarte administration: "I consider the audience solicited in order to treat the situation of the political prisoners inappropriate now

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[39] The black dress represents mourning for each of the victims, the white headscarf symbolizes peace, the red carnation symbolizes the blood of the victims, the white is for the disappeared, and the green leaves are for hope (Schirmer 1993: 33).

that political prisoners can be found in no prison in the country" (*Sentir Con El Pueblo* June 1988).

The Duarte administration did not end the repression of CO-MADRES entirely. Although the new government tolerated marches and public demonstrations, the leadership of CO-MADRES and their offices came under increasing attack.   By 1986, fourteen members had been captured, disappeared or assassinated (CO-MADRES Bulletin March/April/ May 1986), and the numbers continued to rise through the late eighties.   In 1986, before being arrested by the military, men in civilian clothes, possibly members of a death squad, captured and interrogated Maria Teresa Tula (Tula 1993). The CO-MADRES office was bombed two more times in these five years: in 1986 and 1987 (Schirmer 1993: 40).[40]

Accusations that CO-MADRES was a front group for the FMLN justified the attacks on the organization. On February 11, 1986, Ambassador Corr of the U.S. Embassy in El Salvador, accused the organization of being a front for the FMLN (CO-MADRES Bulletin Fall 1987).   In August of 1987, the Salvadoran government published two blurred photographs of a CO-MADRES and armed guerrilla, that were ostensibly of the same woman (CO-MADRES Bulletin Fall 1987).   Declaring the CO-MADRES a terrorist organization with connections to the FMLN allowed the government to apply different standards for the arrest and treatment of the CO-MADRES leaders (CO-MADRES Bulletin Autumn/Winter 1988).

The CO-MADRES argued that the repressive and non-responsive new government was not democratic.[41]   The lack of power or willingness on the part of the new government to

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[40] The offices were ransacked after each bombing, and the CO-MADRES lost most of their documents and their supplies, as well as humanitarian aid like food and medicine.

[41] They repeatedly declared that the new government could not be called a democracy : "Monseñor Romero proclaimed that in El Salvador there existed a false order and peace which was based on repression and fear. Today he would declare that the alleged "democracy" is also false and rooted in a strategy of war against the Salvadoran people, which is supported by the U.S. government." (CO-MADRES Bulletin March/ April/ May 1986).

seriously confront injustice and human rights violations rendered its democratic credentials meaningless. Rather, the new government and its program, "serve to confuse the domestic and international opinion and damage the credibility of the struggle of the popular opposition" (*Madre Salvadoreña*, May 16-June 15).

Tactical Development and New Alliances

As it became increasingly apparent that institutional channels were still ineffective, the CO-MADRES continued to develop new extra-institutional tactics. Some of the old tactics, such as sit-ins and contacting international human rights organizations, continued to be useful to the CO-MADRES. Other tactics, however, were less reliable. The CO-MADRES could not rely on the Church to the extent that they had previously due to growing tensions in their relationship with the Church. Instead, the most significant allies became domestic opposition organizations and their solidarity network in the United States, known as "Friends of CO-MADRES."

The CO-MADRES continued to rely on the tactics they had developed in earlier years. They denounced human rights violation through paid ads in domestic newspapers, public marches, and protests at embassies, government buildings, and prisons (CO-MADRES Bulletin January-March 1987). They increased their involvement with international human rights organizations such as FEDEFAM.[42] They also strengthened their relationship with domestic human rights organizations. In 1987, CO-MADRES joined with two other human rights organizations (CODEFAM, the Committee of Families for the Liberty of Political Prisoners and Disappeared, and COMAFAC, Christian Committee of Mothers and Relatives of the Disappeared) in the Federation of Committees of Mothers and Families of

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[42] In 1983, a CO-MADRE was elected president of FEDEFAM, and FEDEFAM nominated the CO-MADRES for the Robert F. Kennedy human rights award in 1984 (Tula 1993).

Political Prisoners, Disappeared, and Assassinated--FECMAFAM (New Americas Press 1989: 57).

The Church, however, became a less reliable ally. The Church did continue to provide material aid to the CO-MADRES: access to the Church radio station YSAX, food and clothing, and an office in the Archdiocese from 1982-84 (Tula 1993). A major rift developed between the Church and the CO-MADRES, however, over the CO-MADRES periodic occupation of the Cathedral.[43] The occupation of the Cathedral forced the Archbishop to deliver the weekly mass in other churches. The Archbishop ordered the CO-MADRES to cease their occupation of the Cathedral. In 1987, Archbishop Rivera y Damas threatened to excommunicate the leadership of the CO-MADRES if they occupied the Cathedral again. When asked if they would take the Cathedral again, the CO-MADRES said they would if necessary: "God knows that we occupy the Church because of necessity not whim...The Church isn't a building, we ourselves, all of us, are the Church" (CO-MADRES Bulletin January-March 1987).

In contrast, the CO-MADRES found the re-emerging urban left to be an increasingly reliable ally. After opposition groups began to re-surface in San Salvador, the CO-MADRES built alliances with other opposition groups. They worked particularly closely with FENESTRAS, COPPES and CDHES. Whenever a member of any of the organizations was captured, for instance, the organizations would show solidarity with the other organizations and protest the capture publicly. The CO-MADRES felt that these joint actions gave them greater leverage than staging demonstrations independently (Tula 1993).

Although the CO-MADRES clearly relied on some sectors of the organized left, their relationship to the FMLN during this period was somewhat unclear. Individual members of the CO-MADRES were affiliated personally with one of the revolutionary parties of the

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[43] By 1987, the CO-MADRES had taken the Metropolitan Cathedral fifty times (CO-MADRES Bulletin Jan.-March 1987).

FMLN (Tula 1993), some of whom may have been leaders. Due to changes in leadership and fluctuation in active membership, it was not clear that there was any kind of stable relationship between the CO-MADRES and the FMLN.[44] The consistent denial by the CO-MADRES of any ties to the FMLN complicates the question further. [45]

The FMLN, however, offered important political support for CO-MADRES demands. In a general sense, the FMLN represented some of the same issues that the CO-MADRES prioritized on their agenda during this period. The CO-MADRES continued to struggle for their basic demand for the respect for human rights, and by 1985 expanded their agenda to include opposition to military aid from the U.S. and supporting the dialogue between the FMLN and the government.[46] More specifically, the FMLN provided assistance to the CO-MADRES by applying pressure in particular cases of human rights abuses. On at least one occasion the FMLN negotiated a prisoner swap for ten members of the CDHES and the CO-MADRES for soldiers captured by the FMLN (America's Watch 152).

Liberal North American political elites also applied pressure on behalf of the CO-MADRES. One of the most consistent allies of the CO-MADRES was the Kennedy family. In 1984, the CO-MADRES received the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights award that included an award of $30,000 dollars. From that point on, Senator Kennedy

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[44] Conversation with Lynn Stephen

[45] The CO-MADRES refuted many charges that they were connected to the FMLN, and issued strong criticisms of the FMLN's tactic of kidnapping and of their use of mines (CO-MADRES Bulletins, Spring 1986, Autumn/Winter 1988). They also point out that they include mothers of soldiers from the military as well as mothers of opposition activists.

[46] The incorporation of the opposition to military aid and the support for the dialogue case became part of the public agenda after the elections and negotiations in La Palma created small openings. The CO-MADRES began to publicly oppose military aid during the elections when there were many international observers and members of the foreign press. The presence of international observers and press offered protection, as the government was less likely to retaliate, and publicity for the CO-MADRES demands, particularly in the U.S (Tula 1993). The CO-MADRES publicly prioritized negotiations and dialogue after the meetings in La Palma. The CO-MADRES demonstrated at La Palma (Shenk 1984: 4), and shortly thereafter, they began to publicly demand a continuation of the dialogue process. Before the La Palma negotiations, supporting a dialogue with the FMLN was extremely dangerous, but when President Duarte took an important step towards negotiation by meeting with FMLN leaders at La Palma, he also provided an opening for others to support it (Shenk 1984:4).

frequently intervened on behalf of the CO-MADRES with the Salvadoran government and the Reagan Administration (Tula 1993). Other Democratic Senators and Representatives, including Congressmen Moakley and Levine, and Senators Dodd and Leahy, made numerous appeals on behalf of the CO-MADRES to the U.S. and Salvadoran governments and fought for political asylum for two CO-MADRES, America Sosa and Maria Teresa Tula.[47]

A particularly important ally was the North American solidarity organization, "Friends of CO-MADRES." In 1985, America Sosa, a CO-MADRE, opened a U.S. office based in Washington D.C. With the help of North American activists, and Maria Teresa Tula after 1987, she organized the solidarity network. The "Friends of CO-MADRES" and the two representatives in Washington had three basic purposes:

> (1) Inform Congress, human rights organizations, religious groups, the press and the general public on human rights abuses in El Salvador, which, despite declarations to the contrary, are still in effect.
> (2) Organize delegations of North American citizens to travel to El Salvador in Solidarity with CO-MADRES.
> (3) Seek material aid, especially economic, for various CO-MADRES projects in El Salvador" (CO-MADRES pamphlet).

The CO-MADRES office in D.C. published a bulletin of the CO-MADRES activities and updated subscribers on the situation of human rights in El Salvador. The D.C. Office was also responsible for organizing "accompaniments": delegations of U.S. citizens who accompanied the CO-MADRES in El Salvador and provided a kind of protection from government abuses through their presence.[48] Finally, the D.C. office organized fundraising drives, soliciting funds to help publish the paid advertisements and purchase

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[47] These appeals include letters to the U.S. ambassador in El Salvador, the High Command of the Armed Forces, and President Duarte, some of which are kept by the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Office (CO-MADRES Bulletin Summer 1990 and Winter 1992; Tula 1993).

[48] The accompaniments began in 1987. Delegations were generally available when the CO-MADRES needed them, although there were some periods when the CO-MADRES decided it was too dangerous for the Americans (Tula 1993).

supplies, as well as donations of equipment such as cameras and IBM compatible computers. [49]

Interests and Objectives: 1982-1988

CO-MADRES again politicized gender interests and began to politicize strategic gender interests. Repression and limited resources continued to constrain the capacity of the CO-MADRES to carry out new projects and represent gender interests. The CO-MADRES were able to politically represent practical and strategic gender interests publicly with the assistance of other opposition organizations and the Friends of CO-MADRES.

The CO-MADRES expanded their agenda to include more issues that would be considered to represent practical gender interests. Throughout the 1980's, they continued to speak out as mothers against human rights abuses, particularly those against their family members. They also began to speak out as mothers against the horrors of the civil war. As the number of displaced persons increased throughout the eighties, they began to work with refugees and provide food for displaced persons through their office. They began to organize programs to care for orphans of human rights victims. As mothers, they disparaged all the suffering caused by the war, but most frequently, they decried the suffering of the children.

The CO-MADRES received material support for their relief projects from the Church and from humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross and Green Cross. Although the conflict over the occupation of the Cathedral had strained the CO-MADRES relationship with the Church, the Church and other humanitarian organizations continued to

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[49] The exact numbers of members of "Friends of CO-MADRES" and the amount of financial support the friends supply is not readily available. Some indication of the size and strength of the organization is the geographic dispersion of their activities. The Friends had representations in California, New York, Massachusetts, Washington state, Washington D.C., Michigan, and Iowa. They were able to provide financial support through speaking tours by America Sosa and Maria Teresa Tula, and fundraising concerts by Bonnie Raitt.

provide material aid to support the CO-MADRES efforts to care for the community affected by the war. Though the Archbishop chastised the CO-MADRES for some of their activities, he continued to praise the maternal instincts their humanitarian projects illustrated.

Government sabotage of the CO-MADRES projects, however, limited their capacity to expand their practical gender agenda. One particularly tragic example of government sabotage occurred when the CO-MADRES set up an orphanage for children of human rights victims. The CO-MADRES rented a house in Colonia Santa Lucia where they began an orphanage for about one hundred children. Military police came to the house and took eighty-four children. The CO-MADRES found children's bodies in El Playón.[50] The CO-MADRES took the remaining sixteen children to different private homes (Schirmer 1993: 45).

Scarcity of organizational resources further constrained the CO-MADRES' ability to expand their practical agenda. Prioritizing new objectives meant making difficult choices:

> War in El Salvador means mothers with children come to the CO-MADRES office,
> sent from other offices, asking for rice and beans for their hungry children.
> Hungry children and pleading mothers leave the CO-MADRES facing a difficult
> decision. To say yes to helping the mothers of the hungry children means the CO-
> MADRES may start a soup kitchen and therefore start re-directing energy away
> from the founding purpose of denouncing human rights abuses.
> (CO-MADRES Bulletin Winter/Spring 1989)

Expanding their practical agenda was predicated on the availability of human resources, as well as material resources. Devoting time to the new projects often meant less time for human rights work. The CO-MADRES main priority was still to press for a guarantee for human rights and that work continued to take the majority of their time.[51]

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[50] El Playón is a body dump near San Salvador.

[51] It is important to note, however, that while specific acts of repression limited the capacity of the CO-MADRES to effectively carry out their projects, the coercive tactics of the regime paradoxically provided the impetus for those same projects. The need to supply medicine to political prisoners is rooted in the fact that there were political prisoners. Likewise, the need to care for orphans of the assassinated is connected to the repressive policies of the military. Although the CO-MADRES chose which interests they could

The instance in which the CO-MADRES politicized a strategic gender interest was when they publicly protested the use of rape and sexual degradation as torture by the military and death squads. Rape, and violence against women more generally, would be considered a strategic gender problem because it enforces gendered subordination: violence takes away an individual's capacity to make decisions for herself, and when violence against women is widespread or unobstructed by political and social institutions, it becomes an obstacle to women's equality generally. By 1985, the CO-MADRES denounced specific acts of rape by the military in their newsletters and in public protests (CO-MADRES Bulletin March-April 1986; Enough Crying of Tears 1986; Sentir con El Pueblo June 1988; Solidaridad 1985).[52]

Though the CO-MADRES did politicize the problem of rape during this period, they did not represent strategic gender interests to a high degree. The degree to a public denunciation of rape represents strategic gender interests depends of the degree to which the denunciation confronts women's gendered subordination. Although the CO-MADRES did politicize the problem of rape, they only denounced specific crimes committed by the military. They did not denounce the problem of rape in society at large. Thus, while the CO-MADRES politicized rape, the extent to which they politicized strategic gender interests was low.

Assistance from other opposition organizations and the international solidarity network made the politicization of rape possible. One of the difficulties in denouncing the use of

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represent and how, the failure of the government to provide a system in which practical interests were addressed (or at least not deliberately obstructed) is the basis of the CO-MADRES practical agenda. Mariclaire Acosta makes a similar point: "Giving aid and relief to political prisoners and their families and adopting children can be seen merely as an extension of the mothering role. However, the political content of this activity is radically different from normal charitable action: the CO-MADRES have to mother a whole people because the institutions that normally do so in society have proven their inability" (Acosta 1993: 139).

[52] The use of rape as torture has been practiced throughout Latin America as part of a counter-insurgency strategy (Bunster 1993). In El Salvador, members of the military, the police and the death squads have been implicated in the use of rape as physical and psychological torture (Stephen 1993: 11).

rape by the military was that the victims were unwilling to testify to the rape. When victims of the military or the death squads testified to human rights activists from the CDHES or the CO-MADRES, they would often not speak about their rape (Tula 1993).[53] One of the places women began to discover that rape was a common experience was in the political prisons (Tula 1993). The women's sector of COPPES (the Committee of Political Prisoners of El Salvador) began to denounce the use of rape against political prisoners and encouraged victims to denounce their rapes publicly through the CDHES or the CO-MADRES (Enough Crying of Tears 1986; Tula 1993). The activism by COPPES around the issue of rape was critical to the CO-MADRES capacity to issue specific denunciations.[54]

Assistance from the Friends of CO-MADRES was essential to publicizing the denunciations within El Salvador and abroad. Though the CO-MADRES denounced the rapes in the public demonstrations, newsletters provided an equally valuable means to publicize the problem. The Friends of CO-MADRES provided the economic and material resources necessary to produce the newsletters in El Salvador (this included a computer the CO-MADRES received in 1988). The newsletter written in the Washington D.C. office also denounced the rapes. Catherine Russo, a friend of the CO-MADRES, further publicized the problem of rape in a documentary she produced about the CO-MADRES. In the film, Alicia, a leader of the CO-MADRES, testifies about her own rape, and the CO-MADRES and COPPES jointly denounce the rape of prisoners in Mariona (one of several women's prisons where political prisoners are kept). This film aired in 1987 throughout

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[53] Men who were raped were even more reluctant to admit to it. Although this practice has been uncovered by medical practitioners, there have been few public denunciations of this practice (Stephen 1993: 12)

[54] Even if there was medical evidence that a victim had been raped, it was essential that the victim denounce the rape and consent that denunciation be made public: the CO-MADRES would not publicize any denunciation if the victim or the victims relatives did not consent and sign a denunciation for their records (Tula 1993).

the United States on PBS, publicizing the CO-MADRES denunciation of rape tactics to a large North American audience.

The capacity of CO-MADRES to represent both practical and strategic gender interests expanded during this period. The graph below illustrates the general pattern of expansion.

CO-MADRES Representation
of Gender Interests, 1982-88

Strategic

1982   1985   1988
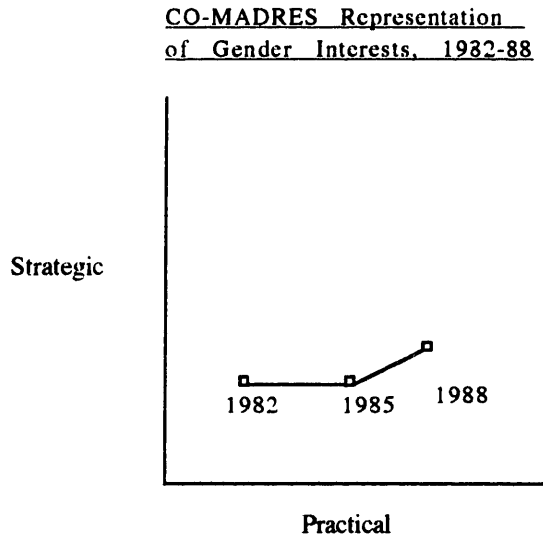
Practical

Between 1982 and 1985, the CO-MADRES steadily expanded their practical gender agenda. Material support from the Church and humanitarian organizations facilitated the expansion, but state repression and finite resources constrained it. After 1985, the CO-MADRES continued to expand their practical gender agenda, and began to politicize strategic gender interests to a limited degree. These expansions were possible because of material support from the "Friends of CO-MADRES" and the political and material support of opposition activities like COPPES. Though the CO-MADRES were not highly active around strategic gender interests, that they represented this type of interests to any extent is a significant counterpoint to those who would argue that femenina organizations cannot represent strategic gender interests at all.

Chapter 5: The Peace Process and Gender Interests, 1989-1993

From 1989-1993, CO-MADRES greatly expanded their practical and strategic gender agenda. They created development projects that targeted women in particular. Beginning in 1990, the CO-MADRES characterized themselves as an organization that promoted "women's self-development projects" (CO-MADRES Bulletin Summer 1990). CO-MADRES began to form coalitions with other women's organizations and increasingly politicized strategic gender issues. Alliances with other women's organizations and ongoing support from international solidarity networks provided the CO-MADRES with the resources and political support necessary to politicize an agenda specific to women.

The Political Context

In 1989, Freddy Cristiani, a member of the right-wing ARENA party, defeated the Christian Democrat, Fidel Chávez Mena, by 167,001 votes in the presidential election (Eguizábal 1992: 148). Though ARENA's margin of victory was great, the victory did not represent support by the majority of registered voters: a record number abstained in the 1989 presidential elections, even though voting was mandatory.[55] Opposition organizations vehemently opposed Cristiani and denounced the supposedly democratic elections. After the ARENA victory, attacks on opposition political organizations began to

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[55] Out of 1,834,00 registered voters, only 1,003,153 went to the polls (Eguizábal 1992: 148)

increase. The new administration declared a state of emergency, suspending constitutional guarantees such as free speech, and enacted anti-terrorist legislation that legalized state repression of dissent (Arnson 1991a: 72; LeoGrande 1991: 129; Popkin 1991:78; NACLA 1989: 35). Reports of detention and torture rose and opposition offices were ransacked and destroyed (Popkin 1991: 77).[56] [6]

The FMLN initiated the Battle of San Salvador in November 1989 in response to the new wave of violence against the opposition. The FMLN launched an offensive in seven of the departments of El Salvador, and occupied six neighborhoods in San Salvador (LeoGrande 1991: 114). Government forces defeated the FMLN, but political analysts have treated the Battle of San Salvador as a political victory for the FMLN (LeoGrande 1991; Montgomery 1992). The occupation of areas of San Salvador required significant support from civilians in those areas (civilians collaborated by concealing arms and combatants), revealing that the FMLN had significant popular support (LeoGrande 1991: 122). The government forces, on the other hand, were unable to combat the FMLN successfully with ground troops, so they resorted to aerial bombing of the occupied neighborhoods (Montgomery 1992: 114).[57] The international community broadly condemned the aerial assaults for their cost in civilian lives (Eguizábal 1993: 135).

Negotiations, Regime Responsiveness, and Repression

Although the ARENA victory and the FMLN offensive do not seem to indicate strong prospects for peace, the power shifts that occurred in 1989 actually created conditions in

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[56] Two of the most infamous attacks on the opposition during this period occurred on October 31: the FENESTRAS headquarters was bombed, killing ten people and injuring 29, and the CO-MADRES office was bombed again, injuring four people.

[57] The neighborhoods which were targeted for the aerial strikes were the poor neighborhoods where the initial FMLN actions were launched: the government forces did not bomb the wealthy areas which the FMLN later occupied, such as the neighborhood of Escalón (Montgomery 1992: 115)

which negotiations and democratization efforts became more successful. ARENA, while still strongly influenced by right-wing extremists, presented a National Peace Proposal during the campaign. The program included a proposal for the incorporation of the FMLN into the political system (Eguizábal 1992: 144). In Cristiani's inaugural address, he proposed a plan for negotiations that did not require the FMLN's surrender. The FMLN, for its part, dropped its demand for power sharing and increasingly focused on victory through the electoral system rather than on the battlefield. The FMLN offered to support the 1989 elections conditioned on a postponement of the elections until September (Eguizábal 1992: 147). The FMLN and the Cristiani administration did not reach an agreement by February, so the FMLN proceeded to boycott the elections. The Democratic Convergence (CD), an offshoot of the FDR, however, did participate in the elections with Guillermo Ungo as their presidential candidate. Although the CD garnered only 3.8% of the vote, its participation marked the beginning of the participation of the organized left in electoral politics.

Changes in U.S. policy under the Bush administration also improved the prospects for a negotiated settlement and a possible transition to democracy. The Bush administration "opened the way for a shift in U.S. policy, away from a rigid ideological stance and towards a more pragmatic position" (Munck 1993: 80). The new administration was less willing to provide military aid than the Reagan administration had been and more willing to use aid as leverage to pressure the Cristiani government to push forth on negotiations (Karl 1992: 153).[5][8]

Finally, the increased role of the U.N. set the stage for a negotiated solution to the civil war. By early 1990, the U.N. was working with the FMLN and the Cristiani

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[58] After a congressional investigation implicated the High Command of the military in the November 1989 killing of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter by the military, the U.S. Congress cut military aid in half. (Karl 1992:152; Munck 1993:81). The congress did authorize the Bush administration to restore the aid if the FMLN began another offensive (Munck 1993: 82). After the FMLN launched an offensive in 1990, Bush restored the aid, but continued to use the aid as leverage (Eguizábal 1992: 153).

administration to bring them together for a series of U.N. mediated talks. The first talks took place in May 1990. By June both parties agreed that the U.N. would monitor human rights (Montgomery 1993: 114).[59] and that a U.N. sponsored "Truth Commission" would document past human rights abuses and recommend steps to resolve the human rights problem.[60] The negotiation process ended on January 16, 1991, with the signing of the Peace Accords. Between 1991-93, the Salvadoran government and the FMLN made slow progress towards the implementation of the Accords.

During the negotiations and since the signing of the peace accords, the space for legitimate opposition activity in the political arena gradually opened. Legal barriers to participation, however, gradually began to disappear: laws forbidding association with the FMLN, for example, were undone by the recognition of the FMLN as a legal political party. The participation of the CD in 1989 brought leaders of the FDR legally into the political system. The CD's electoral support was relatively small in 1989 and 1991: only 3.8% of the vote in 1989 and 12% in 1991. The party won eight seats in the legislature, however, and Rubén Zamora, leader of the CD, became vice-president of the legislature (Munck 1993: 82).

Violent repression, however, continued even into 1993: the CDHES recorded 160 extra-judicial executions, 242 illegal detentions, and 14 disappearances during the first four months of 1993 (CDHES July 1993). In spite of continued repression, the negotiation process led to concrete agreements to reduce human rights abuses. In 1991, the FMLN and the government signed a human rights accord. Human rights activists questioned the sincerity of the government in signing because human rights abuses continued even after the agreement was signed. The accord did establish important new mechanisms for the

[59] The U.N observer team is apparently the first of its kind (Montgomery 1993: 114).

[60] The Truth Commission's report found that the majority of human rights abuses were committed by the military and the death squads. The Commission proposed a series of reforms within the judicial system and the military, as well as punishment of those officials and FMLN leaders implicated in the report (U.N. 1993).

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protection of human rights that yielded concrete results. For example, the accord created the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL). The mission placed 100 observers throughout the country who had the authority to visit prisons unannounced. These powers made the ONUSAL an important deterrent to human rights abuses and its impact was visible shortly after its establishment (Arnson 1991b: 89).

The Changing Shape of the Opposition

The tactics and strategies of the left began to develop in new directions in response to the changing political context. The CD's decision to take advantage of new openings and participate in the 1989 and 1991 elections presented an alternative to the FMLN's strategy. The increased pluralism within the left created conditions in which organizations could operate more independently. Salvadoran women's organizations, in particular, formed new coalitions and used their strength to make demands of the left as well as of government officials. The growing independence of Salvadoran women's organizations illustrated a trend repeated within the opposition as whole: as repression declined and the range of opposition strategies expanded, opposition organizations became less dependent on the FMLN.

In the late eighties, it was very difficult for opposition organizations to function openly. For example, as women's organizations re-emerged in the cities, they again became subjects of regime repression. The office of ADEMUSA (the Association of Salvadoran Women) was ransacked, and the clinic operated by CONAMUS was bombed in 1989 (Ready 1993: 23-24). Many of the organizations depended on support from the FMLN for their survival. In fact, the revolutionary parties were often responsible for establishing new organizations, such as the Salvadoran Movement of Women (MSM) and the Union of

Salvadoran Women (UMS). These organizations maintained close connections with the FMLN and depended on its support (America's Press 1989: 76).

After the initial negotiations of the peace accords, new opposition coalitions with varying degrees of independence from the FMLN began to emerge. As of 1993, there were two major coalitions of women's organizations. The first was the COM, the Coordinating Organization of Women, which included ADEMUSA, CONAMUS, MSM, and the Association of Salvadoran Women (AMS). The second coalition was the Concertacíon, which included women from twenty-five organizations, including women in the government and a group of women who were closely connected to the Resistencia Nacional (National Resistance, one of the five revolutionary parties). The COM had a political vision that was more closely aligned to the FMLN, and the Concertacíon was focused more on gender-specific issues than the COM (Ready 1993: 28). A temporary coalition, called Women in the 1994 Election (Mujeres '94), planned to submit a platform of women's interests to all of the political parties before the election (Stephen 1993: 18). These new coalitions, particularly the Concertacíon and Mujeres '94, illustrated the growing capacity of women's organizations to form coalitions independently and across party lines. These coalitions increased their strength to make demands of party leaders and the government: the Mujeres '94 coalition represented an unprecedented attempt to join fourteen women's organizations and jointly press for their demands before an election.

The CO-MADRES and the Political Process, 1989-1993

Under pressure from the U.N. and the FMLN, the ARENA government became more responsive to human rights demands. The six CD officials that were elected to the legislature in 1991 prioritized human rights issues and supported the CO-MADRES

demands. The new openings allowed the CO-MADRES to represent their demands more effectively in spite of ongoing repression.

The Effects of Responsiveness and Repression on the CO-MADRES, 1989-1993

The CO-MADRES were still targets of state repression even through the early months of 1993. The office was bombed again in 1989: this time, six CO-MADRES, a child, and a North American were injured (Schirmer 1993: 40-41). The office was ransacked a few weeks later, and all the office supplies and documents were confiscated (CO-MADRES Bulletin March 1990). The National Police used the ARENA Anti-Terrorist law to arrest several CO-MADRES for protesting, and the Treasury Police abducted several CO-MADRES late in 1989 (Schirmer 1993 40-41). As late as 1993, the son of a CO-MADRE was abducted and killed (Tula 1993)

Initially,the ARENA government was not any more responsive to the CO-MADRES demands than the Duarte Administration had been. The interactions with the ARENA government were remarkably similar to those with the Duarte administration. The Treasury Police, for example, refused to return property confiscated in the 1989 raid and sought to discredit the CO-MADRES by stating that the confiscated property included explosive devices (Golden 1991: 109).

In spite of apparently dim prospects, the ARENA government agreed to a number of the CO-MADRES most important demands in the Peace Accords. The earliest accord specifically agreed to important protection for human rights, including respect for the lives and bodily integrity of all Salvadorans, respect for the due process of law, and the right to associate freely in political organizations (CO-MADRES Bulletin Summer 1990). The terms reached in the final Peace Accord agreement included agreements to other CO-MADRES demands: a major re-structuring of the reduction of the Armed Forces and the

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dissolution of the National Guard and the Treasury police, and agreement by the FMLN and the government to a cease-fire.

Although the CO-MADRES applauded the content of the Peace Accords, representatives expressed doubt that the accord would be implemented: "The agreement includes respect for the lives, integrity, security of the people, due process of law, personal liberty, liberty of expression, and liberty of association. Implementation remains dubious at present...What is new is potential oversight by the U.N., but this supervision will only be put in place after a cease-fire." (CO-MADRES Bulletin Summer 1990). Leaders also expressed concern that the governments agreement to the Accords represented an attempt to manipulate the U.N. rather than sincere respect for human rights. Celia Beltrán of CO-MADRES cautioned the U.N. in a newspaper article printed in El Diario to be suspicious of the governments willingness to end the war and pursue social justice (CO-MADRES July/August 1990).

In spite of these reservations, the Accords created new political openings and that allowed the CO-MADRES to represent their demands more effectively. The CO-MADRES gained greater access to U.N. human rights monitors and elected officials under the accords. Since the U.N. observation mission began, the CO-MADRES have been able to report human rights violations directly to U.N. representatives throughout El Salvador (Tula 1993). The election of the six Democratic Convergence candidates in the 1991 election brought the first close allies of the CO-MADRES into institutional politics: Ruben Zamora and the others were viewed by the CO-MADRES as genuine advocates of human rights, while progressive Christian Democrats who proclaimed to be advocates of human rights were viewed skeptically because of their parties close alliance with the military (Tula 1993). The 1991 election marked the initial opening of a new kind of representation for the CO-MADRES: representation through elected officials.

The CO-MADRES began to participate in formal coalitions with other opposition organizations. In particular, the CO-MADRES began to work with other women's organizations and became part of an important coalition of women's organizations, Mujeres '94. The new coalitions focused increasingly on influencing political parties and elected representatives. Although the CO-MADRES continued to use protest tactics independently, they began to pressure elected officials and parties to represent their demands through the new coalitions.

The CO-MADRES continued to protest government abuses of human rights with the same extra-institutional tactics. They continued to petition foreign embassies and the Church to intervene on their behalf. They protested in the streets and continued to publish denunciations in the newspapers (CO-MADRES July/August 1990; Diario Latino August 30,1990: El Mundo August 18, 1990;Sentir Con El Pueblo March 1993). They appealed to Congressmen Moakley and Mel Levine, and Senator Edward Kennedy, Christopher Dodd, and Patrick Leahy, who lobbied to end military aid and condemned human rights violations by the Salvadoran government (CO-MADRES Bulletin Summer 1990: 2; CO-MADRES Bulletin Winter 1992; Tula 1993). The Friends of CO-MADRES provided resources and an emergency response network that organized telephone campaigns to Cristiani, the High Command, the U.S. Embassy, the U.N. and U.S. Congressional Representatives (CO-MADRES Bulletin Summer 1990: 10).[61] They appealed to humanitarian organizations and international solidarity organizations for material aid, and in 1989 received funds from feminists in the Norwegian Labor Party to purchase a house for use as an office (Schirmer 1993: 41).

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[61] The number of people the CO-MADRES were able to contact through the emergency response network is not readily available.

Though the CO-MADRES continued to rely on the tactics they developed in the seventies and eighties, they also began to integrate themselves more formally into the organized left. América Sosa described the importance of coalition building to the CO-MADRES in the early nineties:

> Perhaps we could say the most important work that CO-MADRES is doing at this time is integrating our work into broader coalitions, broader movements in our country. For example, we are part of a National Debate. We are part of a National Coalition just recently formed. The Coalition involves different sectors in El Salvador like federated unions, peasant organizations, women's organizations, university groups, and small business sectors or groups. This coalition discusses the needs of the nation and how we can join in one single document to present our position to the government or the inter-party coalition, where various political party members participate in their own legal discussions.
> (Christian Social Action 1990: 11)

The CO-MADRES played an active role in this coalition and in formulating their demands (Tula 1993). The CO-MADRES also developed stronger ties to labor during this period: Celia Beltrán, a leader of the CO-MADRES, was elected to the executive committee of the National Unity of Salvadoran Workers (Unidad Nacional de los Trajabadores Salvadoreños or UNTS).

The CO-MADRES began to work closely with CO-FENESTRAS on specific projects.[62] The two organizations worked together to form the Women's International Network for Development and Democracy in El Salvador (WINDS). WINDS provided support for women's' self-development projects in El Salvador. At the Inaugural Forum in October of 1990, the CO-MADRES and CO-FENESTRAS stated the following goals for first forum:

> (1) To convene international women from diverse sectors to celebrate the birth of WINDS
> (2) To promote a dynamic relationship of mutual support between the international women's movement and a developing women's movement in El Salvador.

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[62] CO-FENESTRAS is the women's division of FENESTRAS, one of the CO-MADRES closest allies.

(3) To educate the international women's community about the current situation of Salvadoran women.
(4) To strategize to provide technical, financial, and political support to women's self development projects in El Salvador.
(5) To commission an International Women's Delegation to El Salvador which will visit potential WINDS projects, observe and report back on political and human rights conditions as they affect women and children.
(CO-MADRES Bulletin Summer 1990: 8)

WINDS funded women's development projects throughout El Salvador, including some of the CO-MADRES projects. WINDS was run by a Board of Directors that included representatives of CO-MADRES and CO-FENESTRAS as well as North American feminist activists and academics.

The CO-MADRES were also instrumental in the formation of Mujeres Por la Dignidad y la Vida (Women for Dignity and Life, known as DIGNAS). The CO-MADRES were active in the planning of the first meeting of the DIGNAS, which took place in July 1990 (CO-MADRES July/August 1990: 4-5). The first meeting brought together several hundred women from different organizations, including peasants organizations, at the National University in San Salvador. The conference included panels on Women and Human Rights, Women and Health, Discrimination and Marginalization of Women, and Women and War (CO-MADRES July/August 1990; CO-MADRES Bulletin Summer 1990).

The CO-MADRES also participated in the coalition of Mujeres '94. The CO-MADRES worked with fourteen other organizations to present a platform for women on a variety of issues which concern the CO-MADRES (Tula 1993). Their participation in the coalition reflects a new strategic development that responded to changes in the political context: progressive parties were becoming part of institutional politics, and this change opened new institutional channels for organizations to represent their interests. Women's organizations were increasingly available allies as women's political organizations operated more independently from the FMLN. The CO-MADRES and the other participants in the

Mujeres'94 utilized these new opportunities to represent interests directly to the full spectrum of political parties, introducing a new strategy for representing women's gender interests within the Salvadoran context.

Gender Interests and the Political Process

The shifting structure of political opportunities in the early eighties created a climate in which new channels of representation for gender interests could be created and utilized. Although the CO-MADRES continued to prioritize human rights interests, they increased their activities around practical and strategic gender interests. The CO-MADRES continued to press the government to respect human rights and to implement the recommendations of the peace accords (Stephen 1993: 18). The CO-MADRES were able to expand their activities around practical and strategic gender interests: coalitions of women's organizations provided new channels to represent women's interests, creating conditions under which the CO-MADRES were able to represent a political agenda that was increasingly specific to women..

The CO-MADRES prioritized practical gender interests within their human rights agenda. In their description of their organization, they began to cite women's self-development projects as a priority objective. The CO-MADRES organized sewing workshops, day care centers, cooperative arts and craft businesses, health clinics, and centers for women and children who have been dislocated during the war (CO-MADRES July/August 1990; CO-MADRES Bulletins 1990-92; Schirmer 1993: 45-46).

Projects like the sewing workshops and day care centers serve practical gender interests. The rationale for the project was that poor women who lacked the education and skills to support themselves when their husbands and family members disappeared or died in the war needed to find a way to continue to support their families: the CO-MADRES

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aspired to "endow women with theoretical and practical skills...which will enable them to obtain work and provide subsisitence for their families" (CO-MADRES Grant Proposal, May 1990).[63]   The day-care centers also represented the practical gender interests of working mothers, by providing those mothers a reasonable means to balance their work and familiy responsibilities.[64]

It is plausible that some of these projects represented strategic gender interests as well as practical gender interests. For example, the CO-MADRES planned to run parenting classes at the day-care centers which would encourage fathers to become more involved. It could be argued that the day-care centers addressed both strategic and practical gender interests at the community level, by providing a service women need given the current expectations about their role as women, and planting the seeds for future changes in that role. Such a claim, however, would require more detailed information about whether the classes came to pass that could not be obtained at this writing.

The collaborative effort to form WINDS enabled the CO-MADRES and other organizations to expand their development projects. WINDS provided funding for many of the CO-MADRES projects. WINDS responded to grant proposals from CO-MADRES for the sewing workshops, health clinics, refugee assistance programs, and other projects. Outside funding was critical to these projects: in the case of the sewing project, the CO-MADRES estimated that they would be able to generate approximately five hundred and twenty dollars of an estimated nineteen thousand dollar total cost.

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[63] The workshop was structured to include time for political analysis (raising consciousness about the class struggle) as well as instruction in various sewing techniques, so it could certainly be argued that the workshop served strategic class interests as well as practical gender interests (CO-MADRES Grant Proposal, May 1990).

[64] All of the day care centers in El Salvador were run by the state. The CO-MADRES designed the day-care centers to present an alternative model to the state run day care. A CO-MADRE described the rationale for alternative day-care centers to Jennifer Schirmer: "No one believed it could be done, because the day-care centers here have all been run by the government with uniformed children, hair cut to the same length, standing in orderly lines...And what is it we want to do with these day care centers? Do we want to continue with the same attitudes? No, we must change them: the fathers must begin to change their thinking about the rights of the child, and about the mother!" (Schirmer 1993: 45).

The CO-MADRES also expanded their human rights agenda to include some of women's strategic gender interests. An ongoing interest for the CO-MADRES was the problem of rape. The issue of rape, which was addressed initially on a case-by-case basis, was increasingly addressed as part of an analysis of women's specific position in society. The CO-MADRES denunciations of rape gradually shifted from denunciation of specific acts that violated human rights to denunciations of the problem of rape more generally. A statement by Alicia Panameño de Garcia during an interview with Lynn Stephen illustrated the kind of connection the CO-MADRES made between the use of rape by the military and the problem of rape in society by the early nineties:

> Rape was one of those things we didn't really think about. We weren't really prepared for it happening to us. We didn't think that the military would systematically be using these practices. So the first few women were detained and they were raped and because we are taught to be pure, they didn't talk about that. They didn't say "this happened to me..."
> (Stephen 1993: 12)

Alicia linked the specific problem of rape by the military to the more general problem of silence and shame about rape in society. The silence about rape made it difficult for women to come forward and denounce rape because rape was still a source of shame for the victim. The CO-MADRES began to denounce societal and familial attitudes about the victims of rape as well as the specific acts by the military.[65] Workshops they ran in the late eighties and early nineties helped the CO-MADRES talk about their own problems with the aftermath of rape.

The CO-MADRES began to prioritize an agenda for women's rights that went beyond condemning rape. They condemned gender inequality in one of their monthly bulletins:

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[65] Many of the women feared being rejected by their families and spouses if they publicly revealed their rape (Stephen 1993: 12). Female activists have also faced ridicule by members of the right for their accusations: in a series of columns which ran in 1991 in "El Mundo", women who worked with the problem of rape and battered women were characterized as "too ugly to get husbands and because of that they had time to run around doing these kinds of things" (Ready 1993: 3).

> The Salvadoran woman is discriminated against and marginalized by the
> political, economic, and social system of her country and not by the Salvadoran
> man, and for that reason our struggle is for the transformation of the society into a
> democratic, independent system, where the values and abilities which every one of
> the women possess is recognized.
>
> (CO-MADRES July/Aug. 1990: 4-5)

Although they were always careful to distinguish between condemning the system that

discriminated against them and their male allies in their public statements, they began to

reiterate this general condemnation of sexism more frequently. They also began to devote

more time to specific issues, including domestic violence, sexuality, prostitution, and

econimic rights (Christian Social Action 1990; Schirmer 1993; Stephen 1993; Tula 1993).

The CO-MADRES addressed women's rights within the human rights community. The

CO-MADRES and DIGNAS planned an international Conference for January 1993

entitled, "The Rights of Women as A Subject of Human Rights." The conference would

bring together Salvadoran women from various organization as well as women from other

countries. The objectives of the conference were :

> (1) To educate Salvadoran and international women about the rights of women as a
> subject of human rights.
> (2) To inform and educate about the Convention about the Elimination of all Forms
> of Discrimination against women as an instrument of struggle
> (3) To discuss and elaborate strategies together in which we will bring together
> Salvadoran and international women, struggling for our human rights
> (4) To publish the results of this conference in a simplified version so that it can be
> studied and discussed by groups of women in El Salvador and other Spanish
> speaking countries
>
> (CO-MADRES Grant Proposal 1992)

The proposed panels included gender roles, prostitution, political rights, education,

employment, health and family planning, social and economic rights, rural women, and

family law.

The CO-MADRES were increasingly able to politicize their strategic gender interests

through participation in coalitions of women's organizations beginning in 1991. The CO-

MADRES worked with other organizations, including DIGNAS and CO-FENESTRAS to pressure the Salvadoran government and political parties to provide protection for women's rights within El Salvador. Perhaps the most significant channel for the CO-MADRES strategic gender interets was the Mujeres '94. At this writing, the platform was not yet available, but was expected to include many strategic gender interests. Issues that were on the agenda for debate include reproductive rights, sexuality, women and land reform, domestic violence, and political participation. The CO-MADRES were able to address their strategic gender interests, such as domestic violence and political participation, in this debate, and may be able to represent those interests to the political paries through the Mujeres '94.

Although the expansion of the CO-MADRES agenda occurred throughout the Salvadoran political process, the nineties brought about new opportunities to expand and politicize practical and strategic gender interests. The graph below illustrates the trend towards expansion and politicization of gender interest:
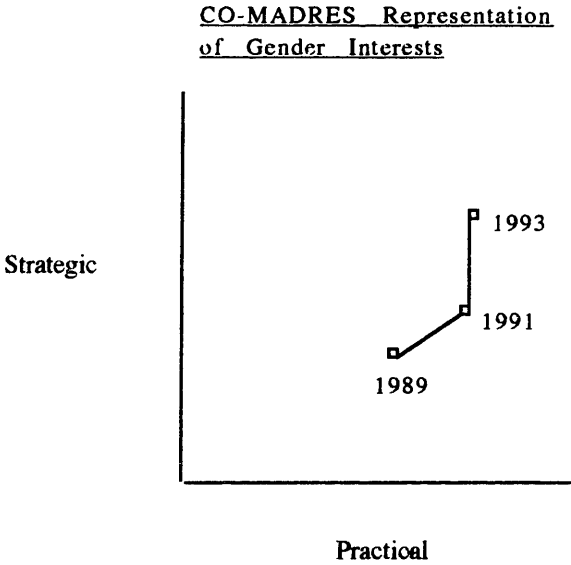
CO-MADRES Representation
of Gender Interests

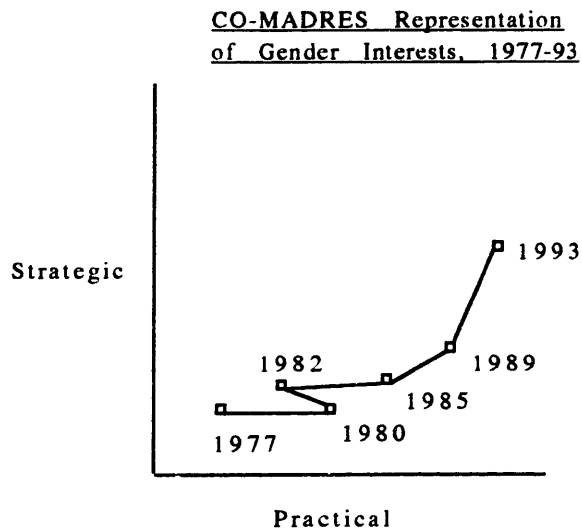Strategic

1993

1991

1989

Practical

Between 1989 and 1991, the CO-MADRES expanded and prioritized women's self-development projects. Those projects represented practical gender interests at the level of the local community. Between 1991 and 1993, the CO-MADRES expanded their participation in coalitions of women's organizations. Those coalitions politicized strategic and practical gender interests, and sought to represent them at a national level through institutional channels. Collaborations with other women's organizations and support from international solidarity networks provided the material and political support necessary for the creation of an agenda that specifically prioritized women's gender interests. These kinds of coalitions were increasingly possible as the peace process progressed, and institutional channels of representation gradually opened. The increased capacity of the CO-MADRES to represent practical and strategic gender interests during this period was possible because of increased availability and independence of women's organizations as well as the opening of new channels of representation within the formal political system.

Conclusion

The CO-MADRES proved capable of representing a range of strategic and gender interests to varying degrees. They represented practical gender interests in the community by developing projects that helped women care for their families, including sewing workshops and day care centers. At the same time, they represented strategic gender interests: specifically, they questioned societies' complicitous silence about rape and domestic violence and challenged ideas about women's political and economic inequality.

The degree to which CO-MADRES represented gender interests varied over time. As political opportunities and constraints developed, the CO-MADRES capacity to represent strategic gender interests, especially at a political level, rose and declined, as the graph below illustrates:

CO-MADRES Representation
of Gender Interests, 1977-93

Strategic

1993

1982   1989

1985

1977   1980

Practical

Between 1977 and 1980, when the Church and the organized opposition offered key support, the politicization of practical gender interests increased greatly and the CO-MADRES gradually began to represent strategic gender interests within their local

community. Between 1980 and 1982, under conditions of heavy repression, political representation of practical gender interests declined. Between 1982 and 1985, the CO-MADRES steadily expanded their practical gender agenda with material resources from the Church and humanitarian organizations and political support from a re-emerging opposition movement. After 1985, the CO-MADRES continued to expand their practical gender agenda, and began to politicize strategic gender interests (specifically the problem of rape) to a limited degree. The material support of the "Friends of CO-MADRES" and the political support of opposition organizations like COPPES facilitated the gradual expansion. Between 1989 and 1991, the CO-MADRES expanded and prioritized women's self- development projects that represented both practical and strategic gender interests at the level of the local community: this expansion was facilitated by material aid from WINDS and cooperation from other women's organizations, like CO-FENESTRAS Between 1991 and 1993, the CO-MADRES expanded their gender agenda to include broad demands for improvements in women's political and economic status and included both practical and strategic gender interests. Alliances with other women's organizations were critical to the generation of a broad agenda for women's gender interests as the peace process progressed, and formal coalitions of women's organizations provided a new channel to represent those demands.

From the case of the CO-MADRES, we can surmise that femenina organizations are not inherently incapable of representing strategic gender interests. The CO-MADRES represented strategic as well as practical interests. The case signals the importance of external constraints and opportunities in determining the extent to which femenina organizations are capable of representing strategic gender interests.

The CO-MADRES are fairly representative of other femenina organizations. In El Salvador, the development of other femenina organizations was comparable to that of the CO-MADRES: they represented both strategic and practical interests to different degrees

throughout the eighties and nineties, and increasingly politicized strategic gender interests between 1991-93 (Ready 1993). Outside of El Salvador, femenina organizations represent a wide range of practical and strategic gender interests. Chilean pobladoras speak of a "popular feminism" that incorporates issues ranging from survival strategies for poor women to workshops on sexuality (Schild 1992). Femenina organizations throughout Latin America confront issues like domestic violence and unequal division of labor in the home (Craske 1993; Lind 1992; Schirmer 1993: Stephen 1992).

Although a single case study is not sufficient to establish all the necessary conditions for femenina organizations to represent strategic gender interests, some conditions that were necessary in this case include political opening, supportive allies, and independence from non-supportive parties. Chilean femenina organizations, for example, increasingly represented strategic gender interests as the political system opened in the late eighties. Women's organizations (both femenina and feminista) gradually became more independent from the organized left and created formal alliances with other women's organizations (Molina 1986; 1989). Some of these coalitions, such as MOMUPO (Movement of Women Pobladoras), identified themselves as feminist and politicized women's strategic gender interests (Fisher 1993). Through participation in MOMUPO, femenina organizations increasingly represented strategic gender interests on a political level (Schild 1992).

A future comparative study would shed more light on the necessary conditions. A particularly beneficial study would include women's organizations that apparently did not politicize strategic gender interests: groups such as the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo of Argentina and the Agrupacíon de Familiares of Chile. A comparative study would provide a better basis to explain why femenina organizations represent or do not represent strategic gender interests. A question I have not addressed in this study is what the internal organizational conditions need be for an organization to represent strategic gender interests.

Organizations indeed respond to external constraints and opportunities, but it is ultimately internal dynamics that shape that response. An opportunity to represent an interest does not guarantee that an organization will represent that interest. Future studies of organizations that apparently have the opportunity to represent an interest but do not would provide a valuable contribution to the analysis of femenina organizations.

Although the fact that CO-MADRES and other femenina organizations represent strategic gender interests does challenge the foundation of arguments that the movimiento femenino is a crisis mobilization, I would argue that it is not sufficient to build an argument that women's movements in Latin America have constructed new and durable channels of representation. I would rather argue that femenina organizations potentially offer new channels for representing gender interests. An evaluation of the "newness" of the kind of representation women's movements provide should be based on a more exhaustive study of women's organizations, inclusive of conservative organizations as well as progressive ones. An evaluation of the durability of the women's movement will have to be based on the movement's ability to survive or its demise, not on the kinds of interests it appears to represent: feminist movements are as subject to demise as are non-feminist movements. The CO-MADRES and other femenina organizations should be evaluated for their particular contributions to the representation of women's gender interests, rather than being dismissed as archaic forms of organizations or romanticized as the new vanguard of women's political activism.

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