

**They Want Our Work, But Not Our Power:
Popular Women, Unpaid Labor,
and the Making of the Bolivarian Revolution**

by

Rachel Eifenbein

M.A., School for International Training, 2005

B.A., Vassar College, 2001

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Approval

Name: Rachel Elfenbein
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (Sociology)
Title: *They Want Our Work, But Not Our Power: Popular Women, Unpaid Labor, and the Making of the Bolivarian Revolution*

Examining Committee: Chair: Wendy Chan
Professor

Hannah Wittman
Senior Supervisor
Adjunct Professor

Jane Pulkingham
Co-Supervisor
Professor

Alison Ayers
Supervisor
Associate Professor

Elisabeth Jay Friedman
Supervisor
Professor
CELASA, International Studies, Latin
American Studies, Politics
University of San Francisco

Kathleen Millar
Internal Examiner
Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology and
Anthropology

Maxine Molyneux
External Examiner
Professor
Institute of the Americas
University College London

Date Defended/Approved: February 10, 2015

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Abstract

The Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela is part of broader Latin American institutional restructuring that aims to expand social, political and economic inclusion through increasing popular participation. This dissertation elucidates the gendered implications of attempts to construct post-neoliberal state-society relations and corresponding practices of popular power. It analyzes the dialectical relations between popular sector women and the Bolivarian state by focusing on the role of women's unpaid labor in the revolution during Hugo Chávez's presidency. This study examines for whom and for what ends popular women's labor was deployed and discursively invoked. It also assesses the consequences of state-society relations for popular women, their power, and the gendered division of labor in Venezuela. This dissertation is based on an extended case study developed from interviews and participant observation with popular women; feminist analysts and organizations; and state women's leaders and institutions.

In reshaping state-society relations from the standpoint of the subaltern, the Bolivarian regime incorporated popular women as central participants in the revolution. This gendered political opening generated new opportunities for women's rights, organizing, and articulations with the state. In 1999, Venezuela recognized the socio-economic value of housework and entitled homemakers to social security in Article 88 of its new constitution. The state instituted several programs that recognized some women's unpaid reproductive labor and lightened and/or socialized their reproductive burdens.

Yet this recognition rendered popular women's unpaid labor and organizing vulnerable to state appropriation because of popular women's positioning in the gendered division of labor. The state incorporated them through its practices and institutions by reconfiguring the extant hegemonic gender role of women as mothers in service of the revolution. It expected them to be both mobilized and contained for what it saw as the revolution's broader interests. Popular women performed much of the unpaid social and political labor necessary to build and sustain the revolution. This utilization of their unpaid labor did not necessarily transform gender power relations. Initiatives to legislate Article 88 were forestalled, social security was not universally accessible, reproductive labor persisted as predominantly popular women's responsibility, and many popular women remained socially, economically, and politically vulnerable.

Keywords: Women's Rights, Women's Organizing, Unpaid Labor, Social Security, Popular Power, Bolivarian Revolution

*For my mother, Christine Bastl,
and all the women
whose labor and care have raised me
to be the human being I am*

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The first seeds of my idea for this dissertation began to germinate far from Venezuelan shores, during my time living and working in South Africa. There, I witnessed how poor and working class women's unpaid labor was vital to household and community reproduction in the face of structural unemployment, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and neoliberal welfare state restructuring. I became interested in institutional mechanisms to recognize such work and socially protect the workers who carry it out as a means to mitigate their vulnerability to poverty, gender violence, and disease. These experiences triggered my curiosity in Venezuela and the implications of Article 88 in that country's new constitution. Such experiences were of political and professional interest to me, and they were also personal. Perhaps no one has taught me more about the value and intensity of such work than the women of the Lukhele and Khumalo families in eNhlazatshe, Mpumalanga, South Africa. Through the years, they have opened their homes to me, fed me, cared for me, and treated me as family. Siyabonga kakhulu, mndeni wami.

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Glossary of Terms

<i>Acta compromiso</i>	Commitment agreement
AD	(<i>Acción Democrática</i>): Democratic Action, the social democratic party under <i>Puntofijismo</i>
<i>Amor Mayor</i>	Bolivarian government mission providing pensions for poor elderly adults
ANC	(<i>Asamblea Nacional Constituyente</i>): National Constituent Assembly
<i>Araña Feminista</i>	The Feminist Spider, a national network of socialist feminist activists and organizations
BanMujer	Woman's Development Bank
<i>Barrio</i>	Popular sector neighborhood
<i>Barrio Adentro</i>	Bolivarian government mission providing free, community-based primary health attention
BCV	(<i>Banco Central de Venezuela</i>): Central Bank of Venezuela
<i>Caracazo</i>	The popular uprising on February 27 and 28, 1989 in reaction to the introduction of a structural adjustment package, which was met with brutal state repression
CFP	(<i>Círculos Femeninos Populares</i>): Popular Women's Circles
<i>Chavista</i>	The range of political forces aligned with Hugo Chávez from 1998 to 2013
Communal Council	Legalized territorially-based local communal government
CONAMU	(<i>Consejo Nacional de la Mujer</i>): National Woman's Council
CONG	(<i>Coordinadora de Organizaciones No-Gubernamentales de Mujeres</i>): Coordinating Committee of Women's Non-Governmental Organizations
COPEI	(<i>Comité Independiente Electoral</i>): Independent Electoral Committee, the Christian Democratic Party under <i>Puntofijismo</i>
CPFMJ	(<i>Comisión Permanente de Familia, Mujer, y Juventud</i> or CPFMJ): National Assembly Permanent Commission on Family, Woman, and Youth
Economic Associative Unit	Bolivarian government term for de facto organizations of two or more people administering a common economic project
EFOSIG	(<i>Escuela de Formación Socialista para la Igualdad de Género</i>): School of Socialist Formation for Gender Equality

<i>Falconiana</i>	A woman from Falcón state
FEVA	(<i>Federación Venezolana de Abogadas</i>): Venezuelan Federation of Women Lawyers
<i>Frente de Mujeres</i>	Women's Front
<i>Gobierneras</i>	Women who were perceived as servile and obedient to the government
<i>Grupo Ese</i>	Group organizing for women's and LGBTTI rights in 2007 constitutional reform referendum
<i>Hijos de Venezuela</i>	Conditional cash transfer program providing per child cash allowances to extremely poor households
INaMujer	National Woman's Institute
IVSS	(<i>Instituto Venezolano de Servicios Sociales</i>): Venezuelan Institute of Social Services
LGBTTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, and intersex
LOSSS	(<i>Ley Orgánica del Sistema de Seguridad Social</i>): Organic Social Security System Law
LSS	(<i>Ley de Servicios Sociales</i>): Law of Social Services
MBR-200	(<i>Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario-200</i>): Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement-200
Mercal	Bolivarian government mission distributing and selling low-cost basic food products
<i>Mi Casa Bien Equipada</i>	Bolivarian government mission providing low-interest credit from a state bank to purchase discounted household appliances
MinMujer	Ministry for Woman's Popular Power and Gender Equality
Missions	Set of Bolivarian government social and economic programs targeting the popular sectors
MVR	(<i>Movimiento de la V República</i>): Movement of the Fifth Republic
<i>Oficialista</i>	Official
Patriotic Pole	Electoral bloc coalition of actors, organizations, parties in support of Chávez
<i>Patrullera</i>	(Female) Patrol officer in the PSUV
PDVSA	(<i>Petróleos de Venezuela</i>): Venezuelan state oil company
Popular Sector	People from the poor and working classes

PSUV	<i>(Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela)</i> : United Socialist Party of Venezuela
<i>Puntofijismo</i>	Regime of governance from 1958 to 1998 premised on power sharing between AD and COPEI
<i>Puntos de Encuentro</i>	Encounter Points, local groups of popular women organized by INaMujer
<i>Red Todas Juntas</i>	All (Women) Together Network
Ribas Mission	Bolivarian government mission providing free secondary education to adults
Sector	A smaller territorial unit within a <i>barrio</i>

Chapter 1.

Introduction. The Labor and Suffering of the Women Undergirding the Bolivarian Revolution

1.1. The Dialectical Relations between Popular Sector Women and the Bolivarian State

Now, we are moved by a great mission—the 7 October Mission—to consolidate our commander Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías in the presidency... and therein lies the great importance of women’s participation in this Venezuelan process... It’s you who are the protagonists, it’s you who vote... it’s you who suffer, it’s you who cry, it’s you who pray for the health of the commander and so that this revolution carries forward. It’s important then that you, with this patriotic commitment do not faint and continue and we continue together until victory. Remember that the women in Venezuela have the majority electoral vote: they are the ones who are more involved in voting. We need 12 million votes to give a resounding victory... And it’s you who sustain this revolution. Because of this, it has been said that this revolution has the face of a woman...

- Falcón State Coordinator of Madres del Barrio Mission¹

We women homemakers home-workers,² the great majority... 70-80% of the participants in the whole country, have come along transforming into community leaders and defenders of this revolution, of this participatory democracy. We are those that are carrying out the actual work that

¹ Sixth Anniversary Celebration of *Madres del Barrio* Mission, Coro, Falcón State, 31 March 2012.

² In this statement, the *Red Popular* uses the popular colloquial term *amas de casa*, which is commonly translated into English as “housewives” even though that is not the literal translation of the Spanish term. Throughout this dissertation, I have chosen to use the term “homemaker” instead of “housewife” to reflect the fact that the people who engage in unpaid reproductive labor are not passive, but actively working to ensure the reproduction of themselves and the people for whom they care. Though I cannot confirm this, I suspect that the *Red Popular de los Altos Mirandinos* chose a seemingly repetitive term—“homemaker home-worker”—to describe themselves to reflect this same distinction.

carries this revolution forward. We work ad honorem and we suffer the contempt of the state bureaucracy that takes advantage of us, using our work to project itself politically, give itself credibility, appropriate the few resources that have been obtained after many struggles, and hope to administer them and even direct them.

- Red Popular de los Altos Mirandinos³

These opening quotes highlight the fundamental role of popular sector⁴ women and their labor in producing, building, and sustaining the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela from the ground up. Both frame popular sector women as revolutionary subjects and introduce us to the centrality of popular women and gender differences in participation in the revolution. Yet these two quotes, while commenting on the same Bolivarian government program—*Madres del Barrio* Mission⁵—come from two different standpoints within the revolution. The first is from above, from a male state leader charged with organizing popular sector women; and the second is from below, from organized popular sector women themselves. While they both speak to the suffering of popular sector women and the role that their suffering plays within the Bolivarian process,⁶ they differ in their understanding of why popular sector women suffer and the state-society relations that produce such suffering. In the first quote, the state coordinator in Falcón state both draws on and resignifies the extant hegemonic gender role of women as mothers, discursively extending mothers' caring labor from sustaining their households to sustaining the revolution and its commander. He represents the

³ 4 February 2006. Comunicado de las mujeres amas de casa trabajadoras del hogar a presidente Chávez. Estado Miranda.

⁴ A widely used term in Latin America referring to people from the poor and working classes. In this dissertation, I use English translations of both terms employed in Spanish to signify women from the poor and working classes: popular sector women (*mujeres de los sectores populares*) and popular women (*mujeres populares*).

⁵ *Madres del Barrio*—Mothers of the *Barrio* (the Venezuelan term for a popular sector neighborhood)—is a discretionary and temporary conditional cash transfer program targeting poor homemakers in Venezuela. President Chávez established it by decree in 2006, claiming that it constituted state recognition of the socio-economic value of popular women's unpaid housework. This program is summarized in the chapter outline at the end of this introductory chapter and explored in detail in chapters Four and Five of this dissertation.

⁶ "The Bolivarian process," or simply "the process," is a widely used term in Venezuela, connoting an ongoing political transformation that includes not only constituted power—the state and its multiple organs— but also constituent power—the people, the ultimate source of power who bring the state into being—and the interaction between these forces. Further, it connotes the participation of people and popular sector social movements who defend the Bolivarian government, but may act independently of it.

Madres del Barrio as caring so much that they suffer because of the ill health of their president. In the second quote, organized popular sector women from Miranda state also address the significance of their unpaid labor not just to community development but also to democratization and the making of the revolution. The *Red Popular* notes that state actors and institutions attempt to seize popular women's unpaid labor for their own ends, which in turn produces the suffering of popular sector women. In short, the first quote frames popular sector women as suffering *for*, or in service of, the Bolivarian state, whereas the second quote frames popular sector women as suffering *because of*, or at the hands of, the Bolivarian state.

Placed in juxtaposition, these two quotes reflect a crucial tension within the Bolivarian revolution under Hugo Chávez's presidency and the main focus of this dissertation: the dialectical relations between popular sector women and the Bolivarian state based on the role of popular sector women's unpaid labor in the revolutionary process. This dissertation illuminates these dialectical relations by answering the questions of for whom and for what ends their labor was deployed and discursively invoked and what consequences this had for popular sector women and their power in Venezuela. I address this tension and these questions through an extended case study developed from interviews and participant observation at multiple social, political, and geographic levels: popular sector women both organized and not organized by the state; feminist analysts, organizations, and networks; and state women's leaders and institutions at national and sub-national levels. I examine how gender, the gendered division of labor, and more specifically, popular sector women's unpaid labor and discourses about it were central to contestations between state and society within the Bolivarian process. By applying a feminist cultural materialist lens to the Bolivarian revolution, this dissertation advances scholarship on the Bolivarian process and the role of popular sector women's unpaid labor in processes of state formation. Emerging in response to the social, political, and economic failures of the neoliberal model, the Bolivarian revolution constitutes part of a larger trend in Latin America of institutional restructuring that expands social, political and economic inclusion through increasing popular participation. My analysis therefore sheds light on gendered implications of attempts to construct post-neoliberal state-society relations and corresponding practices of popular power.

1.2. The Invisible Labor of Poor and Working Class Women

Since the 1960s, a wide range of feminist scholars, activists, and policy makers have drawn attention to how conventional social, economic, and political categories render unpaid reproductive labor invisible. They have highlighted the material and discursive implications of rendering this work invisible for women— the people who are primarily responsible for it because of their gender role. For example, the gendered division of labor and women’s unpaid reproductive labor subsidize capitalist profitability (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1983, p. 47; Mies, 1986). Women and their unpaid labor are also especially instrumental for the maintenance of households and communities in the neoliberal capitalist era (Elson, 1992; Standing, 2004), wherein the costs of social reproduction are externalized as a means to restore profitability in the wake of crises of overproduction, debt, economic stagnation, and inflation. Because of women’s primary responsibility for social reproduction, the social and economic consequences of neoliberalism are therefore “mediated through the construction of gender roles” (Antrobus, 1993, p. 16). Neoliberal social and economic policies rarely take into consideration gender role differences in social reproduction processes. However, they are underpinned by naturalized assumptions about the gender division of labor in the private sphere (Kabeer, 2007; Luxton, 2006) and thus the availability and inexhaustibility of women’s unpaid and/or poorly paid labor to absorb the costs of neoliberal restructuring ((Mackintosh & Tibandebage 2006) in Hassim & Razavi, 2006).

Indeed, numerous studies have shown how neoliberal restructuring of states and societies through the impact of the debt crisis and structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in the Global South (Antrobus, 1993; Feldman, 1992; Jayaweera, 1994; Mblinyi, 1993; Moser, 1993) and austerity measures and welfare state retrenchment in the global North (Bezanson, 2006; O’Connor, 1993; Pascall & Lewis, 2004; Vosko, 2006) have exacerbated poor and working class women’s socio-economic vulnerability. For example, with their emphasis on restructuring economies of the global South, SAPs have transformed public goods and services, such as health care, education, water, sanitation, and communal land, into commodities and in many instances privatized them (Pearson, 2004). SAPs have offset the burden of social reproduction onto communities and families when they cannot afford to purchase goods and services that were

previously available as communal resources, social citizenship rights, and/or state subsidized services. These studies on gendered implications of neoliberal restructuring have shown how poor and working class women have adapted to such neoliberal shifts in social and economic policies by developing new survival strategies. Termed “the invisible adjustment,” women’s new survival strategies have included intensifying their unpaid and paid labor, decreasing household expenditure, spreading out the resources that they do control, sacrificing their own needs, and engaging in community social provisioning. As Janet Momsen (1991, p. 97) points out, this invisible adjustment by poor and working class women makes neoliberal policies possible. The invisible work of poor and working class women thus has enabled state retreat from social reproduction.

The Bolivarian process in Venezuela presents a unique case for understanding the gendered implications for state-society relations and popular women’s power when the state begins to recognize the role of poor and working class women’s unpaid labor in the nation’s social and political processes. Many contemporary states—especially in their neoliberal formations—operate under implicit assumptions of the gender division of labor and poor and working class women’s capacity to ensure social reproduction. However, in its attempts to construct post-neoliberal state society relations, the Bolivarian state has publicly and explicitly recognized poor and working class women’s roles in ensuring household and community reproduction. Popular sector women and their labor are central to the Bolivarian state’s organizing logic of state building and expansion. As both popular sector women and women workers and leaders within the state frequently note, the Bolivarian revolution has rendered them and their labor “visible.”

Venezuelan national visibility of women’s unpaid labor began in 1999 when the country decided to recognize unpaid labor within the home as “an economic activity that creates added value and produces social welfare and wealth” in Article 88 of the Bolivarian Constitution and entitle homemakers to social security in accordance with the

law.⁷ Article 88, the new constitution in which it was embedded, and the 1999 National Constituent Assembly that drafted them formed part of the larger Bolivarian state-building project. The Bolivarian project entailed re-founding the Venezuelan republic as the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela under the presidency of Hugo Chávez (1999-2013) and in the wake of social, political, and economic crises that arose under neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s. Thus state recognition of the socio-economic value of unpaid housework is a foundational ideal to Bolivarian state formation.

Yet, the re-founding of the Venezuelan republic did not necessarily signal a rupture with old state institutions and policies and social and political practices. Rather, an assemblage of new state institutions and policies and social and political practices were progressively created (and in some instances disappeared or disassembled) alongside old institutions, policies, and practices. Within the Bolivarian state under construction and perpetually shifting state-society relations, old and new social and political discourses and practices coexisted in tension with each other and competed for hegemony. This dissertation examines how popular sector women's unpaid labor was central to such contestations within the Bolivarian process under Hugo Chávez's presidency, in addition to building and sustaining the Bolivarian state.

The research analyzed in *They Want Our Work, But Not Our Power* addresses the following research questions: How did popular sector women's unpaid labor and discourses about their labor shape the Bolivarian state? How did the Bolivarian state shape popular sector women's labor and discourses about it? How did the mutual shaping between popular sector women's labor and the Bolivarian state affect popular women's power in their relations within their households and their communities as well as with the market and the state? How did this mutual shaping affect the gender order—

⁷ The country did indeed “decide” this, as the Venezuelan electorate voted in a national referendum in December 1999 whether to ratify the Bolivarian Constitution. This assertion, of course, does not mean that Article 88 was widely read and debated amongst the electorate in the run-up to the referendum, as the electorate had a choice to vote “yes” or “no” to the entire draft Constitution and not to this article alone. As I discuss in the following chapters, the general lack of public debate about the enshrinement and significance of Article 88 in the Constituent Assembly process shaped the ways in which it was (not) claimed and (not) contested by the Venezuelan state and society during Chávez's presidency.

the pattern of dividing labor by gender and discourses that support this division—in Venezuela?

1.3. A Feminist Cultural Materialist Lens to Examine State Formation and Transformation

To examine the role of popular sector women’s unpaid labor and discourses about it in Bolivarian state formation and the broader revolution, I develop a feminist cultural materialist lens. This conceptual framework explores the integration of ideas and material reality from a feminist perspective. It conceptualizes gender as multivalent, with gender relations, the gendered division of labor, and gender subordination understood as cutting across interconnected spheres of politics, economy, and culture. This framework incorporates Nancy Fraser’s (2009) theorization of gender justice as occurring in three interconnected dimensions: recognition (cultural), redistribution (economic), and representation (political). It posits the state as a regulatory institution that both is shaped by and shapes gender relations. This approach conceives of the state as a gendered institution that rests on and affects the gendered division of labor in particular. Drawing on Fraser (2009), I contend that under capitalism, the gendered division of labor is a crucial point where “three interpenetrating orders of gender subordination” of women intersect: “(mal)distribution,” (non) or “(mis)recognition,” and (non) or “(mis)representation” (p. 104). How a revolutionary state intervenes in the gendered division of labor, recognizes the women performing unpaid labor, distributes resources to them, and enables their representation in political processes therefore shows its commitment to overcoming gender subordination and achieving gender justice.

This feminist cultural materialist framework begins from the Marxist premise that the state is not just a territorial and political form, but also a historically contingent social form that both generates and mediates conflicts. The state produces, reproduces, and “rests upon specific social and economic infrastructures” (Roper, 2013, p. 7). As Brian Roper (2013) notes, the state needs to be understood in relation to those infrastructures (p. 7) that both constitute it and are produced by it.

At the same time, this framework moves beyond the classical Marxist focus on political economy to incorporate socialist feminist insights on the interconnectedness of culture, politics, and economy in a socio-economic system. It posits the state as involved both in the mode of production and social reproduction—the range of activities, relationships, and identities involved in the maintenance and reproduction of people from one day to the next and from one generation to the next (B. Cameron, 2006; Ferguson, 1999; Luxton, 2006; Power, 2004). As Henri Lefebvre (2003, p. 94) maintains, the state sets the “conditions for generalized reproduction,” which include not only the reproduction of the means of production and the relations of production, but also “biological reproduction,” “the reproduction of the labor force” and “the reproduction of relations of domination.” Feminist contributions to historical materialism have shown that the relation between production and social reproduction is reciprocal, because all production and exchange rest upon reproductive labor (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1983; Bakker & Gill, 2003; Benería & Sen, 1982; Bennholdt-Thomsen & Mies, 1999; Ferguson, 1999; von Werlhof, 1984). As the state both generates and mediates social conflicts, the state mediates between relations of production and reproduction. This is because under capitalism, the relationship between production and social reproduction is conflictual and dialectical due to the contradiction between the imperative for capital accumulation and reinvestment, on the one hand, and the need to uphold the standard of living of the population, continually supply labor, and consume goods and services, on the other hand (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1983; B. Cameron, 2006; Picchio, 1992). Processes of social reproduction therefore are not merely functional and harmonious. Rather, conflicts and compromises around state allocation of resources to social reproduction arise, and such conflicts are central to understanding relationships among social classes in different periods (B. Cameron, 2006).

Because the gendered division of labor and gender roles charge women with primary responsibility for reproduction, the state’s involvement in and mediation between relations of production and reproduction means that it is both a gendered and gendering institution (Conell, 2001; Hassim, 2006). As Elisabeth Jay Friedman (2000b, p. 35) explains: “To say that an institution is ‘gendered’ is to understand that the formal and informal rules that make it up are both based on, and reproduce, gender relations.” “Gender relations” therefore “are shaped by, and themselves shape the nature of the

state and its relationships to other social institutions” (Hassim & Razavi, 2006, p. 31). The state rests upon gendered divisions of labor and underlying assumptions about them. It both materially and ideologically shapes, reproduces, and reconfigures such divisions through the ways in which it intervenes in productive and reproductive labor processes. In mediating the relationship between production and social reproduction, the state “shapes[s] and stabilizes[s] a particular system of class relationships and, within it, a gender order,... a set of social relations characterized by a sexual division of labour and a gender discourse that supports that division” (B. Cameron, 2006, pp. 46-47). Further, how the state intervenes in production and reproduction has crucial gender implications for subjects, as it can facilitate and/or constrain the life chances and opportunities of different members of society according to their specific positioning within the gendered division of labor. These insights from social reproduction theory show that gender, gender relations, and the gendered division of labor are not peripheral to but indeed constitutive of the state. For this reason, understanding the state necessarily entails understanding the gender order that it rests on and shapes.

A gender order is theorized as at once material and ideological, with structures, practices, and discourses posited as integrally linked within a single system of social relations. This concept therefore overcomes the ontological limitations of dual systems theory, which conceives of patriarchy as a distinct set of social relations that intersects with capitalist relations to produce women’s subordination in society. In bifurcating the social world into separate systems of patricarchal oppression and class exploitation, dual systems theory separates the family from the economy, reinforcing the binary conceptual divisions between kinship and economic activities and public and private spheres that are unique to capitalist society. As Meg Luxton (2006) notes, this conceptualization of intersecting dual systems of patriarchy and capitalism “fails to understand the family as both a set of economic relations and a part of the economic workings of society” (pp. 26-27). Further, it fails to explain relations of gender domination within the sphere of paid work. Rather, the concept of gender order is able to explain how the gendered division of labor and gender subordination cut across public and private spheres of paid and unpaid labor.

While social reproduction is a feature of all societies, this dissertation is premised on the notion that it is a dynamic process that shifts according to the interaction of particular economic, social, political, and cultural forces at specific times and within specific places. This means that the organization of social reproduction within a specific society at a specific time is a contradictory system of social relations, which is open to change and transformation (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1983, pp. 9-12). Thus, as a particular state—which is based on particular configurations of gender relations and involved in social reproduction—undergoes transformation, so too can the gender order within that state. State transformation can alter the ways that the state does or does not recognize the gendered division of labor, does or does not distribute wealth to women performing reproductive labor, and does or does not enable their representation, inclusion, and participation in the political community. State transformation therefore has crucial implications for women, their social, economic, and political positioning, and their power. How revolutionary state transformation both draws on and affects the gender order speaks to the nature of the state and its commitment to gender and class justice. Understanding the gender order and the gendered nature of state-society relations within a revolutionary process thus is important to understanding the character of that process.

The state, in its everyday actions and its larger transformations, not only depends upon and shapes material relations, but it is also a normative institution, drawing on and shaping ideologies and identities within its territory. The state plays a moral regulatory role. As Julie Skurski and Fernando Coronil (2006) note, it shapes and represents a “moral order” and its subjects’ ties to it: “Concerned with its ability to command allegiance and obedience, the state presents itself in moral terms that range from the benevolent to the punitive, while it cultivates state-centered affective orientations that range from love to fear” (pp. 9-10). Through its normative force, the state can shape ideologies that in turn uphold a particular set of material relations, its own power, and thus relations of domination.⁸

⁸ At the same time, the state is a porous moral institution, as extralocal forces penetrate its territory and, in turn, also shape the state’s subjects’ ideologies and identities.

Lefebvre (2003) writes of the social values that the state communicates as producing a minimum of “social consensus,” which not only upholds the state and “occupies a *mental space* that includes the representations of the state that people construct...” (p. 85). The state, then, is not only an assemblage of concrete institutions, actors, and practices, but also an ideational organization that shapes its subjects’ ways of understanding themselves, their relations to others, and their relations to the state. Just as it is a gendered institution, this means that the state shapes the gendered division of labor and gender ideologies and identities that uphold that division and the state.

Akhil Gupta’s study of the discourses about and practices of the Indian state (1995, 2005) shows how the state not only shapes its subjects’ identities, but also how subjects of the state in turn shape the state through their representations of it. He affirms that in addition to being constituted materially through institutions and practices, “states, like nations, are imagined through representations and through signifying practices; such representations are not incidental to institutions but are *constitutive* of them” (Gupta, 2005, p. 28). Gupta’s work elucidates how states are constituted in ongoing processes at multiple geographic levels and through practices and discourses that represent states and give them meaning to the subjects that inhabit them and are interpellated⁹ by them. This discursive focus shows that the state is incessantly produced and state-society relations are continually redefined (Secor, 2007, p. 37). Gupta writes that theorizing the state “needs to take into account its constitution through a complex set of *spatially* intersecting representations and practices” (1995, p. 377). His theory of state constitution points to the methodological importance of highlighting how subjects at multiple levels understand the state and their relationships to it in building knowledge of the process of state formation. Gupta’s attention to subjects—state leaders and workers and citizens of the state—and their interactions at multiple levels across the state’s territory also illuminates how public discursive practices are “enacted in a contested

⁹ I use the concept of interpellation throughout this dissertation in an Althusserian (1971) sense to describe how discourses and institutions hail individuals as subjects. In their recognition of such hailings, individuals are transformed—they become subject(s) to the discourses and institutions that hail them. Interpellation, then, is a dialogical process between forces that identify individuals and those individuals who respond to and are subject to and shaped by such hailings.

space” of “public representation” in which “folk, regional, and national ideologies compete for hegemony with each other...” (Gupta, 1995, p. 377).

The state, then, produces both a minimum of social consensus and difference, as it is a contested territory in which relations of power play out, are reproduced, and/ or reconfigured and resignified through both discourses and practices. At the same time, as Lefebvre notes, the state subordinates “both chaos and difference to its implacable logics” (2003, p. 99). The state contains differences—including gender and class differences—, which it draws on, produces, reproduces, and reconfigures. And as Anna Secor’s (2007) work on the Turkish state shows, the incessant production of the state and its power entails the ongoing production of difference through everyday discourses and practices “enacted in the repeated, multiple, and incessant hailings and turnings, appeals and suspensions, through which state, space, and the subject are constituted” (p. 49).

1.4. Theorizing the Magical Revolutionary Bolivarian State

The Bolivarian process, in its reaction against neoliberal globalization, has reasserted the primacy of the nation-state’s sovereignty in the social, political, and economic decisions made within its territory. This is not to suggest that institutions, ideologies, practices, and identities within Bolivarian Venezuela are not in part shaped by extralocal interests and forces. As the Bolivarian state is being constructed in the era of globalization, it continues to be thoroughly embedded in and dependent upon networks of transnational capital and international trade due to its ongoing dependence on the extractive industries. Indeed, the Bolivarian state and its social, political, and economic trajectory can only be adequately understood in relation to global capital and to the state’s counters—both internal and external and the interaction between these two levels of forces. Yet, in the Bolivarian process, the nation state’s material and discursive role in shaping subjects is central. The very name given to this revolutionary process speaks to carrying forward the colonial independence movement led by Simon Bolivar. The Bolivarian state and many of its subjects represent the revolutionary process as a stage in this long, historical struggle for Venezuelan national sovereignty and independence. Of particular importance in this narrative of revolutionary independence is

the Bolivarian state's intervention in the extractive industries and redistribution of ground rent to popular subjects within its territory.

The Venezuelan anthropologist Fernando Coronil notes both the historical continuity and historical ruptures that make up the Bolivarian state by developing his earlier work on a cultural materialist theorization of "the magical state" (1997). Coronil's cultural materialist perspective "apprehends the production of meaning and the reproduction of life as distinct moments of a unitary process" (1997, p. 15). It is able to capture the material and discursive relations between oil, subaltern modernity, democracy, and nation-building in Venezuela.

Prior to Chávez's presidency, Coronil conceptualized the modern Venezuelan petro-state as a "magical state." He did this by building on Venezuelan play and script writer José Antonio Cabrujas' characterization of the modern Venezuelan state as a "magnanimous sorcerer" that induced collective fantasies through the sowing of the nation's oil wealth. Coronil (1997) wrote of the construction of the magical state as the "deification" of the state that occurred with the transformation of Venezuela from a peripheral agricultural country to a modern oil nation in the 20th century:

As an oil nation, Venezuela was seen as having two bodies, a political body made up of its citizens and a natural body made up of its rich subsoil. By condensing within itself the multiple powers dispersed throughout the nation's two bodies, the state appeared as a single agent endowed with the magical power to remake the nation... (p. 4).

According to Coronil (1997), the Venezuelan state then took on the role of "magnanimous sorcerer," conjoining its power over the political sphere and the nation's oil wealth and exercising this "monopoly dramaturgically, securing compliance through the spectacular display of its imperious presence... the Venezuelan state ha[d] been constituted as a unifying force by producing fantasies of collective integration into centralized political institutions" (p. 4). The state was able to generate public fantasies of collective integration by promising to rapidly transform the nation's oil wealth into massive development projects that would bring modernity and progress to Venezuela. As Coronil (1997) noted, the Venezuelan state could create this illusion of "instantaneous modernization" in part because the state's abundant revenues, which

came from oil rather than taxation of its own citizens, enabled “the state to embody powers that seem[ed] to come from itself” (p. 2).

Coronil (1997) contended that in the transformation of Venezuela to an oil nation, the figure of the president became central. The president came to take on the appearance of a magician, who harnessed the power of the state in the context of limited institutional capacities and managed the nation’s oil wealth (1997, p. 83) to pull modernity for and development out of his magician’s hat (Coronil, No Date). For if the state was to realize these magical powers, it required masterful and charismatic leadership. At the same time, Coronil (1997, No Date) noted that the Venezuelan people would have to believe in the illusory capacities of the president for his magical powers to become real, for him to be able to seduce and enchant them. For charisma “suggests not just a one way, top down flow, but a dynamic interaction: a mutual construction. Charisma entails a charismatic community that confers charisma to the leader. Similarly, the notion of magic suggests trickery, but also the real power of unseen forces” (Coronil, No Date, p. 5). Thus, the “magical state” is not just performed and enacted by state leaders, but enraptures the subjects that bring it into power. “It casts its spell over audience and performers alike. As a ‘magnanimous sorcerer,’ the state seizes its subjects by inducing a condition or state of being receptive to its illusions—a magical state” (Coronil, 1997, p. 5).

Coronil asserts that, under the presidency of Hugo Chávez Frías, the Bolivarian state became “perhaps the most magical of all” (No Date, p. 5). Chávez was not just using the powers of the state to control the nation’s oil wealth and to modernize and “develop” the country. He was also transforming the meaning of Venezuela through his representations of the state and the nation from the standpoint of its subaltern subjects. As the leader embodying the Bolivarian state’s magnanimous sorcerer powers, Chávez facilitated the shifting of fantasies from those of collective integration of the nation to those of collective integration of the majority—the popular sectors. These are fantasies that reflect crucial realities that both preceded Chávez’s ascendancy to power and enabled Chávez to come to power. That is that *Puntofijismo*— the previous regime, the

pacted democracy¹⁰ enacted by the nation's political and economic elite—fundamentally excluded large portions of the popular sectors and the social, political, and economic exclusions it engendered were exacerbated under the nation's engagement with neoliberalism. Under Chávez's presidency, then, collective fantasies underwent a radical inversion:

What comes out of the Magician's Hat is now different: not elements of history, but History itself. And it is a history not for the whole nation, but for part of it. A radicalization of the narrative of History itself... it is not just more 'development,' or more modernity, but a different kind of development and modernity. If other presidents, to use Cabrujas's imagery, would bring progress to Venezuela out of a hat, Chávez claims to bring out a different Venezuela out of a hat. This change... requires an overproduction of words—a framing to explain particular changes within a general scheme (Coronil, No Date, pp. 8-9).

According to Coronil, discourse is both prefigurative and central to the magical and revolutionary transformation of the Venezuelan state and to the constitution of a Bolivarian state that placed the subaltern at its center. He states:

It is not just that words are produced as part of the revolution, but that words produce the revolution... In the case of Venezuela the revolution is verbal before it is social. It is anticipatory—the narrative of revolution prefigures or perhaps even replaces revolutionary transformations. In the context of limited historical transformation, the production of a new history requires a verbal training which make them meaningful as radical events by being placed within a narrative of a revolutionary history (Coronil, No Date, p. 15).

This is not to deny the historical ruptures and insurgent movements, forms of organization, and practices occurring with the construction of the Bolivarian state and process. But it is to highlight the central role that the imaginary—the magical radical narrative—played in not just conceptualizing but also shaping the revolution. It is to assert that discourse in large part constituted the Bolivarian revolution under Chávez's presidency. As Coronil explains:

¹⁰ This term refers to the elite power sharing agreements that set the framework for democratic interaction from 1958 to 1998.

It is not that there are no changes, but that changes, however limited or grand, cannot match what is expected of them, the historical work they seek to produce: the transformation of Venezuelan society and people. To do this, they have to be differentiated from changes inscribed before the previous scheme of modernization and placed as part of a historical break: from the production of lettuce in farms in the heart of Caracas to joint oil ventures with transnational capital in the oil industry, Chávez has to present events as revolutionary, inscribe them within a larger narrative, lift them out of ordinary context and present them as part of epic (No Date, p. 16).

The narrative about such events, which often are practices inherited from the past or similar to those in non-revolutionary regimes in Latin America, served to make the Bolivarian process extraordinary, to mark its historical rupture and radical transcendence. And while Chávez's "nominalism... [did] not mean there ... [was] no distinction between words and world" (Coronil, No Date, p. 22), the magical state that his revolutionary narrative induced merged words "with world, confusing the boundaries between representations and the real" (Coronil, No Date, p. 22). The Bolivarian revolution, then, in large part was what Chávez and the Venezuelan people, acting together, aspired it to become. The charismatic relationship between the leader and the people carried on from Venezuela's past engagements with modernity was resignified and amplified. They were now interpellated as revolutionary actors conjoined not just in national development but in a popular revolutionary process at that.

The discourse of constructing a participatory, protagonistic, and popular democracy is fundamental to crafting a narrative of Venezuela's revolutionary transformations and its historic break from its *Puntofijista* past as a liberal democracy controlled by elites and marked by social, political, and economic exclusions of the popular sectors. (This break is marked discursively in the public imaginary, as both state and society actors refer to the *Puntofijista* era as the Fourth Republic and the Bolivarian era as the Fifth Republic). Indeed, the idea of participatory democracy is foundational to the Bolivarian state-making process. The 1999 Constitution both enshrines participatory democracy and presents it as part of the epic process of building a sovereign and independent Venezuelan state that began with the colonial independence movement of Simón Bolívar and has yet to be realized. The Preamble to the 1999 Constitution reads:

The people of Venezuela, exercising their powers of creation and invoking the protection of God, the historic example of our Liberator Simon Bolivar and the heroism and sacrifice of our aboriginal ancestors and the forerunners and founders of a free and sovereign nation; to the supreme end of reshaping the Republic to establish a democratic, participatory and self-reliant, multiethnic and multicultural society in a just, federal and decentralized State that embodies the values of freedom, independence, peace, solidarity, the common good, the nation's territorial integrity, comity and the rule of law for this and future generations...

The 1999 Constitution represents the sovereignty of the state as deriving from the Venezuelan people, who are recognized as at once differentiated and, together, the source of political power. Article 5 asserts that “sovereignty resides untransferable in the people, who exercise it directly in the manner provided for in this Constitution and in the law, and indirectly, by suffrage, through the organs exercising Public Power. The organs of the State emanate from and are subject to the sovereignty of the people.” Not only are the Venezuelan people entitled to participate politically and indirectly through elections, but the 1999 Constitution also grants them the right to participate in government. Article 6 states that “The government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and of the political organs comprising the same, is and shall always be democratic, participatory, elective, decentralized, alternative, responsible and pluralist, with revocable mandates.” As the people are framed as sovereign subjects who both give the Bolivarian state its form and have the power to take it away, the constitution presents them as central protagonists to the state-making and governing processes. Thus, the Bolivarian state is framed as a state that comes into being and acts through the exercise of popular power.

1.5. Popular Women, Unpaid Labor, and the Making of the Bolivarian Revolution

In reshaping the state and state-society relations and reframing the narrative of the state from the standpoint of the subaltern, which it recognized as internally differentiated, the *Chavista* regime particularly interpellated popular sector women as central participants and protagonists in the Bolivarian process. Unlike the *Puntofijista* regime wherein the state largely marginalized popular women and their gender

interests¹¹ and often impeded their mobilization, since the inception of the Bolivarian revolution, the state made popular women, their gender interests, and their political organization visible. The Bolivarian Constitution employs gender-sensitive language by recognizing female subjects, as the structure of the Spanish language genders all subjects, in addition to recognizing the socio-economic value of unpaid housework and enshrining homemakers' right to social security. The gender-sensitive language that runs through the 1999 Constitution framed the way Bolivarian state functionaries identified the people whom they represented, as they were conscious of publicly recognizing the existence of both male and female subjects and ensuring that female subjects were recognized in official state texts. In public rallies and events attended by popular sector women, state women's and gender equality institution authorities often cited the existence of Article 88 as evidence of the revolutionary character of the Bolivarian state. And since making his socialist turn after several terms in power, President Chávez turned his discourse even further left by stating "there is no socialism without feminism."

The Bolivarian state's inclusion of women under Chávez's tenure was not merely discursive, but also extended to positions of power and institutions. Many more women came to occupy positions of public power in state ministries and in the courts (García & Valdivieso, 2009, pp. 139-140)¹² even though the number of women elected to positions of power remained low, especially at regional and national levels and higher up the state apparatus (Aguirre, Bethencourt, & Testa, 2009, pp. 309-323). And women constituted the majority of members of community councils and other forms of state-sanctioned community-based popular organizations.¹³

¹¹ Women's gender interests refer to historically, socially, and culturally produced interests that women "may develop by virtue of their social positioning through gender attributes" (Molyneux, 1985, p. 232).

¹² For example, Rafael Caldera appointed two women to head ministries during his presidency (1994-1999), while Chávez appointed nine women to head ministries during the first five years of his presidency from 1999 to 2004 (García & Valdivieso, 2009, p. 140).

¹³ I have not seen gender-disaggregated statistics on members of communal councils. However, state gender institution authorities and workers constantly stated that women constituted the majority of community council members. In addition, Thomas Purcell notes from his research with cooperatives in Bolivarian Venezuela, women were the central participants (cited in Spronk & Webber, 2011, p. 236), while Gioconda Espina and Cathy Rakowski state that most volunteers running Bolivarian social provisioning programs were women (2010, p. 189).

From Chávez on down, state functionaries, like the regional level *Madres del Barrio* coordinator cited at the beginning of this chapter, recognized that the Bolivarian revolution had “a woman’s face,” as they were aware that women were driving popular sector organization and mobilization. As stated on a banner created by Bolivarian state authorities that formed the backdrop to the stage at a 2012 regional presidential campaign event in Falcón state: “without the combative woman, the REVOLUTION does not exist!”¹⁴ This was a state populated by leaders who knew that popular sector women and their labor by and large sustained it. In other words, they knew that there was no Bolivarian state without popular sector women’s participation.

This gendered political opening in the Bolivarian process generated new opportunities for women’s organizing. Organized women, in and outside of the Bolivarian state, worked together to demand that the state create and maintain state women’s and gender equality institutions. This included the maintenance of the State Woman’s Institute (*INaMujer*), and the creation of the Woman’s Development Bank (*BanMujer*), the Ministry for Woman’s Issues that later became the Ministry for Woman’s Popular Power and Gender Equality (*MinMujer*), and the National Public Defender of Women. New (semi-) autonomous¹⁵ and state-directed popular women’s organizations and new articulations between state institutions and community-based women’s organizations also emerged in the Bolivarian process. As asserted by the Patriotic Council of Women from the Great Patriotic Pole, bringing together autonomous women’s and feminist organizations and state-directed popular women’s organizations across Venezuela: “The visibilization of the feminine in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela opens the path for a citizenship with gender, class, and ethnic equity and equality and with consciousness of the homeland” (4 June 2012). Women’s rights activists within and

¹⁴ 30 May 2012. Josefa Camejo Women’s Front, Carabobo Campaign. Coro, Falcón state.

¹⁵ “Autonomous” perhaps is not the most fitting qualifier for the relationship between many popular women’s organizations and the state under *Chavismo*. Rather, women allied with *Chavismo* participating in organizations not directed by the state often termed themselves not to be *gobierneras*. That is, they supported the government and their organizations might even have used state resources to carry out their work, but they saw themselves as simultaneously independent of the government and able to critique it.

outside the state also organized for the drafting and the passage of the Organic Law¹⁶ of Women's Right to a Life Free From Violence (2007) when the Supreme Court of Justice revoked the 1998 Law of Violence Against Women and the Family. And feminist organizations used Chávez's feminist and socialist turns to legitimate their demands for broader popular cultural and social change for gender equality.

Since the ratification of the Bolivarian Constitution in 1999, women's movement leaders and organizations also struggled to expand the concept of work and labor-based social protection in particular, using both Article 88 and the alliances and organizational footholds they gained within the state to legitimate these struggles. They strategically developed articulations between activists and organizations within and outside the state to wage these struggles.

In turn (but not necessarily because of those struggles), the Bolivarian state instituted a number of new public programs, which recognized women's unpaid reproductive labor and in some instances lightened their reproductive burdens and/or socialized them.¹⁷ These public programs (outlined in Table 1 below) include *Madres del Barrio*, *Mi Casa Bien Equipada*, *Simoncitos*, Bolivarian Schools, *Barrio Adentro* Mission, *Mercal* Mission, popular cafeterias, Technical Water Tables, *Amor Mayor*, and *Hijos de Venezuela*. Yet, thirteen years into the Bolivarian revolution, neither *Madres del Barrio*, *Mi Casa Bien Equipada*, *Simoncitos*, Bolivarian Schools, popular cafeterias, *Amor Mayor*, nor *Hijos de Venezuela* were universally available nor had they become universally available for their target populations *within* the popular sectors.¹⁸ However, by and large, the roll-out of these new public social provisioning programs relied on the deployment of unpaid or poorly paid labor of popular sector women and their

¹⁶ Organic laws are foundational laws that organize the public powers, develop constitutional rights, or serve as a normative framework for other laws ("Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela," 1999).

¹⁷ In addition, President Chávez issued two separate decrees in 2007 granting pensions to 150,000 elderly people in total, with the second decree granting pensions to 50,000 poor elderly women in particular, some of whom were homemakers. According to the 2001 national Population and Housing Census, there were 1,952,406 elderly people in total in Venezuela, and 1,204,708 elderly women (own calculation based on demographic statistics provided by the National Institute of Statistics) (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, No Date).

¹⁸ *Barrio Adentro*, and the public health system more broadly, and *Mercal* became universally available.

organization within their communities. In other words, popular sector women’s unpaid and poorly paid labor and their organization undergirded the Bolivarian state’s new social provisioning presences within popular sector communities.

Table 1. Bolivarian State Programs Recognizing and/or Alleviating Women’s Reproductive Burdens

Name	Focus of Program
<i>Madres del Barrio</i> Mission	Conditional cash transfer program targeting poor homemakers, which the Bolivarian state claimed was in accordance with Article 88
<i>Mi Casa Bien Equipada</i> Mission	Low-interest credit from the state Bank of Venezuela to purchase discounted household appliances
<i>Simoncitos</i>	Free, public early education centers for children between zero and six years of age
Bolivarian Schools	Free full-day schools providing free meals and health services to students
<i>Barrio Adentro</i> Mission	Free, community-based primary health attention
Mercal Mission	Distribution and sale of low-cost basic food products
Popular Cafeterias	Preparation and provision of free meals in popular sector communities
Technical Water Tables	State-sanctioned community-based organizations documenting water provisioning problems, proposing solutions to them, and working with the state to implement such solutions
<i>Amor Mayor</i> Great Mission	Pensions for poor elderly adults
<i>Hijos de Venezuela</i> Great Mission	Conditional cash transfer program providing per child cash allowances to extremely poor households

The Bolivarian state promoted and in some cases directed popular sector women’s organization in these social provisioning programs and other social and political projects. The state incorporated popular sector women through its practices and institutions by drawing on extant ideologies of gender difference and gendered divisions of labor. It drew on popular women’s roles in their households and communities and reconfigured them in service of the revolution. Popular sector women’s work became resignified as revolutionary and the women who performed it as revolutionary, protagonistic subjects. Yet, the ways in which the Bolivarian state promoted their unpaid labor and organization in the name of the revolution generated tensions between them and the state, which this dissertation addresses.

While this dissertation focuses on poor and working class women as a social group within Bolivarian Venezuela, I base it on the premise that their experiences of the gendered division of labor and their interests as popular women were not uniform. As Maxine Molyneux notes, because women are differentially positioned in societies due to the intersection of their gender with other social attributes such as class, race, and ethnicity, a general unity of interests among women cannot be assumed to exist (Molyneux, 1985, pp. 231-234).

Indeed, Venezuela is a multi-racial and multi-ethnic society marked by racial and ethnic cleavages produced by legacies of European colonialism, slavery, and domination by the global North. These cleavages intersect with class differences: the wealthy and the elite are disproportionately white, whereas the popular sectors are disproportionately people of color. These cleavages also affect women differently according to their positioning within ongoing racial and ethnic hierarchies. The gender order in Venezuela therefore is racialized, and Venezuelan women of color's experiences of oppression are compounded because of the intersection of their gender with their race and class.

Yet the prevailing ideology of *mestizaje*, or racial mixing, has obscured the links between race and class relations in Venezuela, as the idea that all Venezuelans are *mestizos* has been historically propagated. As George Ciccariello-Maher explains, the Venezuelan state promoted *mestizaje* as a means to whiten the nation and conceal the racism within it (2013b, pp. 152-153). Even though racism was foundational to Venezuela and persisted throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century, because of the state ideology of *mestizaje*, Venezuela did not experience a modern system of formal racial segregation like other white settler states, such as South Africa and the United States, did. Further, as the indigenous population in Venezuela is small,¹⁹ indigenous issues and movements have not historically had as much political force as in other South American countries, such as Ecuador and Bolivia, where indigenous populations and movements have been larger. Similarly, few Venezuelans identify as

¹⁹ From the late 19th century through the beginning of the 21st century, indigenous people never constituted more than 5% of the Venezuelan population (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2015, p. 13). According to the 2011 National Population and Housing Census, indigenous people constituted 2.7% of the Venezuelan population (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2015, p. 13).

black or afro-descendant,²⁰ and black and afro-descendent issues and movements have not historically had much political force in modern Venezuelan history. However, under the Bolivarian regime, the government began to recognize indigenous and afro-descendant movement demands and counter the ideology of *mestizaje* by acknowledging racial and ethnic differences and promoting policies of indigenous and afro-descendent identity recognition and representation.

Across racial and ethnic divides in Bolivarian Venezuela, gendered divisions of labor and gender inequalities existed. And popular women disproportionately experienced economic precarity and lack of labor-based social protection. For example, from the 1990s through the 2000s, women in Venezuela increasingly entered the paid workforce (Á. Martínez, 2010, p. 26). Yet, during this time, their incorporation was more into the informal sector of the economy (Á. Martínez, 2010; Richter, 2007). Within the informal economy, women tended to occupy the least paid and most precarious positions (Richter, 2007). Women generally earned lower wages, experienced poorer working conditions, and suffered higher rates of unemployment than men (Richter, 2007).

At the same time, the Bolivarian government instituted a number of new policies and programs to foment popular women's participation in production. The government's production programs targeting women in particular, such as BanMujer, *Madres del Barrio* cooperatives, and Feminist Brigades of Socialist Production, were designed to fit into the broader national revolutionary project of reducing Venezuela's dependence on the extractive industries and imports and supplanting capitalism with a new model of production promoting endogenous development and a solidarity economy. These government programs granted micro-credit²¹ to cooperatives and collective organizations led by women that created production chains or added value to production chains. However, women's experiences with cooperatives were largely unsuccessful

²⁰ According to the 2011 National Population and Housing Census, 3.6% of Venezuelans identified as black or afro-descendant (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2014b, p. 29).

²¹ These programs attached differing terms to the granting of credit, ranging from interest-free loans to low-interest loans.

(Centro de Estudios de la Mujer de la Universidad Central de Venezuela, 2011, p. 31).²² For example, BanMujer had extremely high loan default rates (Rakowski & Espina, 2011, p. 190). Yet these new programs approached women participants not just as producers, as they were also vehicles for popular women's social and political incorporation into the Bolivarian revolution.

In spite of rapid changes in the gendered composition of the paid labor force and the Bolivarian government's promotion of popular women's participation in production, little social redistribution of reproductive labor and the gendered burden of poverty occurred under President Chávez's tenure. During the latter portion of his presidency, approximately 57% of working-age women remained outside of the paid labor force because of household and caring duties (ECLAC, 2013, p. 37). Many women with pre-school aged children remained outside the paid labor market because of lack of childcare alternatives.²³ During Chávez's tenure, the proportion of female-headed households increased from approximately 29% to 39% of all Venezuelan households (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2014b, p. 25). While poverty and extreme poverty rates decreased substantially during his presidency,²⁴ female-headed households disproportionately experienced poverty (Paredes, 2011) and extreme poverty (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2007).

Popular women's experiences of unpaid labor and their interests in Bolivarian Venezuela during Chávez's tenure were not unified. Yet focusing on the intersection of gender and class relations in this multi-racial and multi-ethnic society is essential for understanding the gender order and how popular women's gender interests were shaped within it.

²² Chapter Six describes and explains the lack of success of *Madres del Barrio* cooperatives.

²³ While the Bolivarian government significantly increased public early childhood education and day care services for children three to five years old, public child care services for children zero up to three years old remained insufficient. Households remained the primary childcare provider for infants (Llavaneras Blanco, 2012).

²⁴ From 1998 to 2012, the poverty rate decreased from 43.9% to 21.2% and the extreme poverty rate decreased from 17.1% to 6% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2014a).

The popular women with whom I conducted my research came from different racial backgrounds, ranging from white to *mestiza* to black, as well as from racially mixed communities. While they experienced racial differences, I focused on their experiences of gender and class, and not specifically on their different racial experiences, in order to understand how the state shaped their unpaid labor and their unpaid labor in turn shaped the Bolivarian state.

1.6. An Extended Case Study from the Standpoints of Popular Sector Women

They Want Our Work, But Not Our Power is a story as much about disarticulations as it is about articulations between Venezuelan society and the Bolivarian state and between women in these spheres. It tells a story of both articulations and disarticulations between popular sector women and a popular revolutionary process by shedding light on how the Bolivarian revolution during Chávez's presidency both advanced and sidelined popular women's gender interests. It is also a story of articulations and disarticulations between women's struggles for rights and the implementation of these rights, as it traces victories and forestalled initiatives in women's organizing for rights to recognition and social protection of their unpaid labor from *Puntofijismo* through *Chavismo*. *They Want Our Work, But Not Our Power* is about how women's organization and disorganization around their gender interests shaped such articulations and disarticulations between society and the state in the Bolivarian revolution. It focuses specifically on how popular sector women's unpaid labor and discourses about it were positioned within women's organizing and state-society relations.

They Want Our Work, But Not Our Power is a reflexive case study that both tells and weaves together stories of multiple women, of the popular sectors and middle and governing classes across a range of spaces and forms and levels of social and political organizations, and their relationships to the state. In order to weave these stories of articulations and disarticulations together in a coherent narrative, I use extended case study methodology (Burawoy, 1998), a form of internally and externally reflexive social inquiry that locates the everyday world of popular sector women, their work within their

households and communities, and their social and political participation in the wider historical, social, political and economic context of Venezuela. Michael Burawoy explains that this methodological approach studies “the everyday world from the standpoint of its structuration, that is by regarding it as simultaneously shaped by and shaping an external field of forces” (p. 15). This methodology is concerned not only with how macro- and meso-level processes promote and/or constrain popular sector women’s power, but also with how popular women’s everyday work, practices, and forms of organizing on community levels shape state policies and practices. By focusing on multiple levels of social and political life and their interconnections, the extended case study method can capture the unevenness of state reach and incorporation. It can illuminate how such unevenness constituted the Bolivarian state-making process. Ultimately, this approach can reveal the forces and interests that produced both articulations and disarticulations and instances of organization and disorganization mentioned above and their relation to each other within the Bolivarian process.

In conjoining reflexivity to positive science, the extended case study is a methodologically integrative social research approach. *They Want Our Work, But Not Our Power* weds strands of political economy and historical sociology with participant observation, interviews, and document and media analysis. I used these research methods across geographic spaces in Venezuela with a variety of sources at various levels (politicians, policies, archives, policy makers, workers, leaders and bureaucrats) of the state (local, regional, and national) and sources at the level of the household and the community, such as popular sector women and their organizations. I then combined data from these various sources at various levels and the interactions between them to illuminate the structuration of popular sector women’s experiences of unpaid work, organization, and power in Bolivarian Venezuela.

They Want our Work, But Not Our Power also incorporates Dorothy Smith’s feminist “everyday world as problematic” methodology (1987) in its approach to popular sector women’s lived experiences, their representations of them, and my observations of them as a researcher. Smith begins with the epistemological premise that to understand the organization of society, it must be unfolded “from the standpoint of those who are living it and bringing it into being” (1999, p. 67). Given women’s roles in producing and

reproducing human life and the social relations that sustain it, this mode of inquiry begins “with women’s experience from women’s standpoint” and extends out to explore how broader social and political relations shape it (D. E. Smith, 1987, p. 10). This methodology starts with interviewing women about their everyday experiences and then examines processes beyond the local level to explain how such everyday experiences are embedded in these larger processes (D. E. Smith, 1987, p. 111). Epistemologically, the everyday world as problematic method understands the words, actions, and interactions of research participants as revelatory of the structuration of the social world in which they are embedded, though the social structures and their organizing logics shaping them may not be immediately apparent. As Smith asserts: “In any given context of action, the social arises in how individuals enter actual courses of action coordinating with others, with objects, with an environment that is already socially organized and that is becoming organized as it is again... as they act... the social itself creates the conditions of its own observability” (1987, pp. 126-127). This method therefore explicates “from different sites of women’s experiences, how different social relations or different aspects of the same complex” are organized (D. E. Smith, 1999, p. 69). In the context of Bolivarian Venezuela, this methodology begins from popular women’s experiences and extends out from them to illuminate the “conjunction of local and extralocal organization” (D. E. Smith, 1999, p. 70) to explain how they were differentially incorporated into the process of Bolivarian state formation, how the Bolivarian state shaped their unpaid labor, and how they in turn shaped the Bolivarian state.

To carry out this feminist extended case study connecting popular women’s everyday experiences of work, organization, and power to meso- and macro-level processes within the Bolivarian revolution, I divided my field research into two components. I completed the first component of my field research in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. In Caracas, I conducted document and archival analysis and interviews on women’s rights organizing processes that preceded the 1999 National Constituent Assembly (*Asamblea Nacional Constituyente* or *ANC*), the ANC that generated the Bolivarian Constitution, and post-constituent assembly legislative and policy processes related to Article 88 of the constitution. The second component of my research project, which focused on then current dialectical relations between popular women and the Bolivarian state, was based on fieldwork in Falcón state and several urban centers of

Venezuela. This component of my research involved participant observation, interviews, and document and media analysis. (See Tables 2 and 3 below for a summary of the numbers and types of interviews conducted and events observed. See the Appendix for a more detailed description of my research methods, including the archives consulted and identities or titles of each interview participant.)

I began the first component of my research by collecting data on the processes that led to the convocation of the ANC, women's rights activists' demands for state recognition of women's unpaid housework and homemakers' right to social security, women's rights organizing around the constituent assembly, and discussions and debates within the ANC. Over six months in 2011, I conducted archival analysis of the ANC and analysis of documents (books and popular articles) covering the ANC and related processes preceding it. Major role players and organizations in and observers of these processes were identified through these analyses and conversations with Gioconda Espina and Juana Delgado,²⁵ strategic gatekeepers in this phase of my research project. I relied on these contacts to reach key women's rights protagonists involved in the historical processes leading to the demands that resulted in Article 88 and in the 1999 Constitution. I conducted in-depth interviews with these key protagonists over twelve months.

After I completed archival analysis of the ANC, I spent three months conducting archival and document analysis of post-constituent assembly national legislative, policy, and women's rights organizing processes related to Article 88. This historical research followed the same methodological structure detailed above. I relied on the assistance of a feminist public official working at the national level and on Gioconda Espina to pass on my information and requests for participation in my research to many of the key actors in these processes. I also directly approached some of the key actors with requests to

²⁵ Gioconda Espina is a Women's Studies Professor at the Central University of Venezuela. She has over thirty years of experience of participating in, observing, and analyzing women's movements in Venezuela as well as experience in drafting national legislation in regard to women's and gender issues. Juana Delgado has been a participant in women's movements in Venezuela and a national leader of the Popular Women's Circles (*Círculos Femeninos Populares* or CFP) for over thirty years. The CFP organize popular sector women and grew nationally to become the largest politically autonomous women's organization during *Puntofijismo* (Friedman, 2000b, p. 169).

participate in interviews about these processes. I conducted in-depth interviews with these key actors over thirteen months.

I began the second component of my field research in Coro, the first capital of Venezuela, a site of historic insurrection by slaves, and the contemporary capital of Falcón state. In Coro, the Collective Authority for Women's and Gender Issues in the state gave me permission to conduct participant observation on the functioning of the state women's and gender institutions that fell under her authority (the Ministry for Woman's Popular Power and Gender Equality regional office, the Regional Woman's Institute, and the Secretariat for Development and Gender Equality) and the events that these institutions held with popular women in the state. I observed these institutions and events from October 2011 to October 2012. I attended informal meetings and held informal conversations with workers in these institutions. I conducted in-depth interviews with some of the workers in these institutions, all of whom I asked for their individual consent to participate. I took fieldwork notes at and digitally recorded some of the formal meetings within the state gender institutions and events the institutions held with popular sector women in the state.

I also conducted in-depth interviews with national state gender institution workers in 2012. I approached these workers directly and individually (not via their employers) to participate in my study, and they gave individual consent to participate. In addition, I observed several national gender institution events with popular sector women and organizations.

Over three months in 2012, I conducted research in an urban center of Venezuela with women who had been formerly incorporated into *Madres del Barrio* Mission in order to obtain a bottom-up perspective of the mission. I used my contacts with state gender institution workers to locate three *madres* who had been incorporated into the mission and had exited it. I visited these women in the shops that they ran, talked with them, listened to them, and conducted an in-depth semi-structured individual interview process with each of them. I engaged them in a post-interview participant validation process in which I gave each of them a summary of the interview and the opportunity to review and edit the summary. I also used this validation process as an

opportunity to conduct short follow-up interviews with two of them. In order to gain a top-down perspective of *Madres del Barrio*, my research on the mission extended to in-depth interviews in 2012 with two former municipal mission coordinators in different regions of Venezuela, who were separately referred to me via a gender institution worker and a feminist activist.

Outside of my research affiliation with the Falcón Collective Authority for Women's and Gender Issues, I conducted in-depth interviews over six months in 2012 with ten women in a popular sector barrio of Coro in Falcón state who potentially met the criteria for *Madres del Barrio* Mission but were not incorporated into it. My research assistant, who was a resident of this *barrio*, used personal contacts and snowball sampling to identify and contact participants who potentially met the criteria for incorporation into *Madres del Barrio*. He provided potential participants with a description of my study, scheduled my interviews with women who agreed to participate in it, and introduced me to them. I engaged all of these participants in a post-interview participant validation process in which I gave each of them a summary of the interview and the opportunity to review and edit the summary. I used this validation process as an opportunity to conduct short follow-up interviews with most of them, especially in regard to their experiences of (non)incorporation into state social programs since the initial interviews.

In 2012, I also conducted field research on women's organizing processes around the 2012 organic labor law. This included: document analysis (popular organizational materials, communications, and proposals from 2010 to 2012) and media analysis of the organic labor law drafting process and women's rights organizing for reform of the law; participant observation of women's organizing events around women's labor rights and the organic labor law drafting process; and in-depth interviews with key women's rights activists advocating for the inclusion of women's gender interests in the labor law. I approached two of these activists directly with requests to participate in my research, and one activist introduced me to another activist, whom I interviewed.

As participant observation is about being present in the field(s) a researcher studies, my research included observation of a number of other events that helped to

contextualize my understanding of state-society relations in Bolivarian Venezuela and how popular women were positioned within them. Being present as a social researcher in the context of Bolivarian Venezuela also entailed engaging in general media analysis and taking general fieldnotes of the processes I was observing and taking part in over the eighteen months I lived and worked in Venezuela.

Table 2. Interviews Conducted

Type of Participant	Number of Participants Interviewed	Number of Interviews Conducted
National Level State Gender Institution Workers, Women's Rights Activists, Women's Rights Analysts, and Actors Involved in Pre-ANC, ANC, and Post-ANC Processes Related to Article 88	21	27
Falcón State Gender Institution Workers	6	9
Former <i>Madres del Barrio</i>	3	8
Former <i>Madres del Barrio</i> Municipal Coordinators	2	3
<i>Falconiana Barrio</i> Women	10	17

Table 3. Events Observed

Type of Event	Number of Events
Events for State Gender Institution Workers in Falcón State	5
Events between State Institutions and Popular Sector Women and Organizations in Falcón State	23
National Events between State Institutions and Popular Sector Women and Organizations	2
National Events on Women's and Gender Issues	4
Caracas Events on Women's and Gender Issues	2
Other Events	5

In both components of my field research, all interviews were semi-structured and I conducted and digitally recorded all interviews. For ethical reasons, all interviews were based on the principles of informed consent. I gave research participants whom I interviewed about the pre-ANC, ANC, and post-ANC processes the option of deciding

how confidential they wanted their identities to remain. The identities of all popular sector women and state gender institution workers I interviewed are confidential, and I have given all of them pseudonyms. Because data analysis ran concurrently with data collection, as research themes were identified, I conducted more interviews with some research participants to address the specific themes that were arising through data analysis. I also conducted several interviews with some research participants because they were involved in multiple processes that I was studying.

I gave almost all digital recordings to my research assistant to transcribe. After he transcribed them, I reviewed them for accuracy and edited them accordingly. When my research assistant did not transcribe interviews, I did. After the interview transcription process, I formulated a summary of each interview, removing any information that I did not deem relevant to my study. I conducted all translations of the interview data from Spanish to English.

I invited all interview participants into a dialogical participant validation process in which they could review interview summaries, check them for accuracy, discuss them, and provide analysis of them. I used the participant validation process as a means to reflect on their informed consent. This included giving them the opportunity to remove any data from the study they may have felt uncomfortable sharing, as well as giving participants who originally agreed to be publicly identified in my study the opportunity to withdraw the publicity of their identities.

From the interview summaries, fieldwork notes, and notes from archival and document analysis, I reduced the data using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. After identifying emergent themes and logical connections amongst them from the data, I used extended case study analysis methods to link micro-level themes to meso- and macro-level processes. This conceptual linkage drew on an ongoing review of academic literature and documents covering larger social and political forces and historical processes in order to contextualize these emergent themes. I wrote analytic memos throughout the coding process and they formed the basis of my research conclusions.

As a reflexive model of science, the extended case study method is “a model of science that embraces not detachment but engagement as the road to knowledge” (Burawoy, 1998, p. 5). That is, it is an intersubjective method, premised on the notion that “what can be known is inextricably intertwined with the interaction between a *particular* investigator and a *particular* object or group” (Guba & Lincoln, 2004, p. 26). Following Burawoy (1998), I ground the epistemology of *They Want Our Work, But Not Our Power* in the understanding that the research product cannot be separated from the research process and the researcher cannot be separated from the research design because of the uniqueness of the field research encounter and the centrality of context and power effects on the research site and outcomes. As Burawoy explains:

In the view of reflexive science, intervention is not only an unavoidable part of social research but a virtue to be exploited. It is by mutual reaction that we discover the properties of the social order. Interventions create perturbations that are not noise to be expurgated but music to be appreciated, transmitting the hidden secrets of the participant’s world. Institutions reveal much about themselves when under stress or in crisis, when they face the unexpected as well as the routine (Burawoy, 1998, p. 14).

Thus, as a white academic woman researcher from the global North, I do not aim to reduce the effects of my power, but to understand how my intervention in the social world of Bolivarian Venezuela, and the pressure I exerted upon it, reveals how that world was structured (Burawoy, 1998, pp. 6-7).

Bolivarian Venezuela during Chávez’s presidency, in particular, was a context in which I was forced to be anything but detached, as I felt and was made to feel that the political process underway mattered. Inquiries about the Bolivarian process were highly charged, especially when they came from me, a highly educated U.S. American researcher, given the history of problematic engagements between the U.S. and Bolivarian governments, historical U.S. interference in the Bolivarian process, and the fact that the Bolivarian process was at least discursively defined as a nationalist, anti-imperialist, anti-neoliberal project. Context and power effects were highly interactive in Bolivarian Venezuela.

Context and power effects shape what we can know about the social world and how we can know it, and they can limit our ability to know the social world we set out to study. As Burawoy (1998) states, no matter what our intentions may be as social researchers, “relations of domination... are nevertheless always there to render our knowledge partial” (p. 23). Our social positions, therefore, both open up and limit possibilities to construct knowledge of social relations.

Indeed, the work of researching and writing *They Want Our Work, But Not Our Power* shows that all knowledge is partial. This basic epistemic truism is especially salient for understanding what was known and what was not known in politically polarized Venezuela in which dividing lines had been set and festered between “*los esqualidos*”²⁶ and “*los rojos rojitos*”²⁷ and where popular frustrations with top-down state and party initiatives and the slowness of state delivery had surfaced and resurfaced. This was all the more so in the Venezuela of 2011 and 2012, twelve to thirteen years into Hugo Chávez’s presidency, precisely when Chávez was afflicted with a publicly unnamed cancer in a presidential election year. It was into this context and field of power relations that I immersed myself and set out to construct knowledge about how constitutional recognition of the socio-economic value of housework and homemakers’ right to social security affected popular sector homemakers’ social and political positions and state policies and practices. This charged and complex field of power relations was confusing and difficult to navigate at times, making information often difficult to obtain. Access to information was politically mediated and often dependent upon political appointments, relations, and connections; where some Bolivarian government representatives would open access to government data and programs, others would close them down. Yet, as the political polarization became entrenched and the Bolivarian government radicalized, a “Chavista siege-mentality” set in (Wilpert, 2007), generally rendering information about government programs more difficult to obtain during the latter years of Chávez’s presidency. State actors blocked me from accessing information about some of the poorest women’s experiences of engagement with the Bolivarian

²⁶ A popular term meaning “the squalid ones,” used by some *Chavistas* to label the opposition.

²⁷ A popular term, loosely translated as “the real reds,” that was originally coined by a national state functionary and is used by some *Chavistas* to label who they see as real *Chavistas*.

state, women for whom exclusion and invisibility had been common experiences and who had mostly been forgotten throughout recent history. This difficulty in accessing information about popular women's engagement with the state sheds light on how popular women were incorporated into the Bolivarian project. It also sheds lights on how lack of access to information about popular women and government programs was constitutive of the Bolivarian state-making project.

They Want Our Work, But Not Our Power is a text produced from the information I was able to gather and the experiences that I was able to observe and weave together in this politically charged conjuncture within the Bolivarian process. Yet, it is a text that is haunted by what I do not know, what the research participants with whom I engaged did not know, what they would not share with me, and documents missing from the public sphere.

This absence of knowledge of the Bolivarian process does not only produce a vacuum. It is also productive. Part of what made the Bolivarian state magical under Chávez's presidency was its lack of transparency. While the state made itself recurrently and incessantly visible in popular media and its everyday interactions with the popular sectors, it often did not reveal its backstage organization and processes as to how many state decisions were made, who made them, and to what extent popular voices and input shaped its decision-making. This lack of transparency facilitated the illusion of revolutionary magic. As Coronil notes, the Bolivarian state appeared to have powers that instantaneously came from itself, including its power to suddenly unfreeze genuine claims for inclusion, assistance, and justice from members and organizations of the popular sectors that the state had suspended within its bureaucratic apparatus. Indeed, the Bolivarian state's lack of transparency enhanced its magical appearance, as its subjects could project onto it their desires for and understandings of its internal machinations as well as the degree to which they were included within the state's orbit. The state's opaqueness lent to the generation of an environment in which rumors about its actions and inactions could flourish. Like the rumors about the state's and polluters' (in)actions that circulate amongst residents of the contaminated Argentine shantytown, *Flammable*, as articulated by Javier Auyero and Débora Swistun (2009, p. 15), I take the rumors I encountered in Venezuela as constituting not just imaginations of the state, but

also subjects' understandings and experiences of the state. Further, following Gupta (1995, 2005), I contend that such representations of the state by its subjects are part and parcel of the Bolivarian state itself; these rumors in part constituted the state. The widespread circulation of rumors about the Bolivarian state—many of which contradicted each other— reveals how the structure of the state was constructed around its lack of transparency to those outside its internal realms of decision-making powers.

The task ahead is to craft a narrative that combines what is known and not known to reveal how popular women's unpaid labor shaped the process of building the Bolivarian state and how this magical revolutionary state formation affected their individual, social, and political power. As Coronil notes:

The persuasiveness of a historical account, like that of a magical performance, depends on rendering invisible the artifice of its production. Just as history refers ambiguously to the past in its completeness and to the selective remembering of stories about the past, magic alludes to an extraordinary reality as well as to the selective presentation of the elements that create the illusion of its existence through invisible tricks that exploit distraction and diversion. Like history, magic hangs suspended between fiction and fact, trick and truth (Coronil, 1997, p. 3)

In the following pages, I aim to render visible a fundamental facet of the artifice of the Bolivarian state's production by illuminating how gender, gender difference, and the gendered division of labor were inscribed into and buttressed the process of state formation in Bolivarian Venezuela.

1.7. Chapter Outline

Chapters Two and Three provide a historical account of contested claims for state recognition of unpaid housework and homemakers' social security in Venezuela from *Puntofijismo* through the first eleven years of the Bolivarian Republic. These chapters insert these claims in the broader context of *Puntofijismo* and its social, political, and economic breakdown, the rise of Hugo Chávez to power, the re-founding of the republic through the National Constituent Assembly process, and the subsequent political polarization and radicalization of the Bolivarian government that ensued. They examine how women organized around these claims for recognition of and redistribution

for homemakers throughout these political processes and how these political processes shaped women's movement organizing and these particular claims. Chapter Two explains the processes that culminated in the inclusion of Article 88 in the 1999 Constitution. Chapter Three then analyzes how the formulation of Article 88 in the Bolivarian Constitution interacted with larger processes of political conflict, polarization, radicalization, centralization of power, the development of a parallel state apparatus, and the Bolivarian government's political will to enact women's rights legislation to shape the ways in which its implementation was contested and at times sidelined.

Chapters Four and Five focus on *Madres del Barrio* Mission, the discretionary conditional cash transfer program targeting poor homemakers that the Bolivarian government enacted outside of legislative channels and through which it claimed the state recognized the value of popular homemakers' unpaid housework. Both chapters draw from the work of Maxine Molyneux (2006, 2008), who argues that conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs in Latin America produce new forms of maternalism by incorporating poor women into social programs based on their traditional roles as mothers. I examine how *Madres del Barrio* intersected with notions of popular power within the Bolivarian process to resignify motherhood within the context of the revolution and produce a revolutionary maternalism. That is, the mission posited the *madres* as revolutionary subjects articulating popular power through the deployment of their labor and the fulfillment of their community, political, and productive co-responsibilities in addition to their housework. Chapters Four and Five thus highlight dialectical tensions between popular women and the state that this social program generated. Through the mission, the Bolivarian state assisted popular sector women in meeting their and their dependents' welfare needs, yet it demanded the social and political participation of popular women while exercising its power and control over them.

This examination begins in Chapter Four by laying out the institutional design of *Madres del Barrio* Mission. It details how the mission emerged in 2006 and how it was designed and managed by the national executive within the context of the radicalization of the Bolivarian revolution, the development of a parallel welfare state apparatus, and the Bolivarian state's imaginations and empirical reconfigurations of state-society relations. The developers of the mission drew on both constitutional and legislative

recognition of homemakers' labor and extant gender roles in their design of this mission. The Bolivarian state set the expectation that, in exchange for a temporary monthly cash transfer equivalent to 60-80% of the minimum wage, poor homemakers would extend their reproductive roles from their households to their communities to become the mothers of their *barrios*, in addition to developing socio-productive projects serving the endogenous development of their communities and participating politically in the revolution. This chapter also sheds light on the uncertain relationship between the mission's design and Article 88, given the mission's enactment outside of women's movement organizing around Article 88 and the mission's lack of transparency. I explain how the combination of the mission's non-transparent structure and the effects of state power and the political context limited what information I and the general public could access about the relations between the state and the popular women the mission incorporated. My attempts to know *Madres del Barrio* that I highlight in this chapter reveal the kind of top-down state-society relations the mission was fostering with popular sector women in spite of its rhetoric of promoting women's popular power.

Chapter Five builds on the knowledge and questions produced about *Madres del Barrio* in Chapter Four through a bottom-up examination of fieldwork I carried out across several geographic regions in Venezuela in 2011 and 2012 with then current and former *Madres del Barrio* and state gender institution actors who worked directly or indirectly with *Madres del Barrio*. It begins with the individual stories of former *madres'* experiences of the mission, and then extends to the voices and interests of state actors and institutions to show the structural forces and social and political dynamics that shaped their experiences and popular understandings of the mission in general.

Chapter Five illuminates how *Madres del Barrio's* resignification of motherhood within the context of the Bolivarian revolution had regulatory effects for the *madres* who did not fulfill all their co-responsibilities. Such resignification, in addition to the mission's selective and exclusive targeting mechanisms, served to generate new forms of social and economic divisions among popular sector women. Because gender is a relational construct, this chapter also examines how the production of a revolutionary maternalism through the mission incorporated and occurred alongside a structural and discursive paternalism within the Bolivarian revolution. That is, the structuring of the mission, the

Bolivarian state's broader (non)intervention in care work, and general popular discourse and expectations assumed that the *madres* could intensify their labor in the absence of men's and state support in the provision of care for their dependents. Popular women's unpaid reproductive labor therefore was disregarded. The *madres*, in turn, were blamed for depending on the state and not assuming their participatory and protagonistic productive role in support of the revolution, even though the state expected them to perform unpaid community and political labor in addition to their housework. Thus, both the structure of and popular discourses about *Madres del Barrio* belied the constitutional provision upon which the Bolivarian state claimed that the mission was based. The mission entrenched gender inequalities and popular conceptions of unpaid reproductive labor as not constituting work.

Chapter Six continues with the exploration of stories from the field about popular sector women's unpaid labor from the standpoints of the women carrying it out, by focusing on popular women in a *barrio* who had not been incorporated into *Madres del Barrio*. These are women who continued performing unpaid reproductive labor mostly as they did before the Bolivarian state created new interventions in social reproduction processes, because state services did not reach them sufficiently. Some of these women—the poorest amongst them—waited for the state to reach them and assist in social reproduction processes when it had promised and raised expectations that it would. To illuminate the implications of their state of waiting, this chapter draws on Auyero's (2012) concept of "patients of the state," or subjects who wait and comply silently "in zones of uncertainty and arbitrariness" for the state to act on behalf of their welfare, which in turn reproduces their subordination and the order of political domination. Chapter Six examines how the Bolivarian state, by making its subjects wait, reinforced gender inequalities and thus how, being a "patient of the state" was gendered and disproportionately affected women, given their positionings within social reproduction. Woven and interpreted together, the stories from these *barrio* women create a picture of a negative feedback loop of non-substantive recognition of their unpaid labor. By forcing them to wait for social assistance, the state constrained their time and left them in zones of uncertainty and vulnerability vis-à-vis the men in their lives and the market. The ongoing gendered division of household labor and their unpaid reproductive responsibilities as well as community disintegration and high levels of

violence in their community constituted barriers to their social and political participation, which could have served as a vehicle to make and channel their demands of the state. This negative feedback loop reinforced the gendered division of labor and individual family mechanisms of survival. It upheld the state of ruling relations, wherein these women filled in gaps in social reproduction where the Bolivarian state did not reach.

Chapter Seven focuses on dialectical relations between popular sector women and the Bolivarian state by examining how the tension between popular and populist political practices affected the struggle to organize for women's labor rights and the expansion of legal conceptions of work and labor-based social protection within the 2012 presidential election year. This chapter contrasts instances of bottom-up participatory women's organizing driven by social movements with top-down instances of women's organizing controlled by the state. At the same time, it highlights where these conflicting modes of women's organization converged for the broader interests of the revolution and analyzes the implications of this convergence for women's particular claims for advancing their rights. To do this, I draw on fieldwork with multiple women's movement and state gender organizations across several geographic spaces during the six months preceding the enactment of the 2012 organic labor law, drafted by a commission appointed by President Chávez drafted and issued by decree. I employ extended case study's comparative strategy (Burawoy, 1998, p. 19), tracing the sources of difference in women's organizing around state recognition of their work to external forces and the national political conjuncture in which they were embedded. The political processes that intersected to shape women's organizing for their labor rights included: popular sector women's centrality to, yet their lack of power within, the Bolivarian process; the Bolivarian state's lack of transparency; stalled reform of the law in spite of social movement demands; executive control over legislative processes; President Chávez's illness, and the 2012 presidential election year. By illuminating how the populist mode of legislating the new organic labor law both opened up and closed down opportunities for women's organizing and the recognition of their gender interests, this chapter analyses how these different cases of organizing were connected to and shaped by broader contradictory state-society relations and the regime of power within the Bolivarian process.

Chapter Eight concludes *They Want Our Work, But Not Our Power* by tying together common thematic threads of popular women's relation to the state and recognition of their unpaid labor that run through the preceding chapters. The identification of these common themes raises broader theoretical issues of the spatial, temporal, and moral organization of the Bolivarian state and how gender was articulated into these facets of the state. This chapter troubles the Bolivarian state's claims of its promotion of popular women's power. It ultimately calls for an alternative understanding of popular power and women's positioning within it based on the everyday realities of women's work and interactions with the state.

Chapter 2. Out of the Margins: The Struggle for the Rights to State Recognition of Women's Unpaid Housework and Social Security for Homemakers

2.1. Introduction: Constitutions as Processes of Contestation for Power

"All constitutions," writes Daphne Patai (1991, p. 556), reflect their respective countries' "historical and political moment." To understand the moment of a constitution's production, that moment must be historicized and framed within larger processes of state formation and transformation, state-society relations, social and political inclusion and exclusion, and contestation of and for power and citizenship rights. These larger processes, in turn, shape both struggles for constitutional change and constitutional products.

Just as a constitution reflects contestations for power and inclusion within a given country at the moment of its production, in recent decades insurgent demands from subaltern groups have shifted understandings of the possibilities, limits, and legitimacy of democracy. Constitutional design in many post-colonial countries tends to no longer be limited to elite decision making (Waylen, 2006, p. 1209), as was the case with the 1961 Venezuelan Constitution. Rather, emphasis is now placed on the *process* of constitutional crafting and its openness to inclusion and democratic participation of the people (Waylen, 2006, p. 1209) whom constitutions will govern and protect. In Latin America, the interactions of social movements' democratic demands and responsive state leaders have opened processes of constitution making to civil society participation through the convocation of constituent assemblies in many countries throughout the region since the 1980s. These constituent assembly processes have constituted new political openings for social groups, such as women, who were previously marginalized from corporatist and neoliberal citizenship regimes. Social movements in the region have

responded to these new political openings by developing new forms of contention and strategies for collective action (Hochstetler, 2000, p. 170) to demand that their interests be included and codified into rights in these new constitutions.

This chapter draws on archival and interview data to examine the historical and political processes that culminated in the codification of gender rights for women— a social group largely excluded from participation in and the benefits of corporatist and neoliberal citizenship regimes in Venezuela—in the 1999 National Constituent Assembly (*Asamblea Nacional Constituyente*, or ANC) that rewrote the Venezuelan Constitution. I focus in particular on the rights to state recognition of the socio-economic value of housework and social security for homemakers enshrined in the 1999 Constitution. Using a gender perspective to analyze political opportunity structures, I trace the genealogy of the demand for these rights within Venezuelan women's movement organizing. This chapter situates the historical development of the politics of unpaid domestic labor and women's movement organizing in Venezuela within the larger context of state building (1958-1989), state crisis (1989-1998), and state transformation (1999). Women's movement activists first demanded social security for homemakers in the 1980s—after the peak of the international wages for housework campaigns in the 1970s. They finally encountered a political opportunity structure that was favorable to their mobilization around this demand with the collapse of the old elite-controlled party system in 1999. The electoral mandate for the creation of a participatory and social democracy in the 1999 constituent process was a master frame through which women's rights activists could legitimate their demands.

I conclude that, in spite of women's under-representation in the ANC, the women's movement was able to use the new political opening in 1999 generated by rapid political upheavals to gain leverage in political parties, the state, and the ANC. A few key women's rights activists rose to positions of power within these structures and incorporated the broader women's movement in crafting constitutional proposals that addressed women's gender interests. Uniting across political and ideological divides, they used and built upon a conjunctural coalition building strategy that they had previously honed. This strategy enabled them to successfully lobby and pressure the male-dominated ANC to include most of their proposals in the final constitutional

product, and in particular their demands for state recognition of the socio-economic value of unpaid housework and homemakers' corresponding right to social security. The women's movement was able to harness this gendered political opening to exercise their power and influence as a social movement and set a framework for redistribution of gendered power—and specifically the redistribution of wealth toward women who worked without pay—in the Bolivarian Republic that the 1999 Constitution ordained.

2.2. A Theoretical Framework for Understanding Women's Rights Interventions in Constitutional Change Processes

Constitutions are not only about creating state structures, granting rights, and imposing regulations and obligations; they are also about epitomizing a country's fundamental aspirations (Dobrowolsky & Hart, 2003, p. 2) for state-society relations. As Alexandra Dobrowolsky and Viven Hart (2003, p. 2) assert: "A constitution is intended to stand above everyday politics, authorizing the rules of the game and legitimating the processes and outcomes of government." Because a constitution institutionalizes a framework for governance and a regime of citizenship—a regime of inclusion and participation within the political community—its production is the outcome of struggles of social groups to enter into and determine the rules of the political game. Constitutions, then "are, at their core, about power"—about outlining who has access to power and how power is distributed and exercised (Dobrowolsky & Hart, 2003, p. 2).

For women, who have historically been marginalized within constitutional republics across the world and excluded from enjoying the rights of full citizenship, constitutions are important instruments for enshrining their rights as women (Waylen, 2006, p. 1210) through the omission or inclusion of their gender interests. As women experience gender inequalities in both public and private spheres, constitutions matter to women because they "define the relationships between the state and its citizens as well as among citizens themselves" (Waylen, 2006, p. 1210). The status of women's rights within constitutions therefore "can fundamentally challenge the social, economic and political distribution of power according to gender and sexuality" (Rakowski, 2003, p. 415).

Because constitutions construct regimes of power and citizenship, their production, effects, amendments, and transformation are constantly contested through political processes (Dobrowolsky & Hart, 2003, p. 2). Just as a constitution is the outcome of political contestation, it too sets the framework for future contestation over political, social, and economic power. And because constitutions set a framework for the gendered distribution of power, women's intervention in constitutional processes has the potential to alter the gendered distribution of power as well as set a framework for future contestations over the gendered distribution of power.

To understand women's rights interventions in constitutional processes, "an appreciation of specific political, historical and discursive openings" that form "the political context as well as the societal and cultural norms in which constitutionalism develops" and affect "the nature of the constitutional product . . . is critical" (Dobrowolsky, 2003, p. 237). One factor alone does not generate constitutional change in favor of women's gender interests, but rather the particular convergence of historical, social, cultural, political, and economic factors generate specific gendered political openings that enable women to mobilize to make such changes occur (Dobrowolsky, 2003; Viterna & Fallon, 2008; Waylen, 2006). As Jocelyn Viterna and Kathleen Fallon (2008) note, such a conjuncture "creates new political openings for affecting state institutions and policies, and constructing new political ideologies within which movements can frame feminist goals" (p. 681). At the same time, a gendered political opening that enables women's mobilization for constitutional change does not necessarily guarantee that change in favor of their gender interests will be codified in a final constitutional product. As Georgina Waylen (2006, p. 1217) contends, for this to occur the political opportunity structure during a constitution making process must be relatively transparent, open, and favorable to women's rights interventions. This includes the willingness of actors within political parties, legislatures, governments, and gender machineries—state institutions that make and administer policy on gender-related issues—to take up women's gender issues and form alliances with women's rights activists outside the state (Waylen, 2006, pp. 1217-1218).

Such an enabling context for the codification of women's rights includes the legacy of women's previous mobilizations, in that they build and set a frame for women's

collective action and contestation within processes of constitutional change. Women's movements, then, are most effective when "women's past activism legitimates present-day feminist demands" (Viterna & Fallon, 2008, pp. 684-685). One of the key ways in which women's past activism can legitimate feminist demands for the inclusion of women's rights in constitutions is the prior achievement of positions of power for women's movement activists within state and political party channels. From these positions, activists can use their power to gain allies within political institutions and build cohesive, conjunctural coalitions that can effectively lobby and pressure party and state representatives during processes of constitutional change. This organizing strategy accords with Dobrowolsky's (2003) cross-country assessment of successful women's interventions in constitutional change processes. She concluded that women's rights activists' political mobilization across multiple levels that combines strategies within and outside the state appears to be most favorable (Dobrowolsky, 2003, p. 240) for the inclusion of their gender interests.

Moreover, scholars have noted that in addition to a favorable political opportunity structure, the timing of women's rights activists' constitutional interventions matters for the achievement of outcomes in their favor. Dobrowolsky (2003, p. 239) finds that the earlier women intervene in constitutional design processes, the better, because such timing gives them more access to opportunities to voice their demands and exercise influence over political processes. Furthermore, Dobrowolsky (2003, pp. 238-239) notes that where the political moment of constitutional change falls, in terms of a spectrum of incremental reform to complete transformation, shapes the capacity for change in favor of women's gender interests.

In periods of rapid change, when new institutions are being constructed and wholesale change is possible, women's capacity to influence political discourses and institutions becomes more likely... times of political upheaval, with the potential to create new institutions and structures, and the capacity to be creative and engage in *adaptation* appear particularly auspicious for women's constitutional activism (Dobrowolsky, 2003, pp. 238-239).

Combining the above work of scholars who have analyzed women's interventions in constitutional change processes, I have constructed a theoretical framework for explaining the extent to which the convergence of forces create gendered political

openings that enable women to achieve constitutional changes which advance their gender interests. This combined theoretical framework that I utilize in this chapter highlights five key factors in explaining when, how, and why women's rights mobilizations are successful in changing constitutions: 1) timing and nature of constitutional change; 2) relative openness and transparency of constitutional design process; 3) legitimation of current demands through legacy of women's past activism; 4) cohesive conjunctural coalition building; and 5) openness and willingness of officials within the state and political parties to take up women's gender concerns. This chapter draws on this framework to explain the processes that created gendered political openings in which women were able to mobilize successfully for their gender rights—including the rights to recognition of the socio-economic value of unpaid housework and social security for homemakers—in the 1999 National Constituent Assembly in Venezuela.

2.3. Transformations in State-Society Relations and the Gendered Distribution of Power under *Puntofijismo*

The 1958 Punto Fijo Pact signed by Venezuelan political and economic elites and the 1961 Constitution established the return to civilian rule after ten years of military dictatorship and paved the way for the consolidation of formal democracy and “rentier liberalism”²⁸ in Venezuela. The ensuing “pacted democracy,” commonly termed *Puntofijismo*, was premised on this power-sharing agreement between the two main political parties—the social democratic party, *Acción Democrática* (AD), and the Christian democratic party, *Comité Independiente Electoral* (COPEI).²⁹ *Puntofijismo* “promot[ed]... individual and collective welfare... through the expansion of the oil economy and the distribution of oil revenues by a democratic state” (Coronil, 1997, p.

²⁸ Coronil (1997, pp. 88-111) uses this term to explain the development of national identity and citizenship in Venezuela in the 20th century, which came to be understood not only as participation in formal politics but also as entitlement to the nation's oil wealth. Struggles for democracy thus were linked to struggles for “collective ownership of the common subsoil.”

²⁹ The Democratic Republican Union party— *Unión Republicana Democrática* or *URD*— also formed part of the Punto Fijo power sharing agreement, but never enjoyed substantial power like AD and COPEI under *Puntofijismo*.

228), and contained class conflict through centralized, political party-based, corporatist, and clientelist forms of interest mediation (Gómez Calcaño, 1998, p. 215; Grindle, 2000, pp. 45-47; Hellinger, 2003).³⁰ The *Puntofijista* regime used oil revenues to build and finance a large welfare state that served as the largest employer and the largest investor in industrial development and contributed to the reduction of poverty and the growth of the middle class (López Maya, Lander, & Ungar, 2002, p. 185; Rakowski, 2003, p. 388). In so doing, it generated expectations amongst citizens of entitlement to state provisioning of social security, perpetual progress, social mobility, and collective integration (Coronil, 1997, p. 134; Ellner, 2003, pp. 7-8; Lander, 2005, pp. 25-26; Levine, 2006; López Maya, et al., 2002, p. 185).

However, as Coronil (1997, p. 127) points out, such expectations were part of the construction of an “illusion of harmony,” which “was premised on reformist control of the oil industry and the forceful exclusion of radical demands made by both elite and popular sectors.” From its very inception, *Puntofijismo* “was an exclusionary regime” (Friedman, 2000b, p. 4), as many of the popular forces that helped to bring down the military dictatorship were excluded by AD and COPEI from power sharing and representation under the new liberal democratic system designed and dominated by these two political parties. In spite of the important contributions of the Communist Party, students, and women activists to the struggle against the military dictatorship, the foundations of *Puntofijismo* explicitly excluded the Communist Party and largely excluded popular sectors and women and other non-class-based interest groups from political participation and leadership and many citizenship benefits (Cannon, 2009, p. 47; Ciccariello-Maher, 2013b, pp. 9-11; Friedman, 2000b). Because of this foundational exclusion and quickly ensuing state repression of political dissent, public protest, and strikes, the Venezuelan Communist Party, a break-away radical faction of AD called the Revolutionary Left Movement, and radical student activists chose to take up arms and engage in a guerilla

³⁰ Clientelist forms of interest mediation refer to clients’ lending of political support to patrons in exchange for material rewards that meet clients’ practical needs. While patrons need clients’ political support and clients can manipulate this to meet their specific needs, the negotiation between them remains hierarchical in that clients’ access to resources is conditional on subordination to the patron (Fox, 1997; Taylor, 2004). Patron-client interactions are not mediated by formal and generalized laws and procedures, but by personal ties and social customs (Taylor, 2004).

struggle to bring down the *Puntofijista* regime beginning in 1961. Women within these radical organizations joined the guerilla struggle.³¹

Yet steady economic growth in the 1960s, the international oil crisis, and the subsequent surge in oil prices in the 1970s aided in perpetuating the magical state and the corresponding illusion of social harmony that it inculcated, obscuring the social, political, and economic cleavages that existed under *Puntofijismo* (Cannon, 2009, p. 47; Coronil, 1997; Hellinger, 2003; Roberts, 2003, p. 57).³² Coronil (1997, pp. 301-302) terms this an “oil-supported subsidization of consensus” which served to “lessen the political cost of state decisions” and “artificially” prolong “the life of conflicting social actors.” In addition, as the *Puntofijista* regime consolidated and defeated the guerilla struggle, it developed a policy of “pacification,” in which non-armed leftist groups could become legalized.

The exclusionary political opportunity structure of transition to democracy originally foreclosed women’s political organization. In the struggle to bring down the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship, women had both worked within the structures of the banned parties and united as women across party political lines (Friedman, 2000b, pp. 106-121)—a model of conjunctural coalition building that Venezuelan women activists had begun to develop in campaigns for legal reform in the 1930s and 1940s. Yet, in the transition to a pacted democracy, which was in part based on the exclusion of communist and radical leftist activists, their very unity across party lines prevented their ongoing organization. As Friedman (2000b, p. 126) notes, “exclusion of the left in the transition confounded women’s organizational strategy.” Through adopting a democratic centralist organizing model, *Puntofijista* party leaders were able to demand their women members’ demobilization and close down women’s pluralist organizing, which they saw as a threat to their strategy of exclusion and isolation of the left (Friedman, 2000b, pp. 125-127).

³¹ Four decades later, some of them came to occupy prominent positions within the Bolivarian regime (Ciccariello-Maher, 2013b, pp. 22-44)

³² Edgardo Lander (2005, p. 22) notes, for example, that income distribution was not substantially altered during the height of *Puntofijismo*.

Yet Venezuelan women's marginalization within traditional channels of interest representation in the transition to democracy and under *Puntofijismo* ultimately provoked them to establish alternative and unique forms of representation, political organization, and collective action in spite of internal debates about how to define their interests (Friedman, 2000b, pp. 7-8 & 10). Even though the corporatist regime marginalized women, the prolonged period of liberal democratic consolidation in Venezuela opened up spaces for women's political organizing in which they could safely develop and fine-tune their strategies for engagement with the Venezuelan state (Rakowski, 2003, p. 401).

When women activists did first unite as women across party lines after the transition to democracy in 1968 at the First Seminar for the Evaluation of Women in Venezuela (Friedman, 2000b, pp. 134-135), they drew attention to women and work—both their paid and unpaid work—and the barriers to women's incorporation into paid labor. They made demands of the state to recognize care work and provide socialized care services that would enable them to participate in paid labor and enjoy the same labor rights as men. They also called for men to share in household labor ("'Mujer Hazte Presente.' Conclusiones y Resoluciones. Primer Seminario para la Evaluación de la Condición de la Mujer en Venezuela," 1968).

While no immediate gains came from the First Seminar, women's work and double shift emerged as central themes for the women's movement's platform of engagement with the state, which it has taken up continually since then—throughout *Puntofijismo* (until 1998), into the National Constituent Assembly (1999), and under the Bolivarian regime (1999-the present). The women's movement's focus on work since the 1970s has been on women's paid labor and reconciliation between paid and unpaid labor so as to facilitate women's equality in the labor market ("Second Interview with Adicea Castillo," 5 October 2011). However, throughout this time, the issue of homemakers' unpaid labor, its value for society, and how to protect homemakers has remained on the women's movement's agenda—albeit more often as a secondary focus.

Indeed, Venezuelan state recognition of unpaid housework did not begin in 1999 with the Bolivarian Constitution, but emerged during the height of the *Puntofijismo*, when

Yolanda Poleo de Baez, a judge and leader of the Venezuelan Federation of Women Lawyers' (*Federación Venezolana de Abogadas* or FEVA),³³ set the judicial precedent in 1975 that unpaid housework had an economic value.³⁴ This precedent, which could have had a landmark significance for the Venezuelan women's movement and the struggle for gender equality, was not popularly known nor disseminated, as it was set before the women's movement had solidified and strengthened ("Second Interview with Gioconda Espina," 29 September 2011). Yet it did inform the future demands of women's movement leaders for state recognition of unpaid housework and social protection for homemakers. It also inspired the *Círculos Femeninos Populares* (CFP)³⁵ – the Popular Women's Circles—to create and carry out a central project with popular sector women on valuing their own unpaid labor ("Interview with Juana Delgado," 19 August 2011; Interview with María Auxiliadora Torrealba," 28 September 2011).

The mid-1970s marked an important political conjuncture for Venezuelan women's rights activists, as international attention around and legitimation of women's rights, promoted by the UN Decade on Women (1975-1985), coincided with Venezuelan

³³ In her leadership role in FEVA, Yolanda Poleo de Baez was instrumental later in advancing women's rights in the 1982 reform of the Civil Code and the 1990 reform of the labor law. In both her roles as judge and legislative activist, Poleo de Baez worked within and from outside the state to advance women's gender interests. She carried forward the demand for state recognition of unpaid housework in particular in her organizing for the reform of the Civil Code (Poleo de Baez, 12 July 1977) and later in her organizing for the reform of the labor law (see discussion below on the reform organizing process).

³⁴ In *Martín Hilario Toledo vs. Compañía Transporte Colectivo del Tuy C.A.*, Judge Poleo de Baez (11 November 1975) found that the bus company with which the plaintiff's wife was traveling and whose driver caused an accident which resulted in her death was responsible not only for moral damages to the plaintiff and his children but also for material damages compensating for the replacement cost of her lost unpaid housework that she performed full-time as a homemaker. In her judgment, Poleo de Baez (11 November 1975, p. 18) stated that "in the Venezuelan family, the wife who does not undertake a paid activity outside of the home, fulfills her obligations in the maintenance of the home, the children and the husband with the multiple labors that she executes "full-time" in the home and that generate goods and services. On the subject of labor and particularly in the working class, it is judged that such goods and services, product of this 'disguised' or 'invisible' work increases the salary produced by the husband and improves the level of life of the family, a salary that would not be enough if the family had to invest in paying for such goods and services."

³⁵ The CFP were founded in the 1970s and grew nationally to become the largest politically autonomous women's organization during *Puntofijismo* (Friedman, 2000b, p. 169). The circles organized popular sector women using popular education and non-hierarchical methods and focused on their immediate needs and representing their political interests.

women's growing dissatisfaction with political parties and the rise of middle class and popular sector women's organizations (Rakowski, 2003, pp. 390-391). As a result, many Venezuelan women activists formed non-hierarchical, non-centralized alliances across their political and class affiliations because "they concluded that the only way to empower themselves was to join forces as women. Over time, this became known as a strategy of unity in diversity, focusing on common goals and avoiding issues that were divisive" (Rakowski, 2003, p. 391) in order to make effective demands within the state, political society, and civil society.

Venezuelan women's rights activists successfully organized around the demand for a national state women's agency,³⁶ which was founded by president Carlos Andrés Pérez in 1974 and strengthened when president Luis Herrera Campins transformed it into the Ministry for Women's Participation in Development in 1979. Their organizing across partisan and class lines through the 1970s and into the early 1980s culminated in the inclusion of women's gender interests of gender equality in family decision making and equal legal status and treatment of all children (whether born in or out of wedlock) in the reform of the Civil Code in 1982 (Friedman, 2000b, pp. 174-176).³⁷ Their victory in uniting to reform the Civil Code emboldened them as they drew lessons from their past organizing experiences as well as the political opportunity of the 1985 UN Conference on Women to create a national umbrella network of non-governmental organizations—the *Coordinadora de Organizaciones No-Gubernamentales de Mujeres* (CONG), or the Coordinating Committee of Women's Non-Governmental Organizations.³⁸ Women

³⁶ Friedman (2000b, p. 145) explains that their history of exclusion in the democratic transition revealed to women's rights advocates "the need for an agency that would promote women's issues within the powerful executive branch. Because Venezuelan political life was to a great extent carried out through semi-corporatist bargaining, women recognized that they had little chance at promoting substantial gender-based legal or social reform without such a resource."

³⁷ Women's rights activists successfully organized for congressional discussion of Civil Code reform by being the first social or political group ever to take advantage of the popular initiative article in the 1961 Constitution, which stipulated that a bill could be directly introduced to Congress through a proposal signed by 20,000 citizens. Women's rights activists collected over 35,000 signatures in support of their reform initiative (Friedman, 2000b, pp. 177-178).

³⁸ The CONG was a politically autonomous network incorporating "feminist, professional, popular, labor, political solidarity... party-linked, religious, and health groups" (CONG (1988) as cited in Friedman, 2000b, p. 203). At its peak, around 30 organizations were active members in the CONG (Gioconda Espina as cited in Rakowski, 2003, p. 404).

activists within and outside the state used UN conferences, organizations, reports, and legal mechanisms, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to fuel their coalition building and legitimate their demands. The model of conjunctural coalition building that women's rights activists used and which they honed during the mid- to late-1980s, rejected clientelist forms of interest mediation and instead allowed women within and outside the state "to work in concert in particular times around particular issues without demanding organizational or ideological coherence" (Friedman, 2000b, p. 284).

The institutionalization of the Venezuelan state women's agency in the 1980s and influence of the national and international women's movements enabled further work on state recognition of unpaid housework to be undertaken. The Ministry for the Participation of Women in Development commissioned the Central Bank of Venezuela (BCV) to carry out a study to determine the amount that unpaid housework contributed to the country's GDP (Caldera, 15 February 1981). Using both the replacement and opportunity costs of women's unpaid household labor in cases of then current gender wage gaps and in the ideal case of gender wage equity, the study found that including women's unpaid labor would increase the country's GDP anywhere between 20 and 63 per cent. It concluded that even the lowest estimation of the value of women's unpaid labor equaled the contribution of petroleum production to the national economy (Banco Central de Venezuela, 1983, pp. 19-20). The BCV study also consisted of a time-use study with households in Caracas and the interior of the county, which found an overwhelming pattern of a traditional domestic division of labor with women almost exclusively performing unpaid household labor,³⁹ even in cases where women had been incorporated into the paid labor force. Yet, like the Poleo de Baez judicial sentence that preceded it, the BCV study was not popularly known nor disseminated.⁴⁰ Adicea Castillo, a feminist economist and long-time women's movement activist, who pushed for the

³⁹ The contribution of men to unpaid household labor in 87 per cent of the representative sample of Venezuelan households was found to be "marginal" or "insignificant" (Banco Central de Venezuela, 1983, p. 71).

⁴⁰ The study in its entirety was never published, but a shorter, academic version of the study was written by Lourdes Urdaneta and first published by the BCV in 1986 as *Participación económica de la mujer y distribución del ingreso*. The BCV published a second edition of Urdaneta's book in 2006.

study's undertaking, publication, and dissemination and used it in her academic work, notes that the lack of dissemination of the study shows that "these themes were not validated neither by the academy nor by the upper-level [state] organs" ("First Interview with Adicea Castillo," 22 July 2011). Yet the study did manage to inspire women's movement activists to continue throughout the 1980s and 1990s to call for the inclusion of unpaid housework in the Venezuelan state's GDP accounting and for broader recognition of the value of women's unpaid household work to the country (Caldera, 21 September 1986; Comité "Juntas por Venezuela Camino a Beijing", 1995; Ferrara, 1989).

The Venezuelan women's movement took advantage of the political opportunity structure of the mid- to late-1980s, when women's rights discourse was legitimated in international and Latin American regional forums and within the Venezuelan state (Friedman, 2000b, pp. 197-198), to organize and lobby for the inclusion of women's gender interests in the reform of the 1936 Organic Labor Law. As this campaign began in 1985, women's rights activists in civil society and the state were brought together by the National Women's Office and agreed on the need to address workplace discrimination against working women and protections for working mothers. Yet they disagreed on whom the labor law should protect, and the disagreement revolved around class differences, primarily around whether domestic workers and home-based workers should be entitled to the same labor-based social protection that the middle class and the formal working class enjoyed.

The CONG then decided to draft its own proposal to ensure that the perspectives of women outside the state could be included in the reform process (Friedman, 2000b, pp. 220-221). Judge, lawyer, and FEVA leader, Yolanda Poleo de Baez, who had previously set the judicial precedent that unpaid housework has a socio-economic value, facilitated the CONG proposal generation process. The CONG proposal included the demands for equal labor rights for domestic workers and social security for domestic workers, home-based workers, and homemakers (CONG de Mujeres, 16 July 1986; El Comité de Mujeres Ucevistas "Cipriana Velásquez", 1985; Las Organizaciones No Gubernamentales, 18 February 1986). Both the *Círculos Femeninos Populares* and the

*Red Todas Juntas*⁴¹ (All (Women) Together Network), two popular sector women's organizations, organized both within and outside the CONG to demand social protection for domestic workers, homeworkers, and homemakers in particular in the reform of the labor law (Círculos Femeninos Populares, 1986; La Red Nacional de Apoyo de Organizaciones Populares de Mujeres "Todas Juntas", 1986).

The final draft of the labor law reform passed by the congress in 1990 banned sex-based discrimination and established increased maternity protections for working women. Yet the dominance of middle- and upper-class women in the women's movement reform effort precluded the extension of equal labor-based social protection to domestic workers and homeworkers (Friedman, 2000b, pp. 223-229). In addition, during the reform process the women's movement activists and organizations who were demanding social security for homemakers dropped this demand when they realized that that in the context of an ascendant neoliberalism, the *Puntofijista* state and authorities would not accept it ("First Interview with Gioconda Espina," 21 July 2011; First Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 23 August 2011). Yet, just as the labor law was about to be passed, the CONG issued a statement noting its support for the final draft of the reform and their determination to carry on with its demands for universal social security for domestic workers, homeworkers, and homemakers into the future (La Coordinadora de ONG de Mujeres, 24 October 1990).

2.4. *Puntofijismo* in Crisis

The Latin American debt crisis and the fall in world oil prices in the 1980s unraveled the oil-subsidized consensus in Venezuela. Together, they precipitated the country's entry into a period of long-term economic decline and its shift from import-

⁴¹ *Red Todas Juntas* was a network of popular sector women and popular women's organizations from Caracas and the interior of Venezuela, which was established to explicitly articulate the needs of popular sector women. According to one of the co-founders of *Todas Juntas*, the network was founded to represent popular sector women and their interests because the members of the CONG were predominantly middle class women. One of *Todas Juntas'* central organizing focuses was domestic workers. The network also worked with popular sector homemakers and on conscientizing them about the value of their unpaid labor ("Interview with *Red Todas Juntas* Co-founder," 19 July 2012).

substitution industrialization to market liberalization and from a corporatist to a neoliberal citizenship regime. Social, economic, and political cleavages subsequently were exacerbated. In response to its debt burden and pressures from international financial institutions, the Venezuelan government introduced a series of structural economic changes from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. These policy changes redirected much of the budget from social and economic development to debt re-servicing, thus reducing the state's role in social protection and triggering the expansion of the informal economy, weakening organized labour, increasing the cost of living (Ellner, 2008, pp. 91-92), decreasing real incomes (Coronil & Skurski, 2006, p. 87), and widening income inequalities (Roberts, 2003, p. 60). The socio-economic crisis in Venezuela was both more severe and more prolonged than elsewhere in Latin America (Lander, 2005; López Maya, et al., 2002, p. 26), evidenced by the fact that both poverty and extreme poverty rates at the end of the 1990s had increased almost three times from their rates at the beginning of the 1980s. By the end of the 1990s, almost half of all Venezuelan families were poor and more than a quarter were extremely poor (López Maya, et al., 2002, p. 192). The “material bases of consent that undergirded both the elite political pacts and the class compromise” (Roberts, 2003, p. 58) of *Puntofijismo* thus decomposed as the nation was split into “an internationally connected upper class and its local associates..., and an impoverished majority” that included an ever-shrinking middle class (Coronil, 1997, pp. 383-385).

Under this shift to neoliberalism, Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez suddenly implemented a structural adjustment package,⁴² termed “*El Gran Viraje*” or “The Great Turnaround,”⁴³ in 1989 in compliance with IMF mandates and without any

⁴² This package included the elimination of subsidies for basic goods—including the doubling of petrol prices—, the elimination of price controls, unification of exchange rates, fluctuation of the currency, lowering of tariffs, deregulation of interest rates, increases to the prices of government services (Coronil & Skurski, 2006, p. 89), and the introduction of a value-added tax (Grindle, 2000, p. 71).

⁴³ The introduction of this structural adjustment program was indeed a great turnaround, as Carlos Andrés Pérez had campaigned for the presidency on an anti-austerity platform and assumed the presidency only two weeks before he announced this orthodox neoliberal shock program. It was also a “great turnaround” in a historic sense, as Carlos Andrés Pérez had introduced the concept of a “Great Venezuela” under his first presidency (1974-1979) with his import substitution industrialization, modernization, and social investment policies, financed by the oil boom.

national consultation or debate. On February 27 and 28, 1989, Venezuelans from popular sectors rose up in reaction to these reforms and the state responded with massive repression by the military.⁴⁴ These events, which came to be known, as the “*Caracazo*,” signaled the delegitimation of *Puntofijismo*. As George Ciccariello-Maher (2013b) asserts, the uprising of the popular classes and their violent repression by the state both “exploded the prevailing ‘myth of harmony’” (p. 13) and “revealed the bankruptcy and the violence of the existing system for all to see” (p. 89). These watershed events of 1989 marked the bursting of the magical veneer that had sustained *Puntofijismo* since the 1960s.

While the *Caracazo* emerged as a direct reaction to neoliberal reforms shaped by global forces and international financial institutions, it also constituted “the culmination of building pressures” from popular sectors that had experienced steady socio-economic decline and lacked access to channels for their interests to be heard by those in power (López Maya, et al., 2002, pp. 199-200). The *Caracazo* illustrated that the corporatist institutions and party-based and clientelist forms of interest mediation that had been constructed and entrenched under *Puntofijismo* to contain class conflict could no longer do so. *Puntofijista* institutions proved incapable of adapting to the socio-economic changes in the Venezuelan population, which occurred with the country’s experience of prolonged economic crisis and shift to neoliberalism, and of incorporating the interests of the marginalized popular classes that were growing with the onset of neoliberalism (Ellner, 2003, p. 12; Levine, 2006, pp. 60-61; Roberts, 2003).

The Venezuelan government reacted to the *Caracazo* with a series of economic and political measures in an effort to restore the legitimacy of the *Puntofijista* system. It re-oriented social policies from universal to targeted measures in order to cushion the costs of structural adjustment for the poorest sectors of society (Gómez Calcaño, 1998, pp. 218-219). Although the Venezuelan government increased its social policy expenditures in the early 1990s, these post-*Caracazo* measures were incapable of compensating for income losses resulting from the rise in unemployment, decreases in

⁴⁴ Estimates of deaths of civilians in the *Caracazo* range from several hundred to several thousand, in addition to several thousand wounded civilians.

real wages, the elimination of subsidies, and rising inflation that occurred with structural adjustment (Gómez Calcaño, 1998, p. 188; López Maya, et al., 2002). Ellner (2008, p. 89) and López Maya et al (2002, p. 185) contend that Venezuelans were particularly resistant to accepting this neoliberal restructuring of the state and the economy precisely because it violated expectations of entitlement to redistribution of oil rents and ongoing social protection that *Puntofijista* magical state had inculcated in them. Following the *Caracazo*, as living conditions continued to worsen, protests by popular sectors experiencing the brunt of structural adjustment and whose interests were not incorporated in formal political institutions escalated throughout Venezuela and state repression continued (Ciccariello-Maher, 2013b, p. 73).⁴⁵ This combination of ongoing structural and physical violence by the state made “increasingly public the view that people had been betrayed by their leaders and that democracy had become a façade behind which an elite had used the state for its own advantage” (Coronil, 1997, p. 378). No longer inducing fantasies of collective integration, the Venezuelan state could not secure the compliance of the majority of its subjects.

On the political front, the Venezuelan government attempted to resolve its legitimacy crisis rendered visible by the *Caracazo* and subsequent protests through a series of initiatives aimed at democratizing representation in Venezuelan political institutions. Later in 1989, the government enacted political decentralization reforms, which expanded Venezuelans’ political citizenship by enabling them to elect their leaders at local and state levels. However, these reforms were top-down political projects, which “did not deal with the structural and cultural determinants of exclusion and political illegitimacy” (Lander, 2005, p. 28). At the same time, the decentralization reforms weakened AD’s and COPEI’s control over sections of society that had been traditionally organized by and/ or associated with them through clientelist channels. The neoliberal austerity measures also diminished the capacity of the Venezuelan political system to distribute patronage benefits and thus further contributed to the weakening of the main

⁴⁵ Both Sanjuán (2002, pp. 91-92) and Fernandes (2010, pp. 62-63 & 76) also note that the state increased its repressive force in the *barrios* in the 1990s as it retreated from its interventionist and social provisioning roles and gangs and the drug trade grew to fill this vacuum. As Elisabeth Jay Friedman (personal communication) concludes, the Venezuelan state replaced its magic wand with a baton.

political parties' centralized control over society (Grindle, 2000, p. 170; Levine, 2006). These elite-imposed political and administrative decentralization reforms constituted a contradictory process that contained the conditions to subvert the *Puntofijista* regime. Even as they were imposed from above, they served to further destabilize political parties' grip on society and clientelist forms of interest mediation.

At the same time as the Venezuelan government enacted decentralization reforms, it installed a Special Bicameral Constitutional Reform Commission, which initially began to draft a group of amendments to the 1961 Constitution. During this reform process, the Chamber of Deputies highlighted the need to incorporate participatory democracy in the reform process (Castillo & De Salvatierra, 2000, p. 80) as a means to resolve the crisis of political representation. In February 1992, the *Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario-200* (MBR-200), or the Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement-200, which emerged from within the military and was headed by the mid-level military officer, Hugo Chávez, staged a coup attempt. The attempt failed, and the movement's leaders, including Chávez, were arrested.⁴⁶ Afterwards, the MBR-200 published a document explaining its motivations and its call to return sovereignty to the Venezuelan people through an automatic national referendum for the convocation of a national constituent assembly to re-write the constitution (Jiménez, 2000, p. 93). This was a position that with a number of civil society organizations marginalized by *Puntofijismo* shared (García-Guadilla, 2003, pp. 184-185; López Maya, 2003, p. 81). The bicameral commission responded to these threats by trying to speed up its work (Maingon, Pérez Baralt, & Sonntag, 2000, p. 93), but AD and COPEI suspended it later in 1992. AD and COPEI therefore foreclosed the possibility of achieving constitutional reform within the *Puntofijista* framework. They furthered the conditions that facilitated their own demise by creating opportunities for new and anti-establishment and anti-party political actors, such as Chávez and the MBR-200 and urban social movements, to emerge to fill the vacuum in political legitimacy and representation (García-Guadilla,

⁴⁶ While the *Caracazo* signaled a fundamental break between large sectors of society and the state, the 1992 MBR coup attempt signaled a fundamental break between significant (lower and middle) sectors of the military and the state. And the relationship between the *Caracazo* and the 1992 coup attempt was dialogical, as the MBR noted that they resented the state calling on the military during the *Caracazo* to repress the popular sectors, from which many of them came and with whom they identified.

2003; Levine, 2006).⁴⁷ Societal support thereby grew for the MBR-200's call for the immediate convocation of a constituent assembly (Maingon, et al., 2000, p. 93) as the only way to resolve the social, economic, political, and representation crises that plagued Venezuela in the neoliberal era.

2.5. The 1999 National Constituent Assembly: A Gendered Political Opening to Reframe the Gendered Distribution of Power

The MBR-200, its electoral front—the MVR, or the Movement of the Fifth Republic—, and their leader, Hugo Chávez, emerged from outside the established dual political party system and capitalized on popular sentiment against the *Puntofijista* political parties. They centered their organizing and Chávez's successful presidential campaign in 1998 on the call to convoke an *Asamblea Nacional Constituyente* (ANC), or National Constituent Assembly, in order to transform Venezuelan democracy from representation toward participation and resolve these systemic crises. Chávez also framed the convocation of an ANC and the institutional overhaul that it would enable as a necessary prerequisite for transforming the state's role in the economy from a facilitator of neoliberalism to a more social and interventionist function.

While working class and poor Venezuelan women bore the brunt of the shocks set off by neoliberalism (Castillo & De Salvatierra, 2000, pp. 77-78; Friedman, 2000b, pp. 235 & 239-240) because of persistent gender inequalities in productive and reproductive spheres,⁴⁸ the mutually reinforcing crises also provided a gendered political opening for women's mobilization and recognition as an interest group (Rakowski, 2003,

⁴⁷ Five years before the 1998 presidential elections that brought Hugo Chávez to power, the Venezuelan electorate already signalled its desire for an anti-establishment alternative to AD and COPEI by electing Rafael Caldera of the new *Convergencia* electoral coalition as president of the country.

⁴⁸ These authors show that gender wage gaps persisted and women tended to congregate at the bottom of occupational hierarchies and experience higher rates of unemployment during the neoliberal period. In addition, they note high rates of female-headed households, which characterized half of poor households in the country.

p. 390).⁴⁹ During the 1998 presidential election campaign, women from around the country organized together in support of the call for a new constitution (Jiménez, 2000, p. 20). After he was elected in December 1998, President Chávez fulfilled his promise to prioritize the convocation of the ANC in his first year in office.

Yet Hugo Chávez's campaign and election threatened the women's movement's previous gains vis-à-vis the state. Chávez showed very little interest in women's issues, initially named no women to his government, and his administration threatened to severely cut the budget of the then current formation of the state women's agency—the *Consejo Nacional de la Mujer* (CONAMU), or National Woman's Council (Rakowski, 2003, pp. 396-397). Nor did the MVR initially promote women's issues ("Second Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 14 September 2011).

The potential for retrogression in women's rights, institutions, and power therefore "galvanized women into a new phase of coalition building and strategizing" (Rakowski, 2003, p. 396). Venezuelan women's movement activists turned their initial lack of representation in the state heading into a watershed constituent assembly process into an opportunity to organize women and mobilize them in defense of their gender interests. A core group of women's movement activists⁵⁰ united to defend CONAMU and propose that María León, who was a former member of the guerilla movement, a trade union leader, a Venezuelan Communist Party leader, and co-founder of the CONG and ongoing activist within it, be named to the presidency of CONAMU (García Maldonado, et al., 28 January 1999). León's proven background and ideological

⁴⁹ Friedman (2000b, pp. 238-248) points out two disparate tendencies in civil society women's organizing during the 1990s under *Puntofijismo*: increasing organization amongst popular sector women, especially the Popular Women's Circles; and decreasing cross-class organization amongst women, especially through the CONG. With the case of the CONG's organizing for the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women in the context of a national crisis, she shows how UN processes on women's rights, which activists had previously used as frames to legitimate their demands, became venues for placing into relief growing disarticulations between middle class and popular women (Friedman, 2000b, pp. 248-252). In this sense, the mutually reinforcing crises constituted both threats to and opportunities for women's organizing, thereby showing how central context effects and class can be on women's organization as an interest group.

⁵⁰ This group included professional, academic, union and popular sector women—an example of a reignited women's conjunctural coalition building under a new but yet-to-be-defined political regime.

positioning within the Venezuelan Left and recent activism within the women's department of the MVR gave her political clout within the *Chavista* movement. Chávez, in turn, appointed her to the presidency of CONAMU in 1999 and restored the agency's funding. He then transformed it into the National Woman's Institute (INaMujer) in 2000, as had been stipulated by the 1993 Law of Equal Opportunities.⁵¹ This development not only preserved the state women's institution, but also "strengthened women's position in the government and guaranteed a hearing for feminist demands" (Rakowski, 2003, p. 397). In addition to León, several key feminist leaders, who had previously worked outside the state, began to enter the state— including the ANC— but did not change their ideological position against gender discrimination; they transferred their bases of struggle for women's rights from civil society to state spaces (Espina & Rakowski, 2002).

Once Hugo Chávez assumed the presidency in February 1999, the convocation of the ANC became the centerpiece of his first year in office,⁵² while also transforming how Venezuelans could engage in processes of constitutional change. In April 1999, Venezuelan voters participated in a national consultative referendum in which the majority voted for the convocation of an ANC "with the aim of transforming the State and creating a new juridical order that allows for the effective functioning of a social and participatory democracy" ("Gaceta Oficial No. 36.364," 1999). The passage of this referendum also included the electorate's authorization of Chávez's proposed procedures for the election of ANC representatives, which entailed a simple majority

⁵¹ The 1993 Law of Equal Opportunities stipulated that the state must found a permanent national state agency for women's rights. The implementation of this clause would therefore ensure that the agency's fate no longer depend on the will and priorities of the president, and thus be "subject to the vagaries of state expansion and reduction" and "constant structural reorganization" which had marked its trajectory since its founding in the 1970s (Friedman, 2000a, pp. 73-74).

⁵² The first several months of Chávez's presidency were marked by several legal challenges in the Supreme Court over the constitutionality of the national consultative referendum decreed by Chávez in terms of whether and how to convoke the ANC. One of the legal challenges centered on the procedures for the ANC, as prior to his assumption to power, Chávez had appointed and convened a Presidential Commission for the Constituent Assembly, which drafted the procedures for the election of representatives to the assembly (Combellas, 2005, p. 771). While the Supreme Court ruled that President Chávez could not alone decide the procedures for the ANC, it allowed Chávez to ask the electorate in the national consultative referendum if it would authorize him to set the procedures for the ANC that were partially modified by the National Electoral Council.

system in which candidates would run as individuals and not as representatives of political parties.⁵³ In July, voters elected their representatives to the ANC. The simple majority system combined with the opposition's fragmentation⁵⁴ enabled candidates aligned with Chávez's electoral bloc, *Polo Patriótico*, or the Patriotic Pole⁵⁵, to gain 94.5 per cent of the seats in the ANC, even though they only won 62 per cent of the popular vote (García-Guadilla & Hurtado, 2000). This electoral outcome gave the Patriotic Pole disproportionate influence over ANC decisions and opposition interests little power in ANC debates. As García-Guadilla and Hurtado (2000) and Segura and Bejarano (2013) conclude, this disproportionately favorable electoral outcome for the Patriotic Pole also meant that there would largely be no need for extensive negotiations within the ANC.⁵⁶ This result, in turn, would assist the ANC in drafting the constitution within the six-month time period it was legally allotted to do so by the popular referendum.

Chávez's call and the mandate from the electorate for the creation of a "social and participatory democracy" framed the constituent moment, how people could participate in it, and what demands would be considered legitimate within it. This constituent moment was embedded in a longer process in which not only *Puntofijista* political parties had lost legitimacy, but the concept of political parties had lost legitimacy as well (Molina & Pérez, 2004). Yet the emerging dominant concept of participation of the sovereign people interpellated the Venezuelan people as protagonists in the making of their own constitution. Thus, popular participation was framed as both the process and

⁵³ While both questions received over 80 per cent approval from voters, 62 per cent of the electorate abstained from voting in the referendum (García-Guadilla & Hurtado, 16-18 March 2000, p. 19).

⁵⁴ The ratio of candidates opposing *Chavismo* to candidates aligned with the Patriotic Pole was approximately 8.5 to 1 (this ratio did range considerably across regional electoral districts) (own calculation based on statistics provided by García-Guadilla & Hurtado, 16-18 March 2000, pp. 21-22).

⁵⁵ The Patriotic Pole did not officially run candidates, but Chávez promoted unofficial lists of candidates (Segura & Bejarano, 2013, p. 20).

⁵⁶ This is not to imply that there was not ideological divergence within the Patriotic Pole delegates to the ANC. Indeed, at this time, the Patriotic Pole was a pluralistic coalition of actors, organizations, and parties. This pluralism was reflected in some ANC debates around substantive issues. Yet all of them generally identified with Chávez's platform for regime change against neoliberalism and toward instituting a social and participatory democracy. At this same time, as will be shown below, the Patriotic Pole's programmatic convergence did not entail consensus on the need for gender mainstreaming throughout the constitutional text as well as specific recognition of unpaid housework and homemakers.

product of the constituent moment, signifying a fundamental and revolutionary rupture with the past of elite and party control of constitution making and governance. The inclusion of formerly marginalized groups without substantial contestation with the political opposition within the assembly characterized the Bolivarian constitution making process (Segura & Bejarano, 2013). This meant that while the majority of ANC delegates were not open to participation by and demands emerging from *Puntofijista* parties and organizations controlled by them, they were open to demands from organizations not specifically associated with the *Puntofijista* parties. This dominant concept of participation within the ANC that excluded the old elite and instead included sectors previously marginalized by them (García-Guadilla & Mallén, 2012, p. 81) represented a political opening for women's demands to be seen and heard. In addition, the mandate to construct a social democracy and to expand rather than contract the welfare state represented a political opening for demands for women's social rights. Within the political opportunity of the ANC, both concepts of participatory democracy and social democracy constituted master frames through which women's rights activists could legitimate their demands in the ANC process.

The ANC delegates treated popular participation in the constituent process as a mandate, and resolved to create participatory mechanisms to gather and channel people's proposals for the new constitution from across the country (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, 1999d, pp. 288-289). Once the ANC began, the assembly created a Commission of Citizen Participation to promote popular participation in the constituent process and gathered and systematized proposals received from around Venezuela through a plurality of mechanisms (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, Comisión de Participación Ciudadana, September 1999). And Chávez urged the other constituent commissions to listen to everyone so that "all Venezuelans feel that they are

participating and protagonizing this revolutionary process” (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, 1999a, p. 40).⁵⁷

Yet a fundamental tension between popular participation and speed also marked the constitution-making process. The referendum mandate allotted the ANC six months to complete the new constitution. From the onset of the ANC in August 1999, President Chávez urged the assembly both to act swiftly and enable popular participation in this time-bound process (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, 1999a, p. 40). Ongoing conflict between the *Puntofijista* elite and the emerging *Chavista* elite also constrained the extent of popular participation in the ANC. Debates around the ANC’s interpretation of its own powers and its conflicts with the constituted powers—namely the judiciary and the congress—occupied the bulk of the first month of the assembly’s deliberations,⁵⁸ thus detracting delegates’ time and attention from popular consultation and the drafting of

⁵⁷ García-Guadilla and Mallén (2012) explain how the dominant conception of the Venezuelan people’s sovereignty was abstract and the constituent powers that the ANC leadership employed in the ANC process limited regionally-elected delegates’ consultation with and representation of their constituents. Once elected, some delegates invoked their representative status as representing the nation as a whole, while others insisted on more pluralistic representation by returning to their regions to continue consulting with the constituents whom they were elected to represent in order to continue representing their constituents’ particular interests. García-Guadilla and Mallén (2012) conclude that this dominant emphasis on national representation, in addition to the limited time to engage in popular consultation, meant that centrally/ nationally organized groups were more likely to be consulted by ANC delegates.

⁵⁸ These conflicts were able to emerge because of the ambiguous language contained within the polling bases in the April referendum (Abbott, 2011). While prior to the referendum, the Supreme Court had ruled that the 1961 constitution would remain in force until the new constitution was ratified, the National Electoral Council maintained in one of the polling bases in the referendum that the ANC was an “ordinary power that gathers together popular sovereignty” (“Gaceta Oficial No. 36.669,” 25 March 1999). The majority of ANC delegates chose to recognize the ANC itself as possessing supra-constitutional powers granted to it by the sovereign people in the approval of the April referendum. This interpretation entailed conceptualizing that the ANC’s powers as prior to and above the constituted powers, thus enabling it to modify and transform the existing constitutional order before popular approval and enactment of the new constitution. Using this interpretation, the majority of ANC delegates voted in August 1999 to pass statutes and decrees declaring the subordination of all public powers to it, the reorganization of all organs of public power, a state of emergency for the judicial power and its subsequent reorganization, and limitations to the legislative power at national, state, and municipal levels. A bloc of congressional representatives from parties opposing *Chavismo* decided to challenge the ANC’s assumption of powers in the Supreme Court. The ensuing conflict over the ANC’s powers culminated in a violent confrontation between pro-government and opposition forces outside the legislative palace in Caracas at the end of August 1999.

constitutional articles. Once the first draft of the new constitution was complete in mid-October 1999, Chávez urged the assembly to complete the drafting process within a month so that the final draft of the constitution could go to popular referendum before the end of 1999. The ANC delegates stuck to the president's directive by first conducting one round of discussion of every draft article and then swiftly concluding deliberation on the draft constitution by discussing and voting on blocks of chapters instead of each individual article within them. These procedures enabled the ANC to approve the final draft of the constitution by mid-November 1999.

Women's movement activists united to organize around the National Constituent Assembly, as they were clear that they did not want to be marginalized in the new regime as they had been in the formation of *Puntofijismo*. They saw the constituent process as a gendered political opportunity to make their interests central to the construction of the new regime. And women's rights activists organized around the idea that the only way to overcome their marginalization in the new constitutional framework was by mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout the constitution⁵⁹ and not just organizing for the insertion of a few specific women's rights in it.⁶⁰ This way gender interests would be a fundamental axis and not a footnote within the new constitution. They termed this strategy making women's gender interests visible ("*visibilización*"). As Marelis Pérez Marcano, a delegate to the ANC advocating women's rights within the assembly, explains:

If the new political system that is longed to be created is a democratic system—a full democracy—women's rights had to be made visible in

⁵⁹ For the women's rights activists organizing around the ANC, mainstreaming a gender perspective entailed not only awareness of how all proposals for the new constitution would affect women and gender relations, but also recognizing the female gender alongside the male gender throughout the constitutional text as all subjects are gendered in the Spanish language.

⁶⁰ For example, this strategy was tactfully employed by both the CONG and CONAMU in their promotion of women's rights proposals and conjunctural coalition building for the ANC. The CONG entitled its published set of proposals that included but went far beyond women's rights to contain what they saw as necessary rights, duties, and institutions in the new republic from a popular perspective: "*Las Mujeres Discuten un Nuevo País: Su Aporte a la Constituyente*"—translated as "Women Discuss a New Country: Their Contribution to the Constituent Process." CONAMU entitled its forums and published proposals supported by civil and political women's organizations, "*Una Visión de País con Ojos de Mujer*"—loosely translated as "A Vision of the Country from a Woman's Perspective."

that whole space in an integral way... it meant that we were not entering through the back door asking for concessions, but that it was really essential that women's rights would be able to be incorporated in the constitution as part of this new democracy ("First Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 23 August 2011).

Making women's gender interests visible throughout the constituent process signified rendering visible gender issues and women's contributions to the country that political society had traditionally rendered invisible by relegating them to the private sphere. Women's rights leaders, activists, and organizations continually pressed for the re-drawing of boundaries between private and public spheres, specifically invoking household issues as issues of public concern in which the state should intervene to promote the wellbeing of women.

Women's rights activists' strategy of not narrowly defining women's gender interests also incorporated an intersectional perspective of gender, ethnicity, and class. Part of the call for making visible women's gender interests from the household-level up revolved around the everyday needs of popular sector women and their experiences of struggling to maintain their households as a result of the combination of their gender and their class. In addition, women's rights activists reached out to and worked in solidarity with other social organizations (not specifically working on women's rights) generating proposals for and organizing around the ANC (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, Subcomisión Familia, Mujer, Infancia, Juventud y Anciano, 1999b). This strategy strengthened support for women's rights demands, as it served to position women's rights as part of the broader, general popular struggle for recognition, representation, and redistribution of power and resources to previously marginalized sectors in the new regime.

Women's rights activists seized this opportunity to potentially re-found state-society relations from a gender perspective by deploying and adapting the conjunctural coalition building model they had developed under *Puntofijismo* to suit this landmark constituent process. They utilized their previously developed organizations, networks, tactics, and agenda to generate proposals and consensus around them, as well as to organize within and across their organizations at multiple territorial and political levels—from base, community levels, to state levels, to national levels, to Latin American

regional levels. Unlike the general drive to exclude actors associated with *Puntofijismo*, which characterized the constituent process, women's rights activists united across all political tendencies and included women leaders associated with the old regime⁶¹ in the struggle to achieve women's rights and visibility in the new regime. This is because they understood that, in addition to programmatic unity, they would have greater power if more women participated. As María Auxiliadora Torrealba from the CFP reflects: "There was there a whole solidarity, really a sisterhood... with a lot of respect... There were differences of course—nor was it heaven— but differences that could be settled on... The common... themes and priorities could be agreed on, and very easily common spaces arose. And because of this, we were able to sign a document together..." ("Interview with María Auxiliadora Torrealba," 28 September 2011). Unlike other sectors, but drawing directly on their own history of mobilization, women's rights activists' sense of gender solidarity enabled them to unite across partisan divides during the constituent process.

Some women's rights activists also seized new organizational opportunities in this new context of power reconfiguration. Women's movement activists within the Patriotic Pole formed the Constituent Front of Women From the V Republic Movement at the end of 1998 (Rakowski, 2003, p. 398). At the beginning of 1999, women's movement activists within the Homeland for All (*Patria Para Todos*) party, which fell under the Patriotic Pole, formed the Manuela Saenz Women's movement as a Bolivarian, anti-neoliberal movement incorporating popular sector women (Baute, April 1999).

Women's organizing activities to push for the recognition and representation of their gender interests in the constituent process proliferated both prior to and during the ANC. They saw the ANC not just as a moment or the generation of a constitutional product. They also understood it as a *process* wherein they would need to continually unite and make themselves visible in order to begin to affect the changes in gender relations and state-society relations that they desired. As Nora Castañeda, a former

⁶¹ Two former heads of the state women's agency appointed by AD presidents, an AD-appointed Latin American Parliament representative, an AD congressional representative and a COPEI congressional representative counted amongst the women leaders from the *Puntofijista* parties who actively participated in women's conjunctural coalition building initiatives for the ANC alongside *Chavista*-aligned and independent women leaders and activists.

CONG member, economist and women's studies professor, and later head of the Bolivarian state's Woman's Development Bank, explained, such a process "deals with constructing a new republic, society, and state... beginning from the home" (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, Subcomisión Familia, Mujer, Infancia, Juventud y Anciano, 1999b). Further,

... a constituent process is a process in which the organized people in many ways has the floor. It's like the very constitution says: the people, our people, is a subject, is a subject of power, it does not delegate its power, but it exercises it in a process of constitution of the new society. Constituent signifies to constitute something, and that something is not constituted in a lone product that is the constitution. The constitution serves as a instrument... like a fundamental program of struggle for the people, with it in their hand, so that they can constitute the new Republic ("Interview with Nora Castañeda," 2 August 2011).

A core group of women's rights activists began organizing around the constituent process at the end of the 1998 presidential campaign—months before the convocation of the ANC was approved and the ANC delegates were elected. Activists and organizations outside the state⁶² presented their "Women's Political Agenda"⁶³ to the presidential candidates in 1998 and saw the forthcoming ANC as an opportunity to push for this agenda to be consecrated in the constitution ("Interview with Nora Castañeda," 2 August 2011). Marelis Pérez Marcano—a leader within the MVR, a socialist and feminist activist, Women's Studies professor, former CONG member, and recently-elected congressional representative as well as president of the congressional Bicameral Commission for Women's Rights—was active in early conjunctural coalition building around the constituent assembly. With other women leaders within the MVR, she drew on their connections with women's rights activists in civil society and the state—including from other political parties—to draft proposals for women's rights in the

⁶² Women Together For Venezuela; the CONG, Venezuelan Association for Sexual Education; Center for Social Research, Training, and Women's Studies; Central University of Venezuela's Center for Women's Studies, Popular Women's Circles, Population and Sustainable Development Network, and the Permanent Forum for Gender Equity.

⁶³ Women's rights activists had been developing their political agenda since their preparations for the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women ("Interview with Nora Castañeda," 2 August 2011). As noted in the previous section, the 1995 agenda included the demand for state recognition of the value of unpaid housework.

constitution and to make demands around them (Duran, 19 February 1999; Espina, November 1998). And within a week of Chávez's assumption of the presidency and decree of a popular referendum to decide whether to convoke an ANC in February 1999, the CONG convened a participatory public forum in Caracas in which it presented and discussed a preliminary women's movement proposal for the Constitution (Jiménez, 2000, pp. 21-22). By June 1999, the CONG published a popular booklet, "Women discuss a new country: Their contribution to the Constituent process," containing its proposals for the new constitution, which was also designed to serve as an education and organizing tool to promote popular sector women's participation in and proposals for the constituent process.

Women's rights activists within the state and CONAMU, once it was stabilized, strongly supported the conjunctural coalition building work for the inclusion of women's rights and a gender perspective in the constitution. As soon as María León (who had been a CONG member) assumed power of CONAMU, she stated that the primary objective of this state women's apparatus was to promote women's participation in the constituent process ("Visita a la redacción de **El Mundo**. Participación proporcional a la del hombre pedirá Consejo de la Mujer en la Constituyente," 24 May 1999). León created a constituent commission within CONAMU that worked both to unify all the women's rights proposals and to promote women's participation within the process (León, 2000, pp. 97-98). CONAMU, the Bicameral Commission for Women's Rights, and several regional and municipal level state leaders and organizations held events with women in civil society, incorporating and publicizing women's demands for the new constitution.⁶⁴ By June 1999, CONAMU completed its first draft of a combined women's movement proposal for the constitution, which it presented for public debate (Jiménez, 2000, pp. 23-24). This combined proposal was refined, subscribed to by a coalition of

⁶⁴ The United Nations also supported some of these events.

women's labor, popular, NGO, academic, and state organizations and networks,⁶⁵ and published by CONAMU several months later as "A Vision of the Country from a Woman's Perspective: Proposals for the National Constituent Assembly."

While women's rights activists were clear about their demand for a gender perspective within the constitution in their early organizing in 1999 around the constituent process, they had not reached consensus on the demand for state recognition of the socio-economic value of unpaid housework and social security for homemakers. Yet, early on in this organizing process, María León and other labor leaders signaled that this was an outstanding demand from the women's movement that would be raised again (León & Tremont, 15 February 1999). As women's rights activists developed their overarching demands to make women and their gender interests from the household level up visible, they came to agreement to revive the demand for recognition of unpaid housework and social security for homemakers. Inocencia Orellana, CONG member and former activist within the All Women Together Network, explains:

We had come along working on the theme of the invisibilization of women, and that one way in which we are seen as a minority is the fact that supposedly we are not productive... Because we are not in the paid labor market, but in domestic work. It is unpaid work, but if you have to do it outside [one's own house] they have to pay you for it... We saw that this work had to be valued because it was the way of making ourselves visible... and recognizing that, yes, we women contribute to the country's economy ("Interview with Inocencia Orellana," 8 September 2011).

Women's rights activists recognized that the revolutionary political conjuncture of the constituent process marked a unique gendered political opening for the inclusion of this demand.

⁶⁵ The coalition included: CONG, Bicameral Commission for Women's Rights, the Mayor's office of Caroní Municipality, Women's Studies University Network, Venezuelan Network Against Domestic Violence, Network of Legal Assistance Services, Woman and Environment Network, Peasant Woman and Indigenous Woman Network, Network of Women Labor Leaders, Women Leaders United, Network of Women's Popular Education, Venezuelan Prevention of Premature Pregnancy Network, Central University of Venezuela's Center for Women's Studies, Popular Women's Circles, the Permanent Forum for Gender Equity, and CONAMU.

While women's rights activists organizing around the ANC were clear on their demand that homemakers contributed to society through their unpaid labor, they did not formulate a corresponding proposal on how to finance and implement the social security for homemakers that they were demanding.⁶⁶ This lack of a financing proposal would later prove to be a fundamental challenge to the fulfillment of homemakers' social security under the new constitutional dispensation, given that the pension system was premised on monetary contributions from workers and employers and homemakers did not have an employment relationship.⁶⁷ By May 1999 though, the women's rights conjunctural coalition agreed on the demand for state recognition of the value of unpaid housework and the incorporation of homemakers into the social security system (del Mar Álvarez & Castañeda, May 1999). Both the CONG proposal and the combined women's movement proposal published shortly thereafter contained this demand, and women's rights activists organized around the country promoting this demand in the run-up to the installation of the ANC in August 1999 (Castillo & De Salvatierra, 2000).

All of this conjunctural coalition building work at multiple levels throughout the country preceding the ANC meant that the women's rights activists reached consensus on their proposals for the new constitution before the installation of the ANC. Once the ANC began, the challenge for the women's rights coalition was to ensure that their proposals were heard and included. Even as some women's rights activists were also activists in the Patriotic Pole (the electoral bloc associated with Chávez), some of their demands, such as recognition of the value of unpaid housework and incorporation of homemakers into the social security system, were not contained in President Chavez's

⁶⁶ The demand they made was for "social security" for homemakers, but their fundamental objective was actually narrower: a pension for homemakers of retirement age ("First Interview with Gioconda Espina," 21 July 2011; Interview with Inocencia Orellana," 8 September 2011; Second Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 14 September 2011), since the social security system covered a range of contingencies, including but not limited to old age.

⁶⁷ This financial challenge is discussed in the following chapter.

proposal (5 August 1999)⁶⁸ nor the Patriotic Pole's proposal (Polo Patriótico, 15 August 1999)⁶⁹ for the new constitution.

The women's rights coalition also saw the election of women's rights activists and candidates sympathetic to women's movement concerns to the ANC as essential to the representation of their gender interests in the constituent process. During the ANC election campaign process, the CONG and CONAMU questioned all candidates on their commitment to women's rights, and CONAMU publicly supported 23 candidates who had promised they would defend women's rights ("A la Constituyente en faldas," 13 June 1999). The CONG attempted to run six of its own representatives for the ANC (Zapata, 14 April 1999), but was unsuccessful. Yet Marelis Pérez Marcano, a Patriotic Pole candidate who campaigned on women's and family rights and whom the CONG supported given her proven commitment to women's rights (Zapata, 14 April 1999), did win a seat in the ANC. Women constituted only 16 out of 131 delegates, or 12% of all delegates, elected to the constituent assembly. Yet, out of this small number, several women peripherally tied to the women's movement were elected, including Blancanieve Portocarrero, a lawyer and member of FEVA who had taught women's studies and researched homemakers' contribution to the national economy.

Even though most women's movement candidates were not elected to the ANC and women overall enjoyed disproportionately small representation, Marelis Pérez Marcano and Blancanieve Portocarrero made their commitment to women's gender interests clear to the assembly from the outset. The ANC more broadly, though, did not begin with an explicit commitment to a gender perspective. These two delegates used their positions within the assembly and the Patriotic Pole and alliance with each other to carve out a space to specifically address the multiple demands that the women's rights coalition had formulated for the new constitution and to push the women's rights agenda within the ANC more broadly.

⁶⁸ Interestingly, even though Chávez's proposal was thinner than the women's movement's proposals on gender-based rights, he proposed an article extending the ban on discrimination to grounds of sexual orientation—a demand that some women's rights activists did raise, but on which the conjunctural coalition had not reached consensus for their proposal for the ANC.

⁶⁹ Even though the Patriotic Pole did not propose social security for homemakers, the Patriotic Pole of Women did (Polo Patriótico de Mujeres, 1999).

Delegates to the ANC were divided into commissions to work on specific thematic areas to be addressed in the new constitution, and Marelis Pérez Marcano and Blacanieve Portocarrero utilized these spaces as sites through which to promote the inclusion of a gender perspective and women's rights. At the onset of the ANC, noting women's complete absence of representation in the Committee of Citizen Participation, Pérez Marcano demanded the inclusion of women delegates to the committee in order to specifically promote women's participation in the articulation of proposals between society and the ANC (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, 1999d, p. 303). Portocarrero joined the Constitutional Commission, arguably the most important commission within the ANC because its members edited all the proposals that arrived to it from the other commissions and determined which proposals would go the ANC plenary for final deliberation. Pérez Marcano and Portocarrero joined the Social and Family Rights Commission. As soon as this commission was installed, they proposed the creation of a Women's, Children, Youth, and Elderly Sub-commission within it so that women's rights proposals could specifically be addressed. The commission approved the creation of this sub-commission and elected Portocarrero as its coordinator (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, Comisión de Derechos Sociales y Familia, 13 August 1999). Pérez Marcano and Portocarrero then proposed the creation of a women's rights technical assistance team to aid the sub-commission in collecting, systematizing, and researching proposals on women's rights from throughout the country, and the sub-commission agreed (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, Subcomisión Familia, Mujer, Infancia, Juventud y Anciano, 1999a). In the run-up to the ANC, Pérez Marcano had been spearheading coalition building initiatives for gender equity in the constituent process, where she had listened to women's concerns and proposals throughout the country (Castillo & De Salvatierra, 2000). Pérez Marcano therefore knew not only the emerging demands but also the key actors in building this conjunctural coalition. She invited some of these key actors to join the sub-commission's technical assistance team.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Morelba Jiménez from the United Nations Gender Thematic Group, Flor Ríos from the Bicameral Commission for Women's Rights, Dianora Marínez de Istúriz and Luzbelia Marín from the Patriotic Pole of Women, and Paula Guarisco from CONAMU's Women and Constituent Process Commission (Jiménez, 2000, p. 23).

With the assistance of the women's rights technical assistance team, and taking advantage of the master frame of popular participation within the ANC, the sub-commission engaged in a three-day consultation process with women's rights activists from civil society, academia, and the state, including leaders from the old regime.⁷¹ It also extended this consultation with women's rights activists to several broader Social and Family Rights Commission popular consultation events. Since the women's rights coalition had already reached consensus on a set of proposals, it used these events not only to explain and discuss the significance of these proposals but also to strategize on how to ensure their inclusion in the constitution given women's under-representation in the ANC. They agreed they needed to submit their joint proposal to all the constituent commissions and to use Pérez Marcano's and Portocarrero's standing within the ANC to open up space for women's rights activists to speak in front of as many commissions as possible about the proposal (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, Subcomisión Familia, Mujer, Infancia, Juventud y Anciano, 1999b, 1999c). The technical assistance team integrated the proposals it received through various channels of popular consultation and presented the integrated product to the sub-commission, non-governmental organizations, and the Family and Social Rights Commission for debate and approval.

The women's movement's approach to the ANC as a process in which they had to make themselves visible meant that their work did not finish with generating and submitting their proposals. It continued on through the ANC by being physically present within the halls of the assembly so that they could constantly pressure and monitor the delegates. Even though the women's movement was not comprised of large numbers of activists at this particular time, the movement maintained a daily presence within the assembly, with anywhere between several dozen to several hundred activists interacting with ANC delegates and articulating their demands on a given day ("First Interview with

⁷¹ These activists included representatives from the CFP, the Mother Instructors of Lara State, the Center for Women's Studies at the Central University of Venezuela, a coalition of civil and institutional groups from Lara State, and the CONG, in addition to Mercedes Pulido de Briceño—former Minister of Women's Participation in Development under COPEI—, Virginia Olivo—former head of the Family Department of the Youth Ministry under AD, and then president of the Permanent Forum for Gender Equity—, María León from CONAMU, Pastora Medina—mayor of Caroní municipality in Bolívar State, and Isolda Salvatierra—former vice-president of the Bicameral Commission for Women's Rights.

Adicea Castillo," 22 July 2011; Interview with Morelba Jiménez," 14 July 2011). This constant presence thus lent the movement the appearance of organizational strength and density.

This joint approach of women's rights activists from within and outside the ANC pressuring the male-dominated assembly paid off. As María Iris Varela, an ANC delegate and member of the Constitutional Commission who was not tied to the women's movement, stated: women "have been so fundamental in this whole process, that... the way in which we are carrying ourselves and the different commissions,... that vision of gender is... immersed in each one of the 131 delegates... and is being passed onto the constitutional text" (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, Comisión Constitucional, 1999). Increasingly, male delegates defended women's rights and a gender perspective in ANC plenary debates, including the president of the ANC. And, crucially, several did so when the first full draft of the constitution contained an article defining life as beginning from conception, which signified that termination of pregnancy would become a fundamental human rights violation (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, 1999c). Significantly, the debate that ensued around this definition of the right to life—which the majority of delegates then voted against—was the only substantial debate on the ANC plenary floor on the contents of the draft constitution as they related to women's rights. No substantial debate emerged within the plenary around the inclusion of state recognition of the value of housework and homemakers' social security,⁷² and this draft

⁷² Debate did emerge on the ANC plenary floor around this draft article, but not on whether it should be included in the constitution. The issue raised with this article by a male delegate, supported by other delegates, was that the proposed article discriminated against men and should therefore be expanded to utilize language that includes men—in his words, the "home owners" (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, 1999b, p. 71).

article passed the plenary with support from the majority of delegates (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, 1999b).

2.6. Conclusion

As a result of women's rapid and intense conjunctural coalition building and mobilization prior to and during the ANC, the Bolivarian Constitution of Venezuela ratified by the electorate in December 1999 met almost all the demands for rights made by the women's movement since the late 1970s (Rakowski, 2003, p. 399). These new rights and obligations included sexual and reproductive health rights (Art. 76), the state's obligation to guarantee reproductive health (Art. 76), co-responsibility between fathers and mothers in raising children (Art. 76), gender equality and equity at work (Art. 88), the right to protection of maternity and paternity through the social security system (Art.86) regardless of the marital status of the parents (Art. 76), state obligation to protect maternity from the moment of conception (Art.76), and both the recognition of the socio-economic value of housework and homemakers' right to social security (Art. 88). In addition, the 1999 constitution employed a gender perspective throughout the text in its use of both masculine and feminine subjects.

For many women's rights activists, the inclusion of Article 88 in particular was of watershed significance, as the Bolivarian Constitution became the first constitution in the world to specifically recognize the value of women's unpaid housework and entitle homemakers to social security. Marelis Pérez Marcano, for example, asserted that

Accounts from Blananieve Portocarrero (2000, pp. 159-160), Marelis Pérez Marcano ("Second Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 14 September 2011), and Morelba Jiménez ("Interview with Morelba Jiménez," 14 July 2011), a member of the women's rights technical assistance team, indicate that Blananieve Portocarrero lobbied her fellow ANC delegates in the Constitutional Commission hard for the inclusion of this article in the draft constitution.

Apparently an interpretation in the Constitutional Commission existed that this article was not necessary because they had already agreed that another article was going to be included in the draft constitution that would enshrine social security as universal. Portocarrero and Marcano maintained that the article recognizing homemakers in particular should be maintained as a means to justify affirmative action social security policies for homemakers in the new regime ("Second Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 14 September 2011). However, by 2011, when I began this dissertation research project, no publicly available records of these debates existed within the archives of the ANC, and Blananieve Portocarrero had passed away.

“because patriarchal culture undoubtedly made... the home its great area of relations of subordination. Then having conquered Article 88 was precisely an expression of the visibilization of women in their battle flags” (“First Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano,” 23 August 2011). According to her, Article 88 generated a rupture with “the patriarchal political-ideological paradigm that the home is private and that the state did not have to intervene at all there” (“Second Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano,” 14 September 2011). The achievement of Article 88 signified a crucial landmark for both the recognition of women’s labor and the redistribution of power to them. In addition to making unpaid housework visible, it set a framework for the state to intervene in favor of the workers who performed such work by redistributing wealth to them.

Venezuelan women’s rights activists were able to make these gains because they encountered a political opportunity structure that was favorable toward their mobilization around their interests and the codification of their gender rights within the 1999 Constitution. Rapid political upheaval and transformation of the political structure and state institutions characterized the timing and nature of political change during the constituent process. The outcomes of these rapid changes were uncertain and galvanized women to organize to both defend and advance their gender interests. At the same time, the constituent process in Venezuela marked a crucial political opening for social movements, and the women’s movement in particular, as popular participation constituted a master frame that legitimated women’s organizing and demands for rights. Women’s movement activists utilized their pre-existing political agenda and began formulating proposals for constitutional change well before the National Constituent Assembly began, placing them in a strong position to consolidate, disseminate, and popularize their proposals during the rapid ANC in 1999. While the old elite was largely excluded, the constitutional design process was relatively open and transparent to women’s pluralistic organizing and interventions. In spite of women’s underrepresentation in the ANC, women’s rights activists used the institutional footholds they had gained within the state, political parties, and the ANC to open the space for a cohesive conjunctural coalition to mobilize within and outside of the state and successfully pressure political party, state, and ANC officials to take up women’s rights proposals. Moreover, they drew on lessons they had learned and contributions from their past activism and incorporated many of the same activists from their past initiatives to

make their conjunctural coalition an effective lobby for constitutional recognition of women's gender rights.

The Venezuelan experience of organizing for women's rights in the 1999 Constitution empirically illustrates the conceptual framework outlined at the beginning of this chapter to explain how the political opportunity structure of a constitutional change process can enable the achievement of women's rights within a constitution. In addition to timing and nature of constitutional change, relative openness and transparency of constitutional design process, legitimation of current demands through legacy of women's past activism, cohesive conjunctural coalition building, and openness and willingness of state and political party officials to take up women's gender concerns, the Venezuelan constituent process points to the development of citizen and social movement participation in constitutional change processes as a new factor that can affect the extent to which women can affect constitutional change in their favor. This new factor emerges as democratizing forces from below within Latin America increasingly pressure for their interests to be represented in the state, and as such, are contesting and expanding the very nature and shape of democracy and constitutional change. As Dobrowolsky and Hart (2003) note, a constitution "authorizes the rules of the political game." Venezuelan women's entrance into and participation in the game of institutional politics during their country's constituent process also formed part of a larger collective action master frame that contested the rules of the political game and opened spaces for popular participation in processes of political decision making. Women's participation in this process represents a wider ongoing shift in the Latin American region from clientelist to direct, participatory forms of interest mediation that empower citizens and social movements as political subjects who can transform the political distribution of power.

Chapter 3. Between Fruitless Legislative Initiatives and Executive Magic: Contestations over the Implementation of Homemakers' Social Security

3.1. Introduction

Women's successful mobilization for their rights in constitutional products in-and-of itself does not transform the gendered distribution of power within a country. As Florisa Verucci (1991) asserts: "Equal-rights law is not enough to eradicate deeply rooted discriminations", but it is "the indispensable prerequisite of a thoroughgoing transformation in women's condition" (p. 567). A thorough transformation in women's conditions, and thereby the deepening of democracy, hinges on women's ongoing participation as subjects of rights in political processes. Their participation, and that of other traditionally marginalized groups, would serve both as cause and effect of the essential work of ensuring rights are enforced and enjoyed after they are codified within constitutions. Turning the rights within a constitutional text into concrete practice therefore "requires deep institutional and political changes" (Htun, 2002, p. 748) beyond the enactment of constitutions themselves. Such deep changes include the allocation of resources to institutions dedicated to enforcing women's rights as well as "a commitment to advancing women's rights that penetrates" all areas of policy and state action (Htun, 2002, p. 748). Women's pressure for state action to enforce women's rights also must persist within a new constitutional dispensation, as women's history of organizing for political change in Latin America has proven that states often grant women's rights in order to co-opt women's movements and that states often only enforce women's rights when pressure is put on them by organized women's movements (Alvarez, 1994; Friedman, 2000b). By focusing on post-ANC legislative struggles to implement homemakers' constitutional right to social security, this second historical chapter assesses the extent of institutional and political change in Bolivarian Venezuela from a gender perspective.

Heading into the Bolivarian Republic (once ratified, the 1999 Constitution renamed the country the “Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela”), women’s rights activists now had a constitutional framework to legitimize their demand for the incorporation of homemakers into the social security system and thus for the redistribution of wealth toward women who worked without pay. Yet Article 88 was not immediately enforceable, as it stipulated that homemakers had “the right to social security in accordance with the law.” A legal framework giving shape to this constitutional mandate would have to be developed in order for homemakers to receive the social security to which they were entitled.

Similar to the ANC the year before, women emerged very underrepresented in the first elections for the National Assembly (2000) that followed the enactment of the Bolivarian Constitution, as they constituted only 9.6% of deputies elected to the legislature. Their representation rose only to 14.2% of all deputies elected to the second term of the legislature in 2005 (Aguirre & Testa, 2010, p. 27). Marelis Pérez Marcano, who had continually championed constitutional recognition of unpaid housework and homemakers’ social security in the constituent process, was elected as a deputy to the new National Assembly in 2000 and became the first president of the assembly’s Permanent Commission on Family, Women, and Youth. She was also re-elected to the Assembly in 2005. From the outset in her positions of legislative power, Pérez Marcano spearheaded the drive within the National Assembly to legislate Article 88, and she employed the women’s movement conjunctural coalition building strategy by drawing in women’s rights activists within and outside the state to assist her in developing a legislative proposal. In addition, under President Chávez’s tenure, women’s organizing proliferated. The Bolivarian government created and strengthened state women’s and gender equality organizations— for example: CONAMU, which later became the National Woman’s Institute (INaMujer); the Woman’s Development Bank (BanMujer); the Ministry for Woman’s Popular Power and Gender Equality (MinMujer); and the National Public Defender of Women. And many women joined both new mixed gender and women’s only popular social and political organizations, many of which were organized, promoted, and/or financially supported by the state.

Yet Pérez Marcano and other women's rights activists within and outside the state working together for the implementation of Article 88 encountered a very different political opportunity structure from that of the constituent process. The way in which Article 88 had been formulated in that process interacted with the larger and constantly shifting political context to constrain possibilities for the article's legislation in the first eleven years of the Bolivarian Republic.

This chapter analyzes the implications of the 1999 national constituent process and product for the contestation and enforcement of women's rights, and the right to social security for homemakers in particular, in the consolidation of this new constitutional framework in Bolivarian Venezuela. Using archival and document analysis as well as interview data with women's movement activists within and outside the state and social security legislative advisors, I examine post-ANC legislative initiatives to implement Article 88 between 2000 and 2011. I employ a gender analysis of political opportunity structures to shed light on how these initiatives were shaped by larger social and political processes, including persistent gender-biased ideologies and practices of subordinating women's gender interests. To place these initiatives in their historical context, I first review literature on the political economy of Bolivarian Venezuela. My analysis of this political opportunity structure focuses on the effects on initiatives to legislate Article 88 of increasing political conflict and polarization, radicalization and consolidation of the Bolivarian regime, increasing centralization of power in the presidency, and the executive's development of state institutions parallel to those enacted and overseen by the legislature. These larger political processes interacted with each other, and in turn, the openness and transparency of legislative processes diminished, women's conjunctural coalitions declined, and the openness and willingness of officials within the state to take up and legislate women's rights waned. Thus, since the landmark ANC, the gendered political opening for the legislative advancement of women's rights became narrower, and redistributing gendered power by enforcing homemakers' constitutional right to social security was largely sidelined.

3.2. Political Polarization, Government Radicalization, Centralization of Power and the Development of Parallel State Institutions under *Chavismo*

Political polarization, radicalization of the government, centralization of political power, uncertainty about the role of representative democracy, the development of overlapping parallel state institutions, and lack of consolidation of democratic institutions and channels of interest mediation marked the larger national political context in which women's rights activists attempted to legislate Article 88 from 2000 to 2011. These larger political tendencies existed in dialectical tension with each other, producing a constantly shifting, conflictual political field. While the electoral ratification of the 1999 Constitution and persistent *Chavista*⁷³ victories at the polls⁷⁴ signaled the end to the *Puntofijista* regime and its elite political-party dominated form of (il)liberal democracy, a new form of democracy did not consolidate under the Bolivarian regime during Hugo

⁷³ Because of the lack of consolidation of channels of interest mediation, the term *Chavista* is used to connote the range of political forces aligned with Hugo Chávez from 1998 to 2013. This range includes Chávez's electoral vehicle—MVR—which failed to become consolidated and entrenched within his electoral base and which he aimed to replace with the establishment of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela—the PSUV—in 2006. It also includes smaller allied political parties, as well as social movements that did not subscribe to a particular party but fell under the umbrella organization of the Patriotic Pole.

⁷⁴ These polling victories include elections for representatives at national, regional, and municipal levels as well as popular referenda. This is not to imply that *Chavismo* won all elections for representatives at all levels (except when the opposition boycotted the 2005 elections for the National Assembly and *Chavismo* did gain 100% control of the legislature). Rather, it consistently won the majority of representative positions at national, regional, and municipal levels. Yet, out of 18 elections between 1999 and 2010, the one significant electoral defeat that *Chavismo* suffered since Chávez was first elected president was popular rejection of the 2007 constitutional reform referendum proposed by Chávez. The 2007 constitutional reform referendum initiative and women's rights proposals within it are discussed below.

Chávez's presidency.⁷⁵ Rather, a constant struggle over the form democracy would take within Bolivarian Venezuela occurred, and this struggle was shaped by contestation from opposition forces and contestation by opposing forces and currents within *Chavismo*.

From the outset of his presidency, Chávez's rhetoric was anti-neoliberal in orientation. Political and economic moderation, increased public and social spending (Buxton, 2009; Ellner, 2008; Lander & Navarrete, 2007), and the fragmentation of the opposition largely characterized the first several years of the *Chavista* regime (1999-2001). Taking advantage of the enabling powers that the National Assembly had granted him, President Chávez decreed 49 special laws at the end of 2001 that were marked by an anti-neoliberal focus, most notably in the oil and fishing industries and in agrarian reform (Ellner, 2008). Segments of the opposition interpreted these 49 laws as endangering private property rights, thereby provoking them to unite against Chávez and the Bolivarian project (Lander & Navarrete, 2007, p. 7).

Ensuing political polarization and conflict marked the second stage of *Chavista* government (2001-2004), in which a "battle for state control" (Lander & Navarrete, 2007) occurred, as the opposition used a myriad of tactics to try to bring down the *Chavista* government and the Bolivarian regime. The opposition convened a series of general strikes, which culminated in a coup d'état and the annulment of the Bolivarian Constitution in April 2002. The coup proved to be short-lived in large part because of pressure from military forces and popular sectors loyal to the Bolivarian project. Following his restoration to power, Chávez made attempts at reconciliation with the opposition, but they remained intent on unseating him from power.

⁷⁵ Julia Buxton (2011) notes a historical continuity in the lack of consolidation of liberal democracy in Venezuela from *Puntofijismo* to Bolivarianism: "Certainly it is the case that if Chávez's Venezuela is to be judged by the procedural benchmarks of liberal democracy, there is a deficit of checks and balances on government, the rule of law is weak, the military is not apolitical and executive power is pronounced. But this leads to a number of related considerations. It has never been the case that liberal democracy has consolidated in Venezuela. During the Punto Fijo period, the country had a model of illiberal democracy that delimited participation, restricted access to power, privileged a minority, and politicized all state institutions. The rule of law was historically weak, and corruption and human rights abuses were pronounced. To present the Bolivarian process as some form of democratic regression or authoritarian aberration in this historical context is misleading. It denies the structural legacies of *Puntofijismo* and negates the progress that has been made in extending social and political inclusion in a historical context characterized by disaffection with political parties, politicians, and institutions" (p. xv).

In December 2002, opposition forces, including executives of Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA)—the state oil company— declared an indefinite general strike, in order to force Chávez from power by shutting down the oil industry. The strike amounted to an employer lockout, as most workers did not support it and continued working, and in the case of PDVSA, workers and community members worked together to restore oil production during the lockout (Ellner, 2008). As a result, the lockout petered out after eight weeks, and the government regained control over PDVSA in terms of its management and revenue (Raby, 2006, p. 172).

Recovery of PDVSA proved crucial: even though the lockout had failed to unseat Chávez, it had unleashed an economic crisis. In addition, the opposition's intransigence and the role of the popular sectors in defending Chávez and the Bolivarian regime showed that the revolution both enjoyed and largely relied on popular sector support (Ciccariello-Maher, 2013b, p. 176). The Bolivarian government immediately responded with the creation and implementation of pro-poor social and economic policies (Buxton, 2009, p. 70), initiating a process of *Chavista* government radicalization wherein it increasingly turned to transforming oil rent to goods and services for the popular sectors. In 2003, with newfound control over oil revenue, President Chávez exercised the magnanimous sorcerer powers of the Bolivarian petro-state to create the missions, a set of emergency social programs targeting the popular sectors. Through bypassing the old state bureaucracy, the missions quickly began to address effects of the crisis and longer-term social policy shortfalls on the popular sectors.⁷⁶ In addition, many of the missions either directly or indirectly targeted popular sector women, given their positioning in relations of social reproduction, and affected the gender order within popular sector communities.⁷⁷

Yet the opposition remained recalcitrant in the wake of the failed lockout. In early 2004, certain sectors of the opposition resorted to *guarimbas*—open and aggressive confrontation with state security forces in the streets (Ellner, 2008, p. 120). Further, after the lockout, opposition forces united to gather enough citizen signatures to convoke a

⁷⁶ The design and objectives of the missions are discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

⁷⁷ Chapter Five focuses on how *Madres del Barrio* Mission—the only Bolivarian mission targeting only popular sector women—affected the gender order.

popular recall referendum on Chávez's presidency in August 2004. Chávez emerged victorious from the referendum, with a sizeable majority in support of his presidency. The recall referendum signaled a clear defeat of the opposition, as well as the exhaustion of its tactics to bring down the government.

The defeated recall referendum and subsequent fragmentation of the opposition also signaled a political opportunity for both the consolidation and the further radicalization of the Bolivarian regime. The persistent yet failed insurgency of the opposition and the consistent support of the popular sectors for the Bolivarian regime taught President Chávez “that moderation was not the best way to deal with the opposition” (Wilpert, 2007, p. 28). At the same time, he faced demands from popular social movements and organizations that had supported him to extend and deepen revolutionary changes and promote and sanction popular participatory democracy (Lander & Navarrete, 2007, p. 25). As Gupta (1995, 2005) notes, popular subjects, through their support for Chávez and his regime in contestations over state power, gave meaning to the Bolivarian state and, in turn, acted to shape it from their standpoints. Propelled toward increasing radicalization by popular sectors, Chávez announced in 2005 that he and his government would be pursuing socialism for the 21st century. The time between the defeat of the recall referendum and 2007 marked the third phase of *Chavista* government—a rapid and intense period of radicalization of the rhetoric, goals, programs, and state-society relations of the Bolivarian revolution.

During this intense period of radicalization, the government initiated an economic reorientation toward a “new model of production” to steer the country toward socialism, which would promote “endogenous development” and a transformation in the social relations of production toward relations based on “social property” (Presidencia de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2006, p. 11).⁷⁸ The government increased state ownership of companies through expropriation, nationalization, and renationalization; redistributed land; radicalized and extended the missions; promoted forms of collective ownership; and institutionalized co-management in state companies (Ellner, 2008, pp.

⁷⁸ Chapters Four and Five on *Madres del Barrio* Mission discuss one of the institutional mechanisms through which the Bolivarian government aimed to incorporate popular sector women into this “new model of production.”

121-126; Meltzer, 2009, p. 100). Yet this new model of production did not become hegemonic, but rather developed alongside and in tension with extant capitalist institutions.

In the First Socialist Plan for Economic and Social Development of the Nation 2007-2013,⁷⁹ Chávez issued political outlines to support the construction of 21st century socialism, which called for the establishment of a “revolutionary protagonistic democracy,” based on republicanism and Bolivarianism. While critical of liberal democracy, these outlines did not address what role representative democracy would take under this new form of democracy; rather, they focused on and privileged direct democracy and popular participation (Presidencia de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2006, pp. 14-15). Further, they stipulated that under “revolutionary, protagonistic democracy, justice is above the law; and the conditions to guarantee the welfare of everyone... are above the simple formality of equality before the law and commercial despotism” (Presidencia de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2006, p. 15). In line with these outlines, the government moved to both promote and institutionalize forms of popular power and participatory democracy, as it delegated legally-binding decision-making authority and provided material support to various forms of community organizations, such as the communal councils, the technical water tables, and the urban land committees. These newly legalized territorially-based local organizations did not replace extant local and regional representative democratic institutions, but rather were developed parallel to and in tension with them.

A concomitant centralization of power occurred alongside this shift toward decentralization and popularization of power during this third stage of the *Chavista* regime. In 2005, the opposition boycotted the elections for the National Assembly, alleging electoral impartiality, thus enabling *Chavista* forces to gain complete control over the National Assembly. Even with this complete control,⁸⁰ the National Assembly

⁷⁹ This plan followed the Plan for Social and Economic Development of the Nation 2001-2007. The First Socialist Plan was drafted to “orient Venezuela toward the construction of socialism for the 21st century” (Presidencia de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2006, p. 3).

⁸⁰ In 2007 and 2008, breakaways and expulsions of deputies from the *Chavista* alliance occurred, but this still left *Chavismo* with over 90% of the seats in the National Assembly.

granted President Chávez enabling powers in 2007 to decree laws over a period of eighteen months in order to accelerate changes necessary for the transition toward 21st century socialism (Bruce, 2008, p. 35).

Further, in 2007, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) was created to replace the MVR to develop and strengthen the political-organizational base of *Chavismo* (Ellner, 2011, p. 434). Yet the PSUV developed largely under the charge of state leaders and not its base (Ellner, 2011, p. 440). This in turn limited rank-and-file control over the party, the ability of the party membership to hold state leaders to account,⁸¹ the establishment of pluralistic internal mechanisms of discussion and debate (Ellner, 2008, p. 131; Spronk & Webber, 2011, p. 251), and a concomitant clarification of the politics and ideology of the movement (Ellner, 2011, p. 435). This centralization of power combined with lack of party consolidation meant that the programmatic content of socialism for the 21st century remained “vague and subject to ad hoc and pragmatic change led by Chávez” (Buxton, 2009, p. 73).

This lack of separation between party and state and lack of internal and decentralized democracy rendered the channeling of demands from the party’s base up to party leadership difficult, including women’s specific demands around their gender interests. President Chávez’s support for state gender institutions and public endorsement of feminism as an essential component of 21st century socialism constituted a gendered political opening for the PSUV to discuss and endorse gender equality and equity as party principles (I Congreso Extraordinario del PSUV, 2010). However, this intra-party discussion on gender appears not to have extended to

⁸¹ Ellner (2011, p. 440) explains that some *Chavistas* envisioned that, in the absence of liberal democratic separation of powers, the party would serve to counterbalance the state, as strong rank-and-file participation and decision making in the PSUV would serve as an effective check on the government.

endorsement of specific demands from the women's rights agenda⁸² as part of the party's platform. Neither the "Declaration of Principles from the First Extraordinary Congress of the PSUV" (2010) nor the party's "Strategic Lines of Political Action" (2011) that emanated from this congress incorporated these demands. Further, when questioned, María León noted that the PSUV had not substantially deliberated on at least one of the demands from this agenda—the decriminalization of termination of pregnancy (cited in León Torrealba, 2012, pp. 157-158).

Such deficiencies in the development of popular participatory democracy carried on through and shaped the next and fourth stage of *Chavista* government (2007-2012), in which *Chavismo* suffered its first significant electoral defeat. In 2007, President Chávez proposed a reform of the Bolivarian Constitution in order to construct a socialist democracy and to put the government's proposals for constitutional reform to popular referendum. Chávez developed his 33 proposals for reform with the assistance of a select group of advisers. The National Assembly later developed and added on an additional 36 proposals for constitutional reform, which included some women's movement demands discussed below. Very little popular consultation and participation occurred in the proposal development process (Webber, 2010, pp. 32-33). The 69 proposals for constitutional reform were presented to the electorate in two blocks, and both blocks were narrowly defeated in the referendum in December 2007. While Chávez accepted the results, he noted that the proposals remained "alive" and that he and his government would continue working for their enactment, alongside continuing to construct socialism within the current constitutional framework (Prensa Presidencial, 3 December 2007).

Following the referendum defeat, President Chávez and the *Chavista*-controlled National Assembly did carry on inserting some of the constitutional reform proposals in

⁸² This refers to a "minimum agenda" for advancing women's rights that women's rights activists aligned and not aligned with *Chavismo* and both within and outside the state agreed upon: regulation and application of the Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free From Violence; decriminalization of termination of pregnancy; gender parity and alternation in electoral lists; compliance with laws that prohibit gender stereotyping in advertising; and enactment of legislation enabling homemakers' incorporation into the social security system (Espina, 2007, p. 23). These demands were incorporated into the Ministry for Women's Popular Power and Gender Equality's Second Plan for Women's Equality (2010).

the national legislative agenda, by passing them individually as laws (López Maya, 2011, p. 6). Yet, due to the shifting of the political opportunity structure away from popular power toward centralized power, none of these legislative initiatives included women's movement demands for constitutional reform. The *Chavista*-controlled National Assembly, just before its term was to expire in 2010, granted President Chávez enabling powers for eighteen months.⁸³ Both the National Assembly and Chávez continued to sanction laws promoting popular democracy and participation at local levels (Lalander, 2012, pp. 303-304) and the construction of a communal state (López Maya, 2011, p. 7).⁸⁴

In spite of these new laws promoting direct democracy, a new form of democracy did not become consolidated under Chávez's presidency. Rather, the Chávez government both utilized and renounced and dismantled liberal democratic mechanisms. It avoided corporatist (class-based interest mediation between workers' unions, employers, and the state) and alternative structures of social dialogue (Ellner, 2011, p. 438) and halted decentralization of powers to municipal and regional level governments (Ellner, 2011, p. 434). At the same time, it relied "heavily on elections rather than popular consultation in order to legitimize its programs and policies" (Buxton, 2011, pp. xvi-xvii).

⁸³ In the September 2010 elections for the National Assembly, *Chavismo* did not win the majority of the votes, yet it won the majority of the seats in the legislature, because of the design of Venezuela's mixed electoral system (Lalander, 2012, p. 7). With these results, however, *Chavismo* did not enjoy a qualified majority in the National Assembly. A qualified majority was needed to grant the president enabling powers to enact laws by decree and to pass organic laws, foundational laws that organize the public powers, develop constitutional rights, or serve as a normative framework for other laws ("Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela," 1999). Thus, in December 2010— after the September 2010 elections and before the new National Assembly began its term in January 2011— the outgoing National Assembly granted President Chávez enabling powers to last eighteen months (López Maya, 2011, pp. 6-7).

One of the key laws that President Chávez enacted by decree using these enabling powers, the organic labor law, and its relation to women's organizing and gender interests is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.

⁸⁴ In December 2010, the outgoing National Assembly passed 23 laws, eight of which were organic laws (Asamblea Nacional de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela). Many of these laws formed a package of socialist bills that the executive presented to the assembly ("Interview with Margarita López Maya," 28 September 2012) and the assembly passed with scarce debate and without popular consultation (López Maya, 2011, p. 7). For example, on both December 21st and December 28th, the assembly passed five laws in one day (Asamblea Nacional de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela).

In addition, although the Chávez government granted decision-making powers and authorities to community organizations and allowed them to proliferate throughout the country, it tied the disbursement of funds to support them to the executive branch. Further, in all stages of *Chavista* government, the National Assembly legitimized the centralization of power in the executive branch as it granted legislative authority to President Chávez in order to take urgent actions,⁸⁵ and over his tenure, it granted him these enabling powers for increasing amounts of time.⁸⁶ Though the granting of enabling powers did not signify that the National Assembly ceased to function, this meant that when President Chávez did have these powers, he legislated just as much as the legislative branch.⁸⁷ Thus, a tension between modes of liberal electoral democracy, participatory democracy, and revolutionary democracy marked governance in Bolivarian Venezuela during Chávez's presidency, especially during the third and fourth stages.

This tension regarding the emergent shape of Bolivarian democracy existed because these multiple political currents existed within Chávez's discourses and actions and at all levels of the Bolivarian movement (Ellner, 2005, pp. 172-173), and because Bolivarianism first emerged not as a socialist movement but as a nationalist, anti-imperialist, anti-neoliberal movement. As Buxton (2009) explains, "the Bolivarian revolution should be understood more as a case of socialism by default than design" because of how the combination of extralocal and opposition forces and popular support later triggered the government's left turn, which remained vague, contested, and in constant flux over time (pp. 57-58).

Bolivarianism developed to be an internally differentiated movement driven not just by tensions from outside it but also by tensions from within it. As Ellner explains,

⁸⁵ This practice of granting enabling powers to the president was not unique to the Bolivarian government; rather, it constitutes a historical political practice in Venezuela that preceded Chávez, was utilized under *Puntofijismo*, and was enshrined in the subsequent Bolivarian Constitution, and has continued past Chávez's tenure.

⁸⁶ The 1999 enabling law granted President Chávez authority to legislate by decree over six months; the 2000-2001 enabling law granted him this authority over one year; the 2007-2008 enabling law granted him this authority over eighteen months; and the 2010-2012 enabling law granted him this authority over 18 months (Procuraduría General de la República).

⁸⁷ For example, in 2011 Chávez sanctioned fifteen laws and the National Assembly sanctioned sixteen laws (Lalander, 2012, p. 303).

these internal tensions included both top-down and bottom-up approaches and soft-line and hard-line currents, which did not necessarily map onto each other (Ellner, 2005, 2008), but were interactive and interrelated (Azzellini, 2010, pp. 8-9). The tension between soft- and hard-lines within the movement revolved in large part around the role of parallel institutions in the revolution, such as communal councils, the missions, social production companies, the communes, and popular militia. The soft-line viewed these new, parallel structures as necessary to fill in gaps that old institutions did not address, but envisioned new and old institutions as complementary, with rules regulating their relations. The hard-line envisioned new, parallel structures eventually replacing old institutions, and swift initiatives as necessary to develop them and achieve a revolutionary rupture with *Puntofijismo* (Ellner, 2005, p. 171). While “this intra-revolutionary conflict, this dialectic within a dialectic” gradually pushed Chávez and his government to the left (Ciccariello-Maher, 2013b, pp. 236-237), these tensions within the Bolivarian movement were not resolved under Chávez’s presidency, and were indeed exacerbated as the “bureaucratization of the political sections of Chavismo” became “dominant” (Sara Motta cited in Spronk & Webber, 2011, p. 244) and popular resentment toward this tendency grew.

Yet tensions from outside the Bolivarian movement at times served to gloss over these tensions within the movement. Even though the outcomes of events in 2004 and 2005 proved that the opposition forces were exhausted, permanent political polarization marked Venezuela under *Chavismo*, as opposition forces also proved that they could continually unite against the Chávez government. Given the opposition’s historical aggression and willingness to use extra-legal tactics to delegitimize and bring down the government and the Bolivarian Constitution, the forces aligned with *Chavismo* tended to continue to view opposition forces as a bloc of enemies of the revolution, against which they defined themselves. Conflicting tendencies and actors within *Chavismo* were able to cohere as a movement in large part through their common opposition to the “*escualidos*” (Ciccariello-Maher cited in Spronk & Webber, 2011, p. 250), the “squalid ones”—the *Chavista* term grouping together all opposition actors and forces. Thus, in spite of their ideological and strategic differences, *Chavistas* took their unity as necessary to defend and sustain their revolution against their adversaries.

However this unity amongst different forces and tendencies contained within *Chavismo* also obstructed the movement's ideological clarification, as the need to close ranks in the face of their adversaries hindered internal debate (Azzellini, 2010, p. 20; Ellner, 2005, p. 187). Moderate *Chavistas* attempted to hold back internal confrontation for fear that its exposure and exposure of government wrongdoing could be used politically against the movement (Ellner, 2011, p. 434 & 444). And because the extremely polarized dynamic between *Chavismo* and the opposition rendered popular interpretations of elections to be plebiscites on the regime (López Maya, 2011, p. 6), and elections were held most years Chávez was president, the demand for unity and holding back internal confrontation was ever-present. This imperative to unify in time of elections to defend the revolution manifested in state and party leadership instructing social movements to delay their specific demands in order to campaign for the regime and/or not detract from the broader campaign, in line with Chavez's strategy and directive of "carefully selecting targets rather than striking out on different fronts at the same time" (Ellner, 2008, p. 158).

This exigency to unify in defense of the revolution, especially in times of elections, also affected women's organizing within *Chavismo*, as state and party leaders viewed women's specific demands and organizing for gender rights as potentially divisive and vulnerable to appropriation by the opposition.⁸⁸ For example, during the 2012 presidential election campaign period, María León, former Minister of Women's Popular Power and Gender Equality and then National Assembly Deputy, argued that *Chavista* women should prioritize Chávez's re-election and the epic and broader goals of the revolution.⁸⁹ She asserted that women's specific struggles for rights, such as termination of pregnancy, should not be central to the campaign:

⁸⁸ This is not to assert that this phenomenon of sidelining women's specific demands for rights during election campaigns was unique to *Chavismo*. Indeed, León Torrealba (2012, p. 158) documents both a National Assembly deputy from the PSUV and one from Podemos—an opposition party—stating that 2012 was not the political moment to bring up the issue of termination of pregnancy. Further, García and Valdivieso (2009, pp. 150-151) note the absence of gender issues in the 2008 regional election campaigns of women candidates from all political sides.

⁸⁹ The effect of this imperative during the 2012 presidential election campaign period on *Chavista* women's organizing for the advancement of their labor rights is analyzed in Chapter Seven.

... we women believe as Chávez believes, that in this moment of history, the principal is independence, for us women, to be independent of the empire comes first... Then for that historical discrimination to begin to be overcome, as it is doing, the first is independence, the sovereignty of the homeland, and in that we are immersed, including ready to give our lives.

... I'm not saying that women renounce their struggles, however we can't place them as a central theme of politics. At least those of us women who are political, in this moment we have to dedicate ourselves to Chávez winning, and then there, my pains, my anguishes and my things are pending on him winning (cited in León Torrealba, 2012, pp. 158-159).

León's words reflect a dominant *Chavista* state and party view that women's specific gender struggles must be subordinated to the popular unification necessary for the ongoing revolutionary transformation of Venezuela, in the face of the revolution's adversaries. Further, León's discourse posited that women's specific gender demands both must be delayed for the benefit of the revolution and hinged on Chávez and his maintenance of power; women must wait to make their demands and have faith that Chávez's victory would open up a hearing of their demands.

3.3. Subordination of Struggles to Advance Women's Rights Legislation under *Chavismo*

This Bolivarian state leadership dominant approach of subordinating women's rights struggles that would challenge gender power relations to the revolution's broader goals in a context of profound political polarization and uncertainty around the role of liberal democracy shaped the National Assembly's actions and inactions on women's and gender issues from 2000 to 2011. The National Assembly opened in 2000 with the *Chavistas* holding majority control. At its inception, the assembly created a Permanent Commission on Family, Woman, and Youth (*Comisión Permanente de Familia, Mujer, y Juventud* or *CPFMJ*), which provided women's rights activists with a stable institutional base through which they could draft and lobby for women's rights legislation within the legislature. Yet, within the assembly, *Chavista* deputies viewed the CPFMJ and its work as insignificant. Former *Chavista* deputy Marelis Pérez Marcano (2000-2010) explains that other *Chavista* deputies referred to it as the "Siberia commission," because no one wanted to join it and it was where deputies were therefore sent to work as a form of

punishment for poor performance ("Third Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 5 September 2012). This devaluation amongst *Chavista* deputies of the CPFMJ and its work was due to what Pérez Marcano describes as their "very restricted and limited and unfortunately in some cases even condescending conception of what a commission of women's rights meant" ("Third Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 5 September 2012). General political will amongst *Chavista* National Assembly deputies to carry forward the mainstreaming of women's gender interests from the constituent process into their legislative work did not exist. The majority of *Chavista* deputies did not view the transformation of gender power relations as a priority of the revolution. Nor did the majority of opposition deputies view the transformation of gender power relations as a legislative priority. This left work on developing, legislating, and advancing women's rights within the assembly contingent upon a very small number of legislators— both *Chavista* and opposition deputies—and their particular agendas within it (Rakowski & Espina, 2010; Second Interview with Gioconda Espina," 29 September 2011).

Pérez Marcano recounts that the deputies from opposition forces did not view the CPFMJ and its work as having no strategic importance, yet their primary focus was youth and children's issues, not women's rights, and not the legislation of Article 88 in particular ("Third Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 5 September 2012). Thus, in the first legislative term (2000 to 2005), Pérez Marcano was situated as a president and later vice president of a commission populated by opposition deputies who did not share her primary legislative focus.

In the second legislative term (2005 to 2010) when *Chavistas* possessed complete control of the assembly, Gabriela Ramirez became president of the CPFMJ, and her legislative focus was also family and children ("Second Interview with Gioconda Espina," 29 September 2011). Pérez Marcano became the president of the sub-commission working on women's rights within the broader commission. Pérez Marcano returned to the presidency of the commission in 2008, but she was not re-elected in the 2010 legislative elections.

The CPFMJ focus on family and children's issues and lack of attention to advancing women's rights carried on into the third legislative term (2011- 2015), wherein

the opposition re-entered the National Assembly and gained the presidency of the CPFMJ ("Interview with MA Student in Women's Studies," 10 August 2012). This focus on family and children translated into structural changes with the commission in this term, as it was renamed "Permanent Commission on Family" and women's issues were dropped from its core legislative focus. This meant that, within the legislature, the structure for and thus the work of specifically promoting women's rights, gender equality, and affirmative action measures for women were subordinated.⁹⁰

3.4. Women's Organizing outside the National Assembly for Rights and Power under *Chavismo*

Without general political will within the National Assembly to advance women's rights that would challenge gender power relations,⁹¹ articulation between state feminists like Pérez Marcano and activists outside the assembly, combined with activist pressure on the assembly for legislation representing women's gender interests would be have to be key. Yet ongoing political polarization also hampered women's conjunctural coalition building for the advancement of their rights under *Chavismo*, as broader struggles for or against the Bolivarian revolution tended to divide women's rights activists. During the first stage of the Chávez government, women's rights activists within and outside the state continued to work together across class and partisan lines, yet heightened political conflicts in the second stage of the government obstructed them from uniting (Espina, 2007, p. 23). As Rakowski and Espina (2010) note, the increasing saliency of class divisions amongst women's rights activists and the "politicization of the national women's

⁹⁰ Marelis Pérez Marcano states that the National Assembly's Integrated Social Development Commission created a non-permanent subcommission on gender equity and equality after women's issues were eliminated from the Permanent Commission on Family ("Third Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 5 September 2012).

⁹¹ In 2007, the National Assembly did pass two pieces of legislation proposed by the CPFMJ that aimed to promote positive discrimination of women— the Law for the Protection of Families, Maternity and Paternity and the Law for the Promotion and Protection of Maternal Breastfeeding. Both these laws promote women's maternal roles. As Gioconda Espina (2009a, pp. 255-257) points out, the ways these laws were written do not challenge "dominant patriarchal culture" as they do not obligate employers and communities to enable parental and state co-responsibility in the care of infants, nor do they protect women's right to work outside the home when rearing young children.

agency”—the dedication of its resources to partisan support of Chávez, the PSUV, and the Bolivarian revolution— rendered coalition building across class and political divides for women’s rights difficult (p. 261).⁹²

After the defeat of the 2004 recall referendum, and with the mediation of women’s studies centers and academics (Rakowski & Espina, 2010, p. 265), women did come together across political divides as the “Broad Women’s Movement.” Together they: formulated an agenda for legislative action, which included the demand for the regulation and implementation of social security for homemakers (UNIFEM, Movimiento Amplio de Mujeres, & Centro de Estudios de la Mujer, 2006), and which they submitted to the National Assembly in 2005 (García & Valdivieso, 2009, p. 137); lobbied in support of justice for a young woman who had been held captive, raped, and tortured (Rakowski & Espina, 2010, p. 266); drafted and successfully lobbied for the passage of the 2007 Organic Law of the Right of Women to a Life Free from Violence after the Supreme Court of Justice ruled the 1998 Law on Violence Against Women and the Family to be unconstitutional under the Bolivarian constitutional framework (García & Valdivieso, 2009, p. 137); and drafted a proposal for reform of the Penal Code (León Torrealba, 2012, pp. 110-116).

Yet these initiatives were not the marks of a sustained coalition, as they were often short-lived, and after the 2007 defeat of the constitutional reform referendum, women’s cross-partisan organizing fell away (Rakowski & Espina, 2010, p. 265). Non-*Chavista* women did not participate in the drafting and discussion of the Bill for the Social Protection of Homemakers introduced to the National Assembly in 2008 (discussed below) or the drafting of proposals for women’s rights in the organic labor law reform process from 2010 to 2012.⁹³ This meant that the knowledge and experience on advancing women’s rights accumulated amongst activists who did not identify with *Chavismo* were no longer directly contributing to legislative and policy discussions.

⁹² The lines between party, government, and state were blurred within Bolivarian Venezuela under Chávez’s presidency and state resources were often directed toward party political ends.

⁹³ Chapter Seven covers this process.

The falling away of women's coalition building across political divides for the advancement of their rights did not signify that women ceased to organize and lobby for their gender interests. Yet the focus of their organization generally was not the legislative advancement of their rights. Under *Chavismo*, popular women's social and political organizing and articulation with the Bolivarian state proliferated. Networks of women's rights activists and organizations not aligned with the Bolivarian project, such as the Venezuelan Observatory of Women's Human Rights, continued organizing and using UN and international legal mechanisms and processes to legitimate their claims. In addition, new coalitions of women's organizations emerged within *Chavismo*, such as the *Araña Feminista*,⁹⁴ which formulated and submitted a number of women's rights proposals to the National Assembly and for which it lobbied the government. These new feminist organizations aligned with the Bolivarian project employed new discursive tactics: rather than drawing on UN mechanisms to warrant and strengthen their claims, they tended to appropriate frameworks and concepts circulating and promoted in the broader discourse of the Bolivarian revolution, such as socialism, sovereignty, and social justice in addition to the Bolivarian Constitution, and use them to legitimate their demands for women's rights. Yet, reflecting the broader context in which popular organizations allied with *Chavismo* proliferated and focused largely on local levels, the locus of organized popular women's contestation for the advancement of their gender interests was generally not the legislative sphere, but rather in gaining social and material power in their communities and within their mixed-gender organizations.⁹⁵ In particular, homemakers' organizations in support of the Bolivarian process did emerge in regions throughout the country during Chávez's tenure, but their articulation with the state did not include mass organizing to pressure the National Assembly to legislate Article 88. The state gender institutions did organize large numbers of popular sector women through a broad range of community- and regionally-based organizations,⁹⁶ which it mobilized for marches and public events primarily in broader support of the

⁹⁴ The *Araña Feminista* and its organizing work for the advancement of women's labor rights are described in Chapter Seven.

⁹⁵ See Fernandes (2007) and Motta (2012) for case studies of popular women organizing around social reproduction in Caracas *barrios* and challenging gender relations in their communities in the process.

⁹⁶ For example: Encounter Points, Networks of Women's Bank Users, *Madres del Barrio* Committees, and Women's Fronts.

revolution and generally not to contest gendered power relations (Espina, 2009b, p. 71; Friedman, 2009, p. 422).⁹⁷ Espina (2009b, pp. 71-73) also points out that under *Chavismo*, both *Chavista* and opposition women organized and rallied in mass in record numbers—but for or against the government, not for the specific promotion of women’s gender interests and the advancement of their rights as women.

The particular deficit of sustained organizing and pressure around the legislation and implementation of Article 88 was not merely a result of state-society relations under *Chavismo* and the ways in which popular women were incorporated into the Bolivarian project. Added to the general barriers to advancing women’s rights that would transform gender power relations under *Chavismo* discussed above, the struggle to advance Article 88 faced additional and historical barriers. Unpaid housework and homemakers had never been at the forefront of the women’s rights agenda in Venezuela—neither under *Puntofijismo* nor *Chavismo*. Nor had training in economics been central to the development of the women’s movement and its organizing focus. Across these regimes historically, few women’s rights activists occupied positions of power within state economic and financial institutions from which they could push for the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the state’s economic policies and practices. Nor had a gender perspective and recognition of women’s unpaid labor been mainstreamed in these institutions’ work ("First Interview with Adicea Castillo," 22 July 2011).⁹⁸ In addition, the inclusion of Article 88 in the Bolivarian Constitution was not the result of a sustained struggle for recognition and redistribution led by homemakers ("Interview with *Red Todas Juntas* Co-founder," 19 July 2012). Sustained movement and organization both in the state and society around recognition of unpaid housework that could propel the legislation of Article 88 forward under *Chavismo* therefore did not exist.

⁹⁷ Chapter Seven illustrates this point in the case of organizing around women’s labor rights during the 2012 presidential election year.

⁹⁸ Adicea Castillo notes however that the development of the Woman’s Bank under *Chavismo* had begun to change this, as this state institution trained popular women in economics as small producers ("First Interview with Adicea Castillo," 22 July 2011).

3.5. Initiatives to Legislate Article 88

Within this broader polarized, radicalizing, and constantly shifting political opportunity structure in which general will to advance women's rights in the legislative arena did not exist, a core group of women's rights activists did begin the work of proposing how to legislate Article 88 from the outset of the Bolivarian regime. Believing in the transformatory promise of Article 88 and gender mainstreaming in the new constitutional framework, they came together to formulate a proposal to translate the article into concrete practice during the first phase of the Bolivarian regime, before heightened political polarization and conflict set in. Broader political events provided an immediate context for them to carry forward developing Article 88 as they emerged from the constituent process.

Prior to Chávez's assumption of power, in 1997 President Caldera utilized enabling powers granted to him to decree a new social security law along neoliberal lines and according to international financial institution mandates. While campaigning for the presidency, Chávez denounced this restructuring of the social security system, and once in power, he repealed measures contained within the Caldera law (Méndez, 2006, pp. 26-28). In addition, the constituent process had reconfigured the constitutional framework for social security, enshrining it as a public, universal, integrated, unitary, participatory system covering all people, whether they could contribute monetarily or not, through solidarity financing (Article 86 of the Bolivarian Constitution). Thus, the need to reform the social security system in alignment with the new constitution was urgent.

In 2000 President Chávez created a Special Social Security Commission to draft a new Organic Social Security System Law (*Ley Orgánica del Sistema de Seguridad Social* or *LOSSS*), which would set the framework for a new social security system. The presidential commission submitted a proposal to the National Assembly, an opposition party submitted a draft *LOSSS* to the assembly, in addition to several professional associations, and the National Assembly's Social Development Commission subsequently designated a Technical Advisory Commission to assist with reviewing these proposals and drafting a new *LOSSS* (Méndez, 2006, pp. 28-29).

The legislative initiative to construct a new social security system from the onset of the Bolivarian regime provided a political opening for women's rights activists to demand that articulation of homemakers' right to social security be inserted in the new LOSS. Yet no women's rights activists were in the Social Development Technical Advisory Commission. And given the urgency for constructing a new social security framework and the fact that women's rights activists had no specific proposal for Article 88's implementation coming out of the ANC process, the time within which they had to formulate and lobby for such a proposal was short.

Within the National Assembly, Marelis Pérez Marcano began the initiative to include homemakers in the new LOSS, insisting that it be of primary concern for the CPMJ. As the commission's president, she convened events with state actors and institutions and women's rights activists to develop the proposal. Pérez Marcano also appointed Gioconda Espina, a long-time feminist and Women's Studies professor as her advisor on Article 88. Deploying the conjunctural coalition strategy developed in the past, Espina invited a core group of women's rights activists in and outside the state across partisan divides, many of whom were involved in the constituent process, to assist in developing the legislative proposal.

This core group needed to quickly develop a proposition for who would be covered, what contingencies would be covered, and how they would be covered under the legislation of Article 88. While some women's rights activists envisioned all women benefiting from this constitutional mandate, given the general disproportionate burden of unpaid housework on women ("Second Interview with Adicea Castillo," 5 October 2011), the core group was able to agree upon a proposal to reduce the potential population of homemakers to be covered so as to protect homemakers most in need and thus make the proposal more financially feasible. They agreed that homemakers who carried out essential tasks for the maintenance and development of households and who were not already affiliated to any social security regime either directly or indirectly as dependents should be included. The granting of a retirement-age pension had always constituted the spirit behind women's rights activists' demand for social security for homemakers. Yet the core group did not reach consensus on which subsystems of social security homemakers should be included, as the social security system covered other

contingencies through other subsystems, such as health, housing, and labor risks, alongside covering the contingency of old age through the pension subsystem. Even though the core group generated several ideas for financing the implementation of Article 88, they did not reach consensus on how homemakers' social security would be financed.

The latter point proved to be the most determinate, because the pension system was premised on monetary contributions by employers and workers. As homemakers had no employers and poor homemakers—who were the target group of this legislative initiative—did not have money to contribute to the social security system, the money to finance their social security would need to come from elsewhere. And this social security money for homemakers could not magically appear from the conversion of minerals beneath the nation's soil into ground rent, as the Bolivarian Constitution stipulated that income from the extractive industries should finance production, health, and education (Article 311). During the LOSSSS drafting process, state leaders also already indicated that they thought financing social security for homemakers would be too costly a burden on the state, and this judgment went up to President Chávez, who stated that homemakers would have to wait (Subcomisión de Derechos de la Mujer, 29 August 2001). Yet Pérez Marcano and the core group attempted to work with state economic and financial institutions on formulating viable means to finance homemakers' social security. However, they were not able to devise a concrete, feasible proposal to finance it before the National Assembly passed the new LOSSSS at the end of 2002. Nor did their efforts have a strong influence on the assembly and the president's Special Social Security Commission.

Heightening political conflict, rather than the women's rights core group's work, strongly influenced the drafting and passage of the LOSSSS. The opposition's submission of a LOSSSS bill to the National Assembly after the presidential social security commission had submitted its own triggered President Chávez to pressure the assembly to review the various proposals on the table and draft and pass the LOSSSS as quickly as possible ("Interview with Absalón Méndez," 12 March 2012). The Social Development Commission's Technical Advisory Commission then re-drafted the bill, which underwent limited public consultation, and which it sent to the National Assembly plenary for

discussion in December 2002, just as the employer lockout began (Méndez, 2006, p. 33). Taking advantage of opposition deputies' absence from the assembly due to their participation in the lockout, the *Chavista* deputies did not substantially debate the technical commission's bill and quickly passed it into law ("Interview with Absalón Méndez," 12 March 2012).

While some earlier drafts of the LOSSSS did not specifically include homemakers, the law that the Technical Advisory Commission drafted and the National Assembly passed did. This was due not to women's movement and CPFMJ pressure on the National Assembly and the Social Development Commission, but to articulations between Pérez Marcano, Gioconda Espina, and Absalón Méndez (one of the technical advisors to the Social Development Commission). Méndez insisted on homemakers' inclusion in the LOSSSS in his drafting work with the commission because Pérez Marcano and Espina had presented to the technical advisory commission the core group's proposal as emanating from Article 88. Méndez, in turn, recognized that the law must obey the totality of constitutional mandates ("Interview with Absalón Méndez," 12 March 2012; Second Interview with Gioconda Espina," 29 September 2011).

Yet homemakers were not included in this foundational law in the way in which Pérez Marcano and the core group had proposed—as workers, who were equal to workers who made monetary contributions to the social security system. Rather, Article 17 of the LOSSSS grouped homemakers who lacked economic protection together with disabled peoples and indigenous peoples as “other categories of persons” who would be granted special protection in the development of social security subsystems and regimes that emanated from the LOSSSS. Marelis Pérez Marcano interpreted this inclusion of homemakers in this way as a “political defeat that the women's movement suffered,” as such a categorization of homemakers denied the constitutional spirit of Article 88 ("Third Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 5 September 2012), which recognized that through their work, homemakers contributed indirectly to the wealth and welfare of the country. She notes that

in that moment unfortunately it was not possible that the parliamentarians understand the revolutionary significance of that article. And clearly, since we had an enormous weakness in the commission—there was no gender vision, the members of the

commission did not come from a tradition of struggle for women's rights— then it was very difficult to be able to defend that in the parliament in that phase ("Third Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 5 September 2012).

Because of the National Assembly's general lack of political will to advance women's rights, the legislature only included homemakers within this framework social security law on terms that subordinated them.

Yet Pérez Marcano and women's rights activists did not interpret this legislative "defeat" as the end to the struggle to legislate homemakers' social security. Rather, from the institutional foothold of the CPFMJ, they continued to work with representatives of state economic and financial institutions on a proposal to finance and implement homemakers' social security within the framework of the new LOSSSS. However, their work was disarticulated from that of the Social Development Commission, which was simultaneously drafting bills to regulate the social security subsystems enumerated in the LOSSSS ("Interview with Absalón Méndez," 12 March 2012; Interview with Ana M. Salcedo González," 13 March 2012). The Social Development Commission appointed a technical advisory team to draft a non-contributory benefit regime for the elderly and "the other categories of persons" named in Article 17 of the LOSSSS ("Interview with Ana M. Salcedo González," 13 March 2012). Neither the CPFMJ nor women's rights organizations participated in the development of this bill ("Interview with Ana M. Salcedo González," 13 March 2012), yet homemakers were explicitly included within it as beneficiaries.

In 2005, the National Assembly passed the Law of Social Services (*Ley de Servicios Sociales* or *LSS*), which outlined the non-contributory social security regime. The LSS entitled all elderly people sixty years and above without contributory capacity to an economic benefit between 60 and 80% of the minimum wage salary, as well as homemakers of any age in "a state of need" (Articles 32, 39, and 41). The LSS defined a "state of need" as a state of lack of economic, personal, familial, or social protection, which merited either temporary or permanent protection by the social security system (Article 7). While this legislative advancement did not entitle homemakers to a pension equivalent to the minimum wage to which workers who contributed monetarily to the

social security system were entitled, it did provide a legislative framework for poor and elderly homemakers to receive economic assistance from the state.

Yet, for poor homemakers to receive this assistance, the LSS needed to be regulated and the social service infrastructure needed to be restructured. For these reasons, the LSS explicitly stipulated that the national Institute of Social Services (*Instituto Venezolano de Servicios Sociales* or *IVSS*) present a plan to coordinate the integration of the benefits and services enumerated in the LSS within six months of the law's enactment, and the integration of these benefits and services take place within two years of the presentation of the integration plan (Title IX, Chapter 1). Following the passage of the LSS, the drafters of the LSS and the IVSS president held a forum on the regulation of the law and invited women's rights activists and organizations to participate in the development of the law's regulations (Espina, 10 January 2006). Yet women's organizations did not submit a proposal for the law's regulation ("Second Interview with Gioconda Espina," 29 September 2011), organizations outside the state did not pressure the state to regulate the law ("Interview with Absalón Méndez," 12 March 2012), and the state did not comply with the legislative mandates to develop and implement LSS regulations because the political will to do so did not exist ("Interview with Ana M. Salcedo González," 13 March 2012). Thus, the law that could potentially enable the extension of social security to all poor homemakers throughout Venezuela, was both in effect and dead on arrival.

Instead, in the time period in which the LSS was mandated to be regulated, in the same year as the 2006 presidential election, and during the third phase of the Bolivarian regime in which the government radicalized and extended the missions and other parallel institutions and increasingly centralized power in the executive branch, President Chávez decreed the creation of *Madres del Barrio* Mission. *Madres del Barrio* was a state oil company-financed discretionary social program targeting a narrower band of homemakers in a "state of need" with an economic benefit between 60 and 80% of the minimum wage salary— in parallel to the social security system outlined by social

security law.⁹⁹ Unlike the National Assembly, Chávez made social assistance money for homemakers and elderly women suddenly and magically appear from the conversion of minerals beneath the nation's soil into ground rent. In 2007, President Chávez also exercised these magnanimous sorcerer powers when he issued two separate decrees establishing "exceptional and temporary programs" granting pensions to 150,000 elderly people in total, with the second decree granting pensions to 50,000 poor elderly women in particular, some of whom were homemakers.¹⁰⁰

Once again, these developments did not signal the end to women's organizing for the legislation and implementation of Article 88. However, the next initiative came from outside the National Assembly, as feminist activists seized the political opportunity of the constitutional reform referendum process introduced by President Chávez in 2007 to organize and demand the inclusion of a set of proposals for women's and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, and intersex (LGBTTI) rights in the proposal for the constitutional reform referendum. Early in 2007, feminist and LGBTTI activists from both within and outside *Chavismo* formed an alliance in Caracas called *Grupo Ese*, which invoked its participatory democratic rights to engage in the constitutional reform process. Gioconda Espina, who had served as adviser to Pérez Marcano on legislating Article 88, was a member of *Grupo Ese*. She used the knowledge she had gained from that forestalled process to help to inform the group's demands for refining Article 88. As Espina explained, Article 88 did not explicitly guarantee homemakers a monthly pension, which enabled state functionaries to circumvent the spirit behind the article. *Grupo Ese* proposed reforming the wording of the article in order to make it enforceable ("Second Interview with Gioconda Espina," 29 September 2011). The group proposed changing Article 88 specifically to contain the eligibility requirements for entitlement to benefit from

⁹⁹ The development of *Madres del Barrio* Mission and its relationship to the law and Article 88 is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

¹⁰⁰ The first decree targeted elderly people 70 years of age and above in a "state of need" and elderly people 60 years of age and above with "total disability" (Chávez Frías, 25 April 2007). The second decree targeted women 65 years of age and above in a "vulnerable state" (Chávez Frías, 30 May 2007). I do not possess information on why the beneficiaries of these decrees were targeted nor how they were selected. However, Rakowski and Espina (2011, p. 187) note that researchers attempted to verify the enrolment of the decreed 50,000 poor women in social security and could not find any evidence that such women had been enrolled.

the article that women's rights activists had previously formulated (i.e. homemakers of retirement age who were not directly or indirectly affiliated to a pension regime were entitled to a pension no less than the minimum wage salary). *Grupo Ese* also proposed the execution of Article 17 of the LOSSS and Article 41 of the LSS, in addition to the implementation of homemakers' legal rights to social security within 90 days of the promulgation of the constitutional reform (Grupo Ese, 2007).

Grupo Ese submitted its proposals to the National Women's Institute (INaMujer), the Public Defender, and the Commission for Constitutional Reform (Espina, 2009b, p. 262). President Chávez did not include any of *Grupo Ese's* proposals in his proposals for constitutional reform. However, Chávez did propose the creation of a contributory social stability fund for own-account workers, which would cover retirement, pensions, pre- and post-natal periods and rest periods (Article 87 in Chávez Frías, 15 August 2007), and within which homemakers could potentially be included if they could afford to contribute to it. *Grupo Ese* and María León, president of INaMujer, secured a meeting with the Constitutional Reform Commission to discuss their proposal for the reform of Article 88 in addition to the rest of *Grupo Ese's* constitutional reform proposals ("Second Interview with Gioconda Espina," 29 September 2011). Thereafter, the National Assembly did include several of their proposals in its 36 proposals for constitutional reform—outlawing discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation (Art. 21) and gender parity on electoral lists (Art. 67)—which it issued in November 2007—but not the proposal for reform of Article 88. Yet the electorate rejected both sets of constitutional reform proposals in the national referendum in December 2007. And *Grupo Ese's* organizing fell away after the referendum.

While feminist and LGBTTI activists were organizing for the reform of Article 88 in the constitutional reform process in 2007, Marelis Pérez Marcano continued holding meetings within the National Assembly with representatives of state institutions to discuss mechanisms to legislate and implement Article 88. Inclusion of women's rights activists and organizations outside the state in these discussions was very limited ("Interview with Alba Carosio," 9 March 2012), though women's studies professor Alba Carosio officially assisted Pérez Marcano in this process. These meetings carried on

through 2008, and by the middle of the year the CPMJ had drafted the Social Protection for Homemakers Bill.

The Social Protection for Homemakers Bill began to overcome deficiencies in past proposals for financing the implementation of Article 88 and got around the legal stumbling block of granting a pension equivalent to the minimum wage to retirement age homemakers who did not have contributory capacity. It overcame these obstacles by proposing that homemakers who would receive a minimum-wage pension would contribute four per cent of their monthly pension to the pension fund until they fulfilled the number of contributions necessary for workers to receive a pension (Comisión Permanente de Familia, 15 July 2008). In this way homemakers could be defined as direct contributors to the social security system and be legally entitled to a pension equivalent to minimum wage. The bill also aimed to legislate *Madres del Barrio* Mission by aligning it with the legal framework of the LSS and transforming it into a universal social assistance program for all working-age homemakers in a state of need.

The Social Protection for Homemakers Bill reached the plenary floor of the National Assembly on 15 July 2008, where it underwent a first round of discussion¹⁰¹ with deputies' unanimous support. Marelis Pérez Marcano introduced the bill, addressed the assembly, and stated that the bill aimed to fulfill Article 88 and “settle a historic debt with Venezuelan women, with the homemakers of Venezuela” (Sección de Edición, 15 July 2008, p. 3). She used both the framework of the constitution and the framework of the Bolivarian revolution to justify the bill, arguing that it constituted part and parcel of constructing 21st century socialism. Almost all the deputies who stood up in the plenary and spoke in support of the Social Protection for Homemakers Bill that day concurred in their framing of the bill as revolutionary. Invoking a magical revolutionary discourse, National Assembly President, Cilia Flores, spoke of the bill as part of a set of “revolutionary laws” for gender justice that the National Assembly had passed or was currently discussing (Sección de Edición, 15 July 2008, p. 16). She stated to the

¹⁰¹ Bills undergo at least two rounds of discussion in the National Assembly. The first round of discussion pertains to whether the National Assembly plenary decides in principle if a bill should be developed or not. Thus, approval of a bill in first discussion signifies an agreement by the assembly that the bill should be further developed before it returns to the assembly floor for a second discussion and vote on its passage into law.

assembly: “Women do not have a reason to complain because they are in the Constitution and now they are protected in the laws, as it should be, and with all the political will that the laws can be effectively developed and do not convert into dead letters...” (Sección de Edición, 15 July 2008, p. 16). The National Assembly then unanimously approved the bill in first discussion.

After this first round approval of the Social Protection for Homemakers Bill, the CPFMJ held ongoing technical discussions to further develop the bill, but the commission struggled to refine and advance it and move it forward through the assembly. In spite of the National Assembly’s unanimous approval of the bill in its first discussion, assembly deputies resisted the development of the bill. Alba Carosio insists that this resistance in part stemmed from their gender bias, as they employed a “perverse form of utilizing the concept of equality,” wherein instead of recognizing the bill as a positive discriminatory measure to achieve gender equity in social security, they argued that it discriminated against men (“Interview with Alba Carosio,” 9 March 2012). In this National Assembly resistance to develop the Social Protection for Homemakers Bill, persistent gender bias intersected with the magical revolutionary state’s nominalism of which Coronil writes: the boundaries between representations of gender justice and real gender justice were confused. Many of the assembly deputies whose discourse identified the bill as a mark of the Bolivarian revolution’s commitment to advancing women’s gender interests did not support the bill’s development and passage into law. In addition, the Social Development Commission, which had previously been a stumbling block to the advancement of Article 88, held more weight within the Assembly, and was specifically charged with developing social security legislation, was against the bill (“Interview with Alba Carosio,” 9 March 2012). The commission argued that there was no need for it, since homemakers would be included in the pension law that had yet to be drafted and approved (“Third Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano,” 5 September 2012).

The CPFMJ also struggled with creating a feasible formula for financing the rest of homemakers’ social security beyond homemakers’ own contributions and its proposal that the state contribute ten per cent toward homemakers’ pensions. Representatives of state financial institutions invited to participate in actuarial assessments and the

formulation of a funding proposal continued to argue that the implementation of pensions for homemakers would not be economically feasible. The National Assembly's Economic and Financial Research and Advice Office stated that the approval of the bill would significantly affect inflation and GDP (Dirección de Investigación y Asesoría Económica y Financiera, July 2008, September 2009). It estimated that the implementation of pensions for homemakers would be equivalent to two and a half per cent of the national budget—which was approximately one and a half times the total annual budget for the state ministry charged with social protection (Dirección de Investigación y Asesoría Económica y Financiera, July 2008, September 2009). However, Alba Carosio contends that this resistance from state financial authorities and the calculations they gave as justification for not passing the bill into law were informed by their gender bias and not necessarily from reliable statistics ("Interview with Alba Carosio," 9 March 2012). Yet, Marelis Pérez Marcano admits that "unfortunately" the women deputies in the assembly pushing the bill allowed themselves to be "co-opted" by such assessments from national government representatives ("Third Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 5 September 2012).

Pérez Marcano also admits that the failure to develop and push for the passage of the bill was due to the women's movement not "agglutinating around" it ("Third Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano," 5 September 2012). At the same time, no conjunctural coalition around the Social Protection for Homemakers Bill existed, as women's rights activists beyond the state gender institutions did not participate in the discussion and drafting of the bill, nor was the bill that the assembly approved in first discussion disseminated broadly to the women's movement outside the state. Between the small support from the base of popular women and the resistance from National Assembly deputies and state economic authorities, little pressure both within and outside the assembly and the state more broadly existed to overcome the barriers of gender bias and funding proposals to propel the development and passage of the bill forward.

Once Pérez Marcano lost in the 2010 National Assembly elections, work within the assembly to push forward the Social Protection for Homemakers Bill petered out. The bill became a set of dead letters, which National Assembly president Cilia Flores had forewarned against, and homemakers by and large remained unprotected by the

social security system. Yet, once again, the national executive acted magically, swiftly appearing with an abundance of petrol money that the National Assembly could not access to take up the forestalled extension of social security. President Chávez announced at the end of 2011, less than a year before the 2012 presidential election, that he was creating a new mission, a “great mission”—Great Mission in Elderly Love (*Gran Misión en Amor Mayor*)—to establish a special minimum wage pension regime not just for excluded homemakers but for all elderly adults in the country living in households with incomes less than the minimum wage salary. And suddenly, with the president’s 2011 decree, the state that had insisted it could not fund and sustain poor homemakers’ social security appeared to have funds to include all the nation’s elderly poor in the social security system.¹⁰²

3.6. Conclusion

The post-ANC legislative contestation over the gendered distribution of power illustrates that while the 1999 constituent process and constitution laid the foundations for homemakers’ entitlement to social security, these foundations were not strong enough for women’s rights activists to rely on to impel state enforcement of this constitutional mandate. The political opportunity structures of the National Constituent Assembly and the Bolivarian regime under President Chávez’s tenure were both characterized by rapid changes. Yet the ANC represented a political opening for the advancement of women’s rights, whereas the post-ANC period of regime contestation and consolidation largely represented a political closure for the legislative advancement and enforcement of women’s rights. Unlike the transversalization of gender in the 1999 constitution, a fundamental commitment to gender mainstreaming and the promotion of gender equality did not transverse state policies and state and party actions under Bolivarianism. While the Bolivarian government created new gender institutions and new organizational articulations with popular sector women and incorporated a discourse of feminism as central to the construction of socialism for the 21st century, the state more

¹⁰² Chapter Six discusses the waiting of popular women in one *barrio* in Falcón state for the *Amor Mayor* pensions to reach them and their dependents in 2012, and thus raises questions as to the administration of the mission and the extent of its reach.

broadly did not undergo deep and thorough institutional changes in terms of its commitment to mainstream, advance, and enforce women's gender interests. Popular women lacked equal descriptive representation in governance, and they especially lacked substantive representation to champion and forward their gender interests. Moreover, unlike the ANC process, when women were able to take advantage of the unique political moment to unite across partisan divides to further their gender interests, broader political polarization and conflict under Bolivarianism tended to hamper women's rights activists' conjunctural coalition building, as the saliency of partisan and class differences rendered their gender solidarity insufficient to unite them. This larger political context often turned the focus of their organizing and coalition building from their specific gender interests toward actions for or against the revolution and/or the government. No mass movement existed to compel the state to legislate and implement Article 88. Pressure from within and outside the state for the state to act to enforce women's rights, and Article 88 in particular, was not sustained. Thus, under Chávez's presidency, popular sector homemakers in Venezuela had the constitutional right to social security largely without legal mechanisms and institutions to enable them to enjoy their newly won right.

Moreover, state recognition of homemakers' right to social security was profoundly shaped by the centralization of power under *Chavismo*. When the state did channel social assistance to popular homemakers, it did so outside of the legislative arena—where legislation partially recognizing Article 88 had been passed and women's rights activists had been developing a fuller proposal for the implementation of Article 88—and through executive action. On several occasions, President Chávez acted suddenly and magically with the state's petrol money to expand social protection to popular sector women through the missions and executive decrees. The Bolivarian state, under Chávez's charge, recognized popular homemakers (though not all of them), but they and the women's rights activists supporting their interests did not control the terms of this recognition and redistribution.

Chapter 4. State Imaginations of Popular Motherhood within the Revolution: The Institutional Design of *Madres del Barrio* Mission

4.1. Introduction

The legislative initiatives aimed at putting into effect homemakers' constitutional right to social security that did not bear fruit, detailed in the previous chapter, did not signify a vacuum of state action around Article 88 during Hugo Chávez's presidency. Rather, the executive branch of the Bolivarian government acted in parallel to the national legislature and the extant welfare state apparatus when it invoked Article 88 in its generation of a new social policy initiative targeting extremely poor homemakers throughout Venezuela with social assistance. In 2006, president Hugo Chávez decreed *Madres del Barrio* Mission—a discretionary conditional cash transfer program through which it claimed the state would recognize the value of popular homemakers' unpaid housework.

Using official state documentation and data from interviews with state leaders and actors and women's movement leaders on *Madres del Barrio*, this chapter analyzes the relation of *Madres del Barrio* Mission to Article 88. It locates the development and design of *Madres del Barrio* within the Bolivarian government's development of the missions as a parallel welfare state apparatus integral to the radicalization of the Bolivarian revolution under Chávez's presidency.

Further, this chapter begins to examine how the Bolivarian state drew on gender, gender difference, and the gendered division of labor in its reshaping of state-society relations through this new mission. By laying out the institutional design of *Madres del Barrio* Mission in this chapter, I show how the Bolivarian government, under Chávez's presidency, imagined the role of popular sector motherhood and women's unpaid labor

within the Bolivarian revolution.¹⁰³ Comparing my analysis to other gender analyses of conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs in Latin America, I contend that like other CCTs in the region, *Madres del Barrio* constitutes what Maxine Molyneux (2006, 2008) terms a maternalist program. Similar to other CCTs in the region, this mission incorporated women as mothers and reinforced their role as caregivers and the gendered division of labor. Yet drawing from Molyneux's conception that CCTs resignify motherhood through the conditionalities they impose on women beneficiaries, I argue that *Madres del Barrio* also resignified motherhood in the context of the Bolivarian revolution. In addition to expecting them to carry out their housework, the mission posited the *madres* as revolutionary subjects—"protagonists"—articulating popular power through the fulfillment of the community, political, and socio-productive co-responsibilities that it set for them.

This chapter begins with an overview of the design of conditional cash transfer programs in Latin America and their underlying gendered assumptions. It then moves into a discussion of the social and political context in which the executive branch of the Bolivarian government enacted *Madres del Barrio* Mission as part of the development of a parallel welfare state apparatus that would serve the larger state goals of advancing the Bolivarian revolution and reconfiguring state-society relations. This discussion of the institutional design of *Madres del Barrio* delves into the gendered assumptions within the conditionalities of the mission and how they intersected with state notions of popular power in the Bolivarian process. I examine the uncertain relation of the mission's design to Article 88 and trace this uncertainty to the mission's non-transparent structure. I conclude that this lack of transparency around *Madres del Barrio* indicates the mission's development of top-down state-society relations, which call into question the potential for the state's promotion of popular women's power through the mission.

¹⁰³ The following chapter shows how the Bolivarian government empirically resignified the role of popular sector motherhood and women's unpaid labor within the Bolivarian revolution through an examination of the mission's discourses and practices and popular interpretations of them.

4.2. Gendered Assumptions Underpinning the Design of Conditional Cash Transfers in Latin America

From the late 1990s through the 2000s—at the same time as Venezuela re-founded the republic to address social, political, and economic crises associated with neoliberalism—many Latin American states, with the assistance of international finance institutions, began designing and implementing conditional cash transfer programs in response to socio-economic failures of the neoliberal model. Conditional cash transfers programs, or CCTs, are cash transfers from the state to targeted groups of poor citizens that are conditional on these citizens' fulfillment of certain duties—such as ensuring their children's schooling, nutrition, and medical visits and performing community work. These new social programs are premised on notions of “active citizenship” and “co-responsibilities” between the state and citizens, wherein families are expected to share responsibility with the state for managing socio-economic risks (Bradshaw & Quirós Viquez, 2008; Molyneux, 2006, 2008). CCTs seek to overcome the “assistentialism”¹⁰⁴ of state assistance in Latin America during the post-World War II corporatist and national developmental era (Molyneux, 2006). They bring the state back into social provisioning for the poor in ways that both incorporate and transform previous modes of public welfare delivery.¹⁰⁵

Scholars have analyzed CCTs in Latin America as measures to make liberalism more inclusive, as these programs aim to enhance poor citizens' capacities to take care of themselves (Escobar Latapí & González de la Rocha, 2009; Luccisano & Wall, 2009; Molyneux, 2006; Razavi, 2009; Tabbush, 2009). They have found that, in linking means-tested benefits for certain groups of vulnerable citizens to minimal social rights to basic welfare, CCTs in Latin America have served to mitigate poverty and constitute the development of more inclusive social protection measures.

¹⁰⁴ Assistentialism, or *assistencialismo*, broadly refers to non-contributory state social assistance to the poor, in contrast to state welfare to which citizens contribute. A popular connotation of assistentialism is that its recipients are passive subjects.

¹⁰⁵ Molyneux (2006) notes the emergence of the importance of civil society and the principles of “participation,” “empowerment,” and “co-responsibility” in the delivery of social welfare in Latin America in the 1990s. At the same time, she contends that the notion of co-responsibility draws from earlier social hygiene movements and state-led modernization and civilization projects that targeted the poor in the region in order to facilitate their integration into capitalist society.

At the same time, gender analysis has revealed that CCTs are predicated on inequitable gender power relations and the exploitation of the labor of poor mothers positioned within them. For example, studies of conditional cash transfers programs in Mexico (Bradshaw, 2008; Escobar Latapí & González de la Rocha, 2009; Luccisano & Wall, 2009; Molyneux, 2006, 2008),¹⁰⁶ Argentina (Tabbush, 2009),¹⁰⁷ and Nicaragua (Bradshaw, 2008; Bradshaw & Quirós Viquez, 2008)¹⁰⁸ have shed light on CCTs' underlying gendered assumptions and the gendered implications of their targeting mechanisms and conditionalities. These countries' CCTs are designed to target mothers in particular, as the cash transfers that mothers receive are in exchange for the fulfillment of their reproductive functions and thus to support them in their reproductive role (Molyneux, 2008, p. 31). These CCTs do not target fathers for sharing responsibility in meeting household reproduction needs (Bradshaw & Quirós Viquez, 2008, p. 195; Luccisano & Wall, 2009; Molyneux, 2006, p. 59). Sarah Bradshaw (2008, p. 195) points out that this programmatic gender-specific targeting at women to fulfill family needs is based on notions of gender differences in intra-household resource allocation and usage, wherein women are conceived of as the family members who make choices that are able to improve the welfare of the whole household rather than merely their own. Molyneux therefore asserts that such CCTs position mothers as "policy conduits,... in the sense that resources channeled through them are expected to translate into greater improvements in the well-being of children and the family as a whole," and the benefits that mothers derive from the programs "are a by-product of servicing the needs of others" (Molyneux, 2006, pp. 59-60). Bradshaw (2008) and Constanza Tabbush (2009) point out that in positioning beneficiary mothers as policy conduits, CCTs are

¹⁰⁶ Mexico's CCT program—*Oportunidades*— requires children's school enrolment, family members' regular health check-ups, mothers' attendance at health and nutrition information sessions, and mothers' performance of community work (usually cleaning work) in exchange for cash transfers to female heads of participating households, food supplements, and health and education subsidies (Escobar Latapí & González de la Rocha, 2009; Molyneux, 2006).

¹⁰⁷ Argentina's CCT program—*Plan Familias*— requires children's school attendance and health check-ups in exchange for cash transfers directly to women (Tabbush, 2009).

¹⁰⁸ Nicaragua's CCT program—*Red de Protección Social*—requires children's progression through primary schooling, improvements in their nutrition, and healthy development of pre-school age children and mother's attendance at health, hygiene, and childcare information sessions in exchange for temporary cash transfers directly to women for children's education, family food security, and payments to private healthcare providers (Bradshaw, 2008; Bradshaw & Quirós Viquez, 2008).

underpinned by an “ideology of maternal altruism.” Tabbush (2009) contends that this ideology promotes a “model of the ‘empowered’ woman based on her alleged altruism and commitment to family welfare” and willingness to conduct unpaid family and community labor (p. 311). Similarly, Molyneux (2008) concludes that such CCTs are maternalist programs, which serve to resignify motherhood, in that the co-responsibilities are normative devices that promote specific notions of motherhood to which the state expects women beneficiaries to conform. These scholars using gender analyses to examine CCTs in Mexico, Argentina, and Nicaragua have concluded that, in targeting female heads of households, these countries’ CCTs tend to reify traditional gender roles by reinforcing maternal modes of care and gender differentiated social reproduction relations and modes of social inclusion. Instead of promoting gender equity in social reproduction, these CCTs increase poor women’s reproductive burdens. These programs both rely on and tend to exacerbate gender difference and women’s primary responsibility for family welfare. While these CCTs assist in meeting the needs of poor women’s dependents, they do not transform the structural determinants of these women’s vulnerability in relation to the market and the family.

4.3. The Development of the Missions within the Radicalization of the Bolivarian Revolution

From 1999 to 2003, the Bolivarian government made little headway in addressing the social policy shortfalls that it inherited from the *Puntofijista* regime,¹⁰⁹ as its social policy initiatives remained targeted measures and failed to reach the majority of the

¹⁰⁹ As Chapter Two notes, poverty and extreme poverty rates in Venezuela nearly trebled between the beginning of the 1980s and the end of the 1990s. The targeted, compensatory social programs that the Pérez and Caldera governments instituted in the wake of the *Caracazo* were unable to mitigate these poverty rates (Gómez Calcaño, 1998, pp. 227-230). The introduction of user fees for state welfare services under neoliberalism (Wilpert, 2007, pp. 106-107) also compounded welfare shortfalls amongst the popular sectors.

popular sectors.¹¹⁰ Indeed, during these first years of the regime, persistent social policy shortfalls perpetuated the social exclusion of large swathes of the popular sectors. For example, in 2003, 70% of people in Venezuela could not access health services, the majority of adolescents dropped out of the education system, close to 60% of households lacked adequate housing, and around 80% of people in Venezuela did not have social security for old age (D'Elia & Cabezas, 2008, p. 1).

The new constitution, the elections that followed its approval, and debates and conflicts over institutional reforms dominated the political agenda of the first years of the Bolivarian government (D'Elia, 2006, p. 204), not social policy. As Chapter Three details, intense and increasing political polarization and conflict, which in turn unleashed an economic crisis, also marked these first few years of the Bolivarian regime. Following the April 2002 coup and the 2002-2003 employer lockout, the opposition moved to revoke President Chávez's mandate through a recall referendum that took place in 2004.

Responding to this contextual mix of mass social exclusion, an economic crisis, and an opposition intent on unseating him from power and rendering the country ungovernable in the process, President Chávez announced the creation of the missions in 2003. The missions were a set of emergency programs intended to augment already existing Bolivarian social policy initiatives and rapidly address welfare needs amongst popular sectors throughout the country. The missions emerged as emergency social policies, designed "to demonstrate the capacity of the revolution to reduce social exclusion... in the areas of health, education, food, production and housing" (D'Elia & Cabezas, 2008, p. 4). In order to roll out the missions quickly and avoid resistance from within the extant state bureaucracy, the government bypassed the existing state organs

¹¹⁰ During the first stage of the *Chavista* government, President Chávez continued some of the compensatory social programs initiated by President Caldera, while introducing new targeted emergency social programs carried out by a civil-military alliance (Fernandes, 2008, p. 41). Together, this mix of targeted social programs appear to have contributed to slightly decreasing poverty rates, but these gains were sharply reversed with the economic crisis that ensued in the wake of the 2002 coup and with the 2002-2003 employer lockout (Weisbrot, 2008, p. 36 & 38).

charged with administering social policy.¹¹¹ Small presidential commissions quickly designed the missions and the presidency financed them through extra-budgetary funds taken from state petrol rents. The government turned to the military, Cuban officials and workers, state oil company (PDVSA) workers, some state and municipal workers, and community organizations and volunteers aligned with the Bolivarian project to roll them out in popular sector neighborhoods (D'Elia & Cabezas, 2008, p. 4). From 2003 to 2004, the government created and rolled out thirteen missions across the country to address welfare deficits in the above-mentioned areas. (See Table 4 for an outline of these missions). These initiatives resulted in the Bolivarian government quickly reaching and assisting many of the poorest members of Venezuelan society to meet their basic welfare needs¹¹² in novel ways that invoked and depended upon community organization and participation.

With President Chávez's legitimacy reasserted by the electorate when he defeated the opposition in the recall referendum in 2004, he began to radicalize the Bolivarian government project. After his 2004 victory, Chávez stated that "the objective of this new phase [post-referendum] is to guarantee the definitive transformation of the inherited political and social structures and the economic and cultural model that sustained them, through the radicalization of revolutionary policies and especially the social missions" (Chávez Frías, November 2004). He moved to consolidate the missions as an integral component of the new institutional framework of the revolutionary state under construction. In this framework, the missions would privilege social equality and

¹¹¹ D'Elia (2006, p. 209) notes that during the first years of the Chávez government, the president and other high-ranking *Chavista* authorities possessed weak control over the state apparatus. Therefore, the executive "concluded that the political timing of the Venezuelan conflict made it impossible to wait for administrative reforms to improve management capacity in the face of new and urgent demands" (Lander & Navarrete, 2007, p. 24).

¹¹² The exact numbers of people reached by these missions are uncertain because of lack of access to reliable statistics. However, D'Elia and Cabezas (2008, p. 10) cite Datanálisis surveys indicating that in 2004 *Barrio Adentro* reached 30% of the population and *Mercal* reached 38.2% of the population. They also cite both government authorities and Datanálisis surveys indicating that approximately 2.7 million people had benefited from the educational missions by 2007. D'Elia (2006, p. 74) states that the government asserted that *Vuelvan Caras* had trained 300,000 people by 2005. Habitat Mission appears not to have had the same massive reach as the other missions, as it had only constructed 10,000 houses by June 2005, thus making a small dent in addressing the national housing deficit of approximately 1,800,000 houses (D'Elia, 2006, p. 122).

popular participation in public policy and, in turn, reconfigure state-society relations. From 2004 to 2006, the government's objectives with the missions were: the de-bureaucratization of state-society relations; the incorporation of the armed forces in public programs; the social, political and economic organization of communities according to the collective values of solidarity and revolution; and the control and management of the resources resulting from petroleum (D'Elia & Cabezas, 2008, p. 5). This move marked a further turn by the Bolivarian government away from developing the welfare state apparatus inherited from *Puntofijismo* toward the broadening and strengthening of an alternative or parallel welfare state apparatus charged with designing and implementing social policy targeted at the popular sectors and supporting, defending, and advancing the revolutionary Bolivarian project.¹¹³

Although the missions originally emerged as emergency social policy measures, in their consolidation post-recall referendum, they did not transition out of an administrative logic of emergency. That is to say, they remained designed and managed by presidential commissions in an ad-hoc fashion, financed by extra-budgetary funds from PDVSA proceeds (D'Elia, 2006, p. 208; D'Elia & Cabezas, 2008, p. 5), and not subject to legislative approval and oversight (Hawkins, et al., 2010).¹¹⁴ This administrative structure enabled the missions to operate magically: through Chávez's masterful and decisive leadership, they could suddenly arise to address suspended claims for social inclusion and expand rapidly throughout the country by almost instantaneously converting the country's oil wealth into massive goods and services for the popular sectors. This administrative logic also signified that the missions remained discretionary social policy, which meant that, just as they could magically appear on the national stage, they could easily and quickly disappear from it according to fluctuations in oil revenues and political whims (Wilpert, 2007, p. 147). Entrenching the missions as

¹¹³ Hawkins, Rosas, and Johnson (2010) note that the missions did not quantitatively mark an increased proportion of the national budget dedicated to social spending (while noting that absolute social expenditure increased as state revenue increased), but rather marked a qualitative restructuring of the government's social spending in terms of who social policy reached and how it reached them (2010, p. 202).

¹¹⁴ This is in contrast to the extant welfare state apparatus created and monitored through liberal democratic means (under both *Puntofijismo* and *Chavismo*), which was subject to legislative approval and oversight.

discretionary social policy in turn perpetuated the pre-existing disarticulation between social policy and social rights, as citizens did not necessarily have rights to recourse if the missions did not reach them and/or fulfill their stipulated responsibilities (D'Elia & Cabezas, 2008, p. 15; Wilpert, 2007, p. 148). Furthermore, in continuing to operate as discretionary social policy subject to an administrative logic of emergency, the missions did not dismantle the extant welfare state apparatus that was enshrined in law and subject to legislative oversight. Rather, they developed parallel to it as “an integrated system in itself to attend to the set of needs of the excluded sectors and consolidate within it the values and symbols of the revolution” (D'Elia & Cabezas, 2008, p. 15).

Table 4. Development of the Bolivarian Missions 2003-2004

Name of Mission	Date of Creation	Focus of Mission
<i>Barrio Adentro</i>	April 2003	Health
Robinson I	July 2003	Literacy
Sucre	July 2003	University education
Robinson II	October 2003	Primary education up to sixth grade
Miranda	October 2003	Organization of reserve military bodies
Ribas	November 2003	Secondary education
Mercal	January 2004	Access to basic food security
Miracle	January 2004	Correction of degenerative eye conditions
Identity	February 2004	Official identity documentation
<i>Vuelvan Caras</i>	March 2004	Cooperatives and nuclei of endogenous development
Habitat	August 2004	Access to land and housing and home improvements
Guaicaipuro	October 2004	Food security and health, education, and housing services for indigenous communities
Piar	October 2004	Support to small-scale mineworkers

Adapted from Delia (Ed.), 2006, p.207 and D'Elia & Cabezas, 2008, p.8

4.4. State Imaginations of Popular Sector Motherhood and Unpaid Labor within the Bolivarian Revolution: The Development and Institutional Design of *Madres del Barrio* Mission

Against this backdrop of the development of a parallel welfare state apparatus with the goal of advancing the Bolivarian revolution, President Chávez announced the establishment of *Madres del Barrio* Mission during the 2006 presidential election year, in time for International Working Women's Day that year. Chávez (24 March 2006) decreed *Madres del Barrio* as a new mission that would specifically target homemakers "in a state of need" with a temporary or permanent economic benefit of 60-80% of the minimum wage salary in order to "overcome their poverty" and "exclusion and elevate their quality of life." Chávez issued his decree enacting *Madres del Barrio* just over six months after the National Assembly signed the Law of Social Services (LSS) into effect and just after the period in which the national Institute of Social Services was mandated to draft and present a plan to roll out this new law. As the previous chapter details, the 2005 Law of Social Services stipulated that homemakers "in a state of need" would receive an economic benefit between 60 and 80% of the minimum wage salary. In spite of its usage of the same wording in laying out its target population and the economic benefit, Chávez's presidential decree did not cite this law. However, the decree stated that *Madres del Barrio* was "in concordance" with Article 88 of the Constitution and "in accordance with" Article 17 of the Organic Law of the Social Security System (Chávez Frías, 24 March 2006), which stipulates that specific social security benefit regime laws will establish the conditions under which to grant "special protection" to homemakers who "lack personal, family or social economic protection" (Asamblea Nacional de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2005). The enactment of *Madres del Barrio* carried on with the framework set by previous missions in duplicating social policy through the development of parallel welfare state institutions, which the 2005 Law of Social Services

explicitly prohibited (Asamblea Nacional de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2005).¹¹⁵

As with the development of previous missions, president Chávez appointed a small presidential commission to design *Madres del Barrio* Mission, which it designed within a few months. None of the five officials appointed to this presidential commission came directly from women's movement organizations and none had been directly involved in the post-ANC discussions and organizing around how to legislate homemakers' social security. Rather, according to Gioconda Mota, who served on this presidential commission and then became the first president of *Madres del Barrio*, the idea for the mission came from María Cristina Iglesias, the Minister of Work ("First Interview with Gioconda Mota," 3 October 2011). Mota asserted that Iglesias saw a pressing deficit in social security coverage of homemakers and proposed that the mission would take an integrated and progressive approach of targeting women in extreme poverty "while more structural measures with relation to the issue of social

¹¹⁵ Article 93 of the Law of Social Services "prohibits national administration organs and bodies from granting economic benefits of a similar nature" to those outlined in the LSS. The LSS prohibits duplication of social policy, thus developing the 1999 constitutional mandate and the legal mandate in the 2002 Organic Law of the Social Security System to create a unitary, integrated social security system. The drafters of these mandates created them because the Venezuelan social security system was extremely fragmented—with somewhere between 800 and 1000 public retirement and pension regimes around the time these mandates were drafted ("Interview with Absalón Méndez," 12 March 2012). As discussed above, the missions also had perpetuated and complicated the fragmentation of social policy because they were instituted in parallel to the extant welfare state apparatus. According to Ana Salcedo, who served on the technical team that drafted the LSS, the intention behind the LSS mandate was to eliminate the extra costs that come with state provision of parallel social services in an uncoordinated manner and therefore to put more order to and streamline public social expenditure ("Interview with Ana M. Salcedo González," 13 March 2012).

The National Assembly passed the LSS when the forces aligned with *Chavismo* held a razor-thin majority in the legislature. The lack of regulation of, observance of, and adherence to the LSS then is not necessarily due to the power dynamic between *Chavismo* and the opposition. Rather, Absalón Méndez—a long-time advisor to the National Assembly on social security—argues that, under *Chavismo*, the legislative and executive branches acted uncoordinated from each other on social policy issues, with each branch individually approaching the reconfiguration of the social security from different angles, ultimately impeding the systematization and consolidation of social security in Venezuela (Méndez, 2006, p. 37). According to Méndez, the executive's contravention of the LSS with its establishment of *Madres del Barrio* Mission is a reflection of the disarticulation between the executive and legislative branches of government at the time ("Interview with Absalón Méndez," 12 March 2012).

security coverage were taken" ("First Interview with Gioconda Mota," 3 October 2011). Further, Mota stated that the presidential commission designing *Madres del Barrio* viewed social security as a historical debt owed to homemakers, while noting that no legislation existed that operationalized homemakers' right to social security as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution. The commission therefore conceptualized *Madres del Barrio* as a measure to begin operationalizing Article 88 ("First Interview with Gioconda Mota," 3 October 2011).¹¹⁶

Yet, unlike the group of activists organizing to draft and later legislate and implement Article 88 by targeting homemakers of retirement age for a pension (whose work is highlighted in the preceding two chapters), the presidential commission designing *Madres del Barrio* decided to target primarily extremely poor homemakers who were not yet of retirement age with social assistance. To be eligible for the mission, a woman did not have to be of retirement age, but had to be a homemaker with "ascendant and/ or descendent persons under their dependency" whose "family income was less than the cost of the food basket" (Chávez Frías, 24 March 2006). The economic benefit of 60 to 80% of the minimum wage salary that beneficiaries would receive would be the same for all recipients, regardless of how many people were under their care. *Madres del Barrio* only targeted women as potential beneficiaries and the decree enacting the mission made no mention of men. Mota stated that this targeting design was intended "to bring about an initial economic support that would level the life conditions of the family and at the same time develop some work with a humanistic, organizational and even socio-productive character that would allow the women to enter

¹¹⁶ As this description of the development of *Madres del Barrio* indicates, the presidential commission designed the mission during the time period in which the National Institute of Social Services was mandated to draft and present a plan to roll out the 2005 Law of Social Services. As Chapter Three explains, the LSS provides a juridical framework for poor and elderly homemakers to receive economic assistance from the state. If the Law of Social Services had been enforced, then based on the claim that the intention of *Madres del Barrio* was to begin to operationalize Article 88, the mission would not be necessary. I do not know whether, during this time period, the presidential commission already knew that the National Institute of Social Services would not draft such a plan and the Law of Social Services would therefore become dead on arrival. However, an alternative interpretation could be that the executive's fundamental objective in establishing *Madres del Barrio* was not about operationalizing Article 88. Several influential women's movement activists' opinions in favor of this interpretation are detailed below.

the world of work in an individual and collective way” (“First Interview with Gioconda Mota,” 3 October 2011).

Like other CCTs in Latin America, the design of *Madres del Barrio* contained the co-responsibilities that mothers use their cash transfers to care for their families and ensure their children’s schooling and nutrition.¹¹⁷ Yet, unlike other CCTs in the region, *Madres del Barrio* set further duties for mothers to fulfill, which included receiving occupational training as a strategy to assist them in exiting poverty. The designers of the mission intended that the economic benefit would be temporary for working-age homemakers, as the mission would prepare the beneficiaries for productive occupations. This preparation would include state micro-financing of their productive activities once they completed their training. The executive envisioned that such support would in turn enable the *madres* to become independent of social assistance and “overcome their situation of extreme poverty” (Chávez Frías, 24 March 2006). The mission’s design of occupational training and micro-financing for the *madres* therefore fit into the general contemporary Latin American social policy paradigm of embedding liberalism and making it more inclusive by enhancing the poor’s capacities to take care of themselves.

The presidential decree establishing *Madres del Barrio* did not stipulate a specific time limit for working-age homemakers’ receipt of the cash transfer. Rather, the decree noted that the duration of receipt of the economic benefit would be determined by the particular conditions of each homemaker and her family (Chávez Frías, 24 March 2006). Neither the presidential decrees governing *Madres del Barrio* nor the official mission documents I accessed stipulate who in the mission would be responsible for making this determination and how they would arrive at it.¹¹⁸ Rather, Mota informed me that the idea of the mission designers was that “after a period of time, when the women had sufficient levels of empowerment in all viewpoints—economic, social, humanitarian—she could

¹¹⁷ When I asked Mota, she did not reflect an awareness of the design of other CCT programs in Latin America. However, she was only one of the designers of the mission. It could be possible that the institutional design of other Latin American CCTs influenced the other designers of *Madres del Barrio*. Yet I do not have access to any information that shows what kind of influence, if any, other Latin American CCTs had on the design of *Madres del Barrio*.

¹¹⁸ Chapter Five illustrates how *Madres del Barrio*’s lack of clear guidelines on the duration of the temporary benefit and procedures for exiting the mission enabled the *madres* who remained in the mission to be judged in popular discourse about their interactions with the mission.

hand over that benefit to another mother who in some way was at the point in which she started” (Chávez Frías, 24 March 2006).

The training and micro-financing that the *madres* would receive to enable their independence were designed to fit into the larger state socio-economic goals for the Bolivarian revolution. The productive occupations that the *madres* would assume would be of their choice. Yet their occupations would not only have to serve the individual *madres*’ needs to overcome their poverty, but they also would have to meet their communities’ needs, as the executive decree stipulated that they must fit into “the endogenous development of their communities” (Chávez Frías, 24 March 2006). The concepts of “socio-productive inclusion” and “endogenous development” employed in the establishment and parameters of Mission *Madres del Barrio* were broader strategies employed by the Bolivarian state to achieve national sovereignty and construct socialism. The *madres*’ socio-productive occupations were conceptualized as part of a larger process of “generating cultural dynamics that can overcome the logic of capitalist domination” and forming a “new social structure and the consolidation of a new economic model, that is driven by the National Bolivarian Government” (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", 2007, p. 56).

In envisioning the *madres*’ productive work as fitting into the broader national revolutionary project of supplanting capitalism and its organizing logics, the mission expected the *madres*’ productive activities both to meet social needs and be collectively organized. *Madres del Barrio* Mission guidelines developed shortly after the mission’s establishment stipulated that the *madres*’ socio-productive projects should be developed and carried out collectively, as the mission would only grant loans¹¹⁹ to economic associative units¹²⁰ and cooperatives to finance their projects (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", August 2007, pp. 1-2). Further, the mission would only finance socio-productive projects in productive areas that fit into the National Plans (*Planes de la Nación*) (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", 2007, p.

¹¹⁹ These loans were interest-free and supposed to be paid back within five years (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", No date provided).

¹²⁰ De facto organizations of two or more people administering a common economic project (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", August 2007, p. 2)

56) and created production chains or added value to production chains (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", No date provided).¹²¹ The mission itself, or through referrals to other state organs, would provide *madres'* collective enterprises with "socio-political and motivational" education, skills training in their respective productive areas, and technical advice so that they could successfully design and carry out their collective socio-productive projects (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", No date provided).

The design of *Madres del Barrio* Mission extended beyond the provision of occupational training and micro-financing. The designers of *Madres del Barrio* employed a multi-dimensional conceptualization of poverty as a social, "structural", and "spiritual" "problem" in addition to an "economic problem" (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", October 2007a) and as affecting not only women as individuals but also their family members. Since they viewed social exclusion as a crucial aspect of poverty, the mission designers envisioned a range of integrated public measures and interventions to achieve the social inclusion of beneficiaries and their families. The presidential decree enacting *Madres del Barrio* stated that homemakers and their families would receive "support" in "health, food, education and training, culture, recreation and housing" (Chávez Frías, 24 March 2006). The decree stipulated the establishment of a presidential commission comprised of representatives from the ministries in these different areas to ensure that such social support would be provided to program beneficiaries in a coordinated manner (Chávez Frías, 24 March 2006).

The designers of *Madres del Barrio* also conceptualized poor homemakers' lack of social and political participation and protagonism as part of the structural problem of poverty that they faced. In guidelines for the mission's community work developed shortly after President Chávez's decree of the mission, *Madres del Barrio* stated that extremely poor homemakers would only overcome their situation of poverty and exclusion through their participation in the design, execution and evaluation of activities carried out for their benefit (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez",

¹²¹ These productive areas were: "agriculture, cattle, poultry and fishing; industrial; textile; artisanal; food; tourism; and services" (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", 2007, p. 56).

October 2007b, p. 10). The mission asserted that through their participation in productive and community activities, in “co-responsible articulation” with the state, popular sector homemakers would take charge of their own welfare, overcome their poverty and “break with assistentialist” (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", October 2007a) modes of welfare delivery. The presidential decree enacting *Madres del Barrio* stipulated that state support of *madres* and their families would be “carried out in co-responsibility between public institutions and the organized community” and the *madres* should “assume the commitment”...“to participate with their families in organizing processes of the communities to which they belong” (Chávez Frías, 24 March 2006).

Like other CCTs in Latin America premised on notions of active citizenship and co-responsibility, *Madres del Barrio* framed popular women’s participation in co-responsibility with the state as an integral component to the functioning and achievement of the goals of the mission. The notion of co-responsibility developed by the designers of the mission included not just an articulation between individual women citizens, their families, and the state, as in other CCTs in Latin America. Guided by a concept of collective participation, the Bolivarian government’s notion of co-responsibility also included an articulation between the *madres*, their families, and community-based collective organizations. The formation of local collective organizations of popular power and their action in co-responsibility with the state were central to the government’s vision for the reconfiguration of state-society relations. In the mission’s design, the *madres* would support the state and popular power organizations, the state and popular power organizations would support them, and popular power organizations would mediate between the *madres* and the state.

The designers of *Madres del Barrio* framed popular power, in articulation with the state, as the “principal” means by which poor homemakers would come to be included in the mission. According to the mission guidelines, “the different politically organized forms of the communities (community councils, land committees, health committees, technical water tables, network of users of BanMujer, INaMujer encounter points, committees of social protection, and *Madres del Barrio* committees, amongst others)” would select “the mothers and families in the greatest condition of poverty and vulnerability” for inclusion in the mission (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", 2007, p. 6). These

mothers would then be assessed in their homes by a state surveyor to determine their “socio-economic profiles” and needs, which included information about their family members (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", October 2007a). Their data would be sent from there to state organs for review and verification, and ultimately sent back to the communities, where “citizen assemblies” would have the final power to decide which mothers were really in a state of need and should be included in the mission (Misión Madres del Barrio "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", 2007, p. 6).¹²²

Under the decreed design of *Madres del Barrio* Mission, *Madres del Barrio* committees, comprised of ten to fifty homemakers (Chávez Frías, 25 October 2006), would be the vehicle for the articulation of the *madres*’ popular community organization and participation. The presidential decree states that these committees “should contribute to”:

1. Strengthening ties in the *barrio*, providing affect and help to the poorest mothers and families.
2. Watching over the care of children, youth, and elderly of their community.
3. Guaranteeing the schooling and contributing to better school performance of the children and youth of their community.
4. Watching over the good functioning of the feeding houses, school cafeterias, Mercal establishments,¹²³ and making sure that no member of the community experiences hunger.
5. Watching over health in the *barrio* and the health conditions of the community, paying special attention to the children, youth, and elderly.
6. Participating in the communal councils and articulating with the network of social services.
7. Administer public resources for the attention to social security needs of the community (Chávez Frías, 25 October 2006).

These decreed guidelines for the work of the *Madres del Barrio* committees indicate that under the program design, homemakers would be expected to extend their reproductive

¹²² The following chapter discusses and analyzes some of the empirical implications of this co-responsible popular power-Bolivarian state framework for selection of *Madres del Barrio* beneficiaries, and in particular how such a design enables particularism in the selection of mission beneficiaries.

¹²³ Mercal Mission distributes and sells low-cost basic food products across the country through fixed and mobile commercial points, prioritizing sales to low-income Venezuelans, in order to guarantee the food security of the country (D’Elia, 2006, pp. 46-49).

roles from their individual households to their communities by attending to the social provisioning needs of vulnerable members of their communities through their committees. In essence then, while the mission termed them “community promoters,” the mission beneficiaries were expected to become the mothers of the *barrio* through their community organization and participation.¹²⁴ The *madres*’ extended reproductive labor was also expected to include supporting the state’s social provisioning services in their communities through monitoring, channeling, and administration of state resources. Later mission guidelines stipulated that the spokeswomen of the *Madres del Barrio* committees should assume the additional task of socially and politically integrating other women from their communities who had been previously excluded, as the committees were to serve as sites of women’s incorporation into the Bolivarian revolution (Misión Madres del Barrio “Josefa Joaquina Sánchez”, October 2007b, p. 13). The designers of the mission imagined the *madres*’ reproductive labor and community-based organization as buttressing the Bolivarian state and revolution.

Madres del Barrio Mission’s co-responsibilities for *madres* to receive occupational training, engage in collective socio-productive activities, and organize socially and politically in their communities were framed as constituting part of the government’s broader geopolitical and economic goals of national sovereignty, socialism, and popular participation for the Bolivarian revolution. The mission posited the *madres* not just as policy conduits for their families and children, but also for their communities and the revolution. As mothers of their *barrios*, the resources channeled to them were expected to translate into social, economic, and political improvements for their communities and the national revolution in addition to their individual families. The mission expected the *madres* to perform triple shifts of housework, productive work, and social and political community work in order to fulfill these co-responsibilities.

¹²⁴ I am thankful to Alba Carosio for this insight.

4.5. The Uncertain Relation of *Madres del Barrio* to Article 88

While the design of *Madres del Barrio* mission targeted poor working-age homemakers, it did not exclude homemakers of retirement age. Rather, the intent of the designers of the mission, as Gioconda Mota notes, was that elderly homemakers could enter the mission and receive the economic benefit equivalent to 60-80% of a minimum wage salary, from which they would eventually “trampoline” to the social insurance role and a permanent pension equivalent to the minimum wage salary, once the social security system underwent structural reforms and was broadened (“First Interview with Gioconda Mota,” 3 October 2011). According to Mota, the designers also conceived that working-age homemakers under “very adverse conditions,” such as having prohibitive disabilities or high care loads of family members with disabilities, would receive the mission benefit and eventually transition into receipt of permanent social security as well (“First Interview with Gioconda Mota,” 3 October 2011). Further, Mota stated that the presidential commission used the 2005 Law of Social Services as the juridical basis for the allocation of an economic benefit to poor homemakers within the design of *Madres del Barrio* (“First Interview with Gioconda Mota,” 3 October 2011), even though the presidential decree enacting *Madres del Barrio* did not state that the mission was in accordance with that law.¹²⁵

Women’s movement activists were divided over whether *Madres del Barrio* Mission marked a partial fulfillment of Article 88, even though the presidential decree establishing the mission drew on Article 88 to legitimate it. As discussed above, the actors who designed *Madres del Barrio* were not the actors who had been engaging in organizing for the enforcement of Article 88, and the proposal for and design of *Madres*

¹²⁵ Mota’s explanation of the juridical basis of the mission appears at first glance to be a contradiction. Yet, it may not necessarily be a contradiction, if the executive knew that it would not or might not be able to extend the mission benefit to all poor homemakers throughout Venezuela. Whereas the enforcement of the Law of Social Services connotes that poor homemakers would have *rights* to benefits stipulated in the law which the state would have the duty to fulfill, the establishment of a mission does not entail a corresponding right to benefit from it as a citizen of Venezuela. While I cannot confirm this interpretation of Mota’s explanation, it may be one of the reasons why the presidential commission designing *Madres del Barrio* used the Law of Social Services without formally citing it.

del Barrio did not directly emerge from women's movement proposals for the legislation of Article 88. Nor were pressures from below the state pushing the state to create a mission as a vehicle to operationalize Article 88. In addition, the subjects targeted by *Madres del Barrio* were different from those who were the intended beneficiaries of social security benefits in the initiatives to draft and legislate Article 88. Both the means by which the mission was created and the structural design of the mission contributed to a lack of consensus amongst women's movement activists on the relation of *Madres del Barrio* to Article 88.

Gioconda Espina, who served as an advisor to the National Assembly on Article 88, contended that this uncertainty is a result of the vagueness of the drafting of the article ("Second Interview with Gioconda Espina," 29 September 2011), (because Article 88 does not state that homemakers of retirement age will receive a pension but rather that "homemakers have the right to social security in accordance with the law"). This wording leaves homemakers' social security and its fulfillment open to a range of interpretations. According to Espina, even though Chávez and the presidential commission did not base the design of *Madres del Barrio* on the work that the women's movement had already done within and outside the National Assembly on conceptualizing how to operationalize Article 88 (which is detailed in the preceding chapter), "one cannot say that Chávez lied. Chávez referred to the letter of the article, but not what we had been working on since 1999 as the 'spirit' behind the letter. He chose the interpretation of Article 88 that was most convenient to him" ("Second Interview with Gioconda Espina," 29 September 2011). For Espina, who is not *Chavista*, this convenience was political, as she saw the mission as a clientelist vehicle for Chávez to strengthen his grassroots political support amongst young popular sector women and their children—his electoral base ("Second Interview with Gioconda Espina," 29 September 2011). Marelis Pérez Marcano, a *Chavista* and the former National Assembly Deputy who had been the prime driver for operationalizing Article 88 within the legislature, also did not view *Madres del Barrio* as a social policy measure that fulfills Article 88. She argued that the mission did not recognize the added value that homemakers produced and thus was not a measure to achieve gender equity. Rather, according to Pérez Marcano, the mission incorporated "a perspective of social inclusion" of the most vulnerable in society—poor, single mothers with children— in order to meet

their immediate needs with temporary social assistance, incorporate them into socio-productive processes, and thereby “combat extreme poverty” (“Fourth Interview with Marelis Pérez Marcano,” 6 September 2012). Espina and Pérez Marcano, who had worked together across political divides within the National Assembly to legislate Article 88, agreed that *Madres del Barrio* did not signify state fulfillment of Article 88.

However, other women’s movement actors within the state have viewed *Madres del Barrio* as a partial fulfillment of Article 88. Virginia Aguirre, the former director of the Bolivarian Gender Observatory, and a national-level feminist public functionary whom I interviewed, saw the mission as a form of state recognition of unpaid housework. A feminist public official working at the national level whom I interviewed saw the mission not as a form of recognition of the value of poor homemakers’ unpaid housework but as a means to incorporate them into the social security system. And the two former municipal coordinators of *Madres del Barrio* and a municipal gender institution worker whom I interviewed did view the mission as a fulfillment of Article 88. These former municipal-level mission workers referred to the economic benefit that the mission allocated to beneficiaries not as social assistance but as payment for their household labor—something that the women’s movement activists working on drafting and legislating Article 88 had been careful to avoid because of the potential gendered regulatory effects associated with paying women for the housework that they perform in their own homes. For example, Nora Castañeda, who was active in the CONG and women’s movement’s organizing for the ANC and went on to serve as president of the Bolivarian state Woman’s Development Bank during Chávez’s presidency, noted that the movement explicitly discussed whether to demand a salary or social security for homemakers in the constitution. According to her, they decided against demanding a salary “because the salary is an instrument to enslave the worker and it would come to constitute an instrument to enslave the women worker-homemakers,” and that is why Article 88 explicitly enshrines homemakers’ entitlement to “social security” and not remuneration (“Interview with Nora Castañeda,” 2 August 2011).

4.6. *Madres del Barrio* Mission's Non-Transparent Structure and Its Price of Silence for Popular Women's Power

These differing views amongst women's movement actors who had worked within the state about what *Madres del Barrio* was and its relation to Article 88 arose not only because the idea for the mission did not emerge from previous women's movement organizing around Article 88 and because of differing political perspectives amongst them. This lack of consensus also arose because of the mission's non-transparent structure. Information about the mission that goes beneath the Bolivarian state's public transcript to evaluate its performance was not publicly accessible. The "public transcript" refers to James Scott's conceptualization of what the subordinate say and do in the presence of the dominant—their public ritual displays of compliance with power relations that seem to be "in close conformity with how the dominant group would wish to have things appear" (Scott, 1990, p. 4). Under President Chávez's tenure, the *Madres del Barrio* were everywhere on the public stage set by the state—at government marches; in events with government figures from the local level up to regional, national and even presidential levels; and in government print, electronic, digital, and audio media. But reliable public information about them and what the mission had specifically done and not done for them was almost nowhere to be found.¹²⁶ This included even the most basic of information about the *Madres del Barrio*, such as how many of them existed. For example, the few state documents that I was able to access that do provide information about how many women were incorporated in *Madres del Barrio* contradict each other. Both Aguirre, Bethencourt, and Testa (2009, p. 93), from the Bolivarian Gender Observatory, and the National Assembly's Office of Economic Financial Research and Advice Office (Dirección de Investigación y Asesoría Económica y Financiera, July 2008, p. 17) cite 2008 statistics from INaMujer on the total number of women incorporated into the mission throughout Venezuela at that time. Drawing from the same institutional source, Aguirre et al. state that 99,633 women were incorporated (p. 93) while the National Assembly Office states that 240,000 women were incorporated (p. 17). This lack of transparency helped to preserve the magical appearance of *Madres del Barrio*,

¹²⁶ Hawkins, Rosas, and Johnson note a similar phenomenon in their 2010 article on the missions in general (p. 210).

as its opaqueness lent to the generation of an environment in which different understandings of the mission's actions, inactions, and internal machinations could be projected onto it. The divergent views of the mission reflected above speak both to its uncertain relation to article 88 and to how the discretionary design of the mission was constructed around its lack of transparency to those outside its internal realms of decision-making powers.

Those internal realms of decision-making power appear to have been closed off not just to those outside the Bolivarian state but also to those within it. I do not know if information about the mission was publicly accessible before the mission was moved under the administration of the Ministry of Woman's Issues in 2008. Yet, as early as 2008, D'Elia and Cabezas (2008) were noting extreme difficulties in accessing statistical information about the missions (p. 9). Since *Madres del Barrio* in particular had been administered by the woman's ministry (MinMujer) and Nancy Pérez led this ministry from 2010 to 2013 (when it was called the Ministry of Woman's Popular Power and Gender Equality), the ministry did not make information about the mission publicly available, even to leaders and workers *within the very same ministry*. For example, MinMujer denied the proposal of the Bolivarian Gender Observatory, the state institution charged with evaluating public policies directed at women that was located within the same ministry¹²⁷ to evaluate *Madres del Barrio* ("Interview with Virginia Aguirre," 6 September 2012). A former worker within the national ministry tasked with articulating the various socioeconomic programs of the ministry, which included *Madres del Barrio*, also informed me that she struggled to access basic information about the mission ("Interview with Laura," 10 July 2012). Even after several years of performing this work, she did not possess a clear understanding of how the mission worked ("Interview with Laura," 10 July 2012). If national-level state gender institution workers could not access information about *Madres del Barrio* from within their own organization, what then was the fate of the public who has the right to know how its resources were used? What does this indicate about the state of the public sphere in Bolivarian Venezuela and how popular sector women were positioned within it?

¹²⁷ The Ministry of Woman's Popular Power and Gender Equality closed the Bolivarian Gender Observatory during Nancy Pérez's tenure as minister.

The *Madres del Barrio* documents that I was able to access, and which I cite in this chapter, were not readily accessible in the public sphere. They were provided to me not by MinMujer—the state organ that had been charged with administering the mission since 2008—but by the Family, Woman, and Youth Commission of the National Assembly. They were provided to me because Marelis Pérez Marcano, the former president of the commission, asked the commission staff to furnish me with them. None of these documents were available in the public archival offices of the National Assembly at the time of my archival research in 2011, and these official documents only covered the first two years of the mission’s existence, before it fell under the administration of MinMujer. This brings into question how the Venezuelan public could even access the limited documentation I was able to access.

My experience as a researcher of persistently approaching the gatekeepers of *Madres del Barrio* Mission at local, regional, and national levels in 2011 and 2012 addresses questions of access to information and the state of the public sphere by demonstrating the lack of public access to information¹²⁸ about the mission as well as the popular sector women participants within it. In 2011, I moved to Falcón state, believing I would be able to interact with the participants within the mission—its beneficiaries, workers, and local and regional authorities because of my research relationship with the Collective Authority for Women’s Issues and Gender Equality in the state. Sub-national and national state gender institution authorities had also granted me research pre-clearance prior to Nancy Perez’s assumption of power of the MinMujer. However, when I approached the (new) Falcón regional level (male) coordinator of the mission (who was appointed after I received my pre-clearance and Nancy Pérez assumed power), he informed me he would first have to receive approval from the mission’s national authorities before I could begin my research with the mission. And so began my half-year process of engaging with regional and national state gender institution authorities in order to seek permission to conduct my planned research. Navigating this institutional

¹²⁸ Erin Fletcher (2012)—also a North American academic researcher— details in an online publication her foiled attempts in 2012 to access statistics on women’s issues— in her case, domestic violence statistics— from the National Institute for Women, the Ministry of Woman’s Popular Power and Gender Equality, the National Defender of Women’s Rights, and the national police.

maze eventually took me to the halls of the national Ministry of Woman's Popular Power and Gender Equality, where I was told that the national minister had rejected my proposal without providing any reason, after I had been told that her vice-minister had approved it.¹²⁹ A state authority then informed me that, without such national level permission, I was not allowed "to touch the *madres*."¹³⁰ The magical, non-transparent structure of *Madres del Barrio* Mission—a public social program—enabled state authorities to block me from accessing information about participants within it.

Gender inequalities in control over public resources directed at women also complicated hierarchies of power and knowledge within the bureaucratic structure of the mission. In the above anecdote of the hierarchy of control of access to information and participants within the mission—of who was allowed "to touch the *madres*"—the regional coordinator's gender is relevant because *Madres del Barrio* was the only Bolivarian mission in Venezuela targeted only at women. In my research in 2011 and 2012, I found men leading the mission at the municipal level—Miranda municipality, where the city of Coro is located—, the regional level—Falcón state, and the national level—the National Director of Attention to the *Madres del Barrio*. If *Madres del Barrio* was an institutional articulation of popular women's power, why were men leading it?

I persisted, however, in my endeavor to construct knowledge of *Madres del Barrio* Mission, its organization, and its effects on popular sector women's welfare, gender relations, and social, political, and economic participation. I did this by piecing together a picture of the mission through documenting the words and experiences of those who had "touched" the *madres* in one way or another—as former mission workers or authorities or state workers who were not employed by the mission but whose work

¹²⁹ I never received written confirmation from either of these authorities as to their responses to my research proposal. This lack of documentation from above—at the national state level—also illustrates issues of transparency with the institutional functioning of the state women's and gender equality organs.

¹³⁰ Similarly, Petras and Veltmeyer (2009, p. 180) note a general paternalistic orientation toward the popular sectors by middle class *Chavista* leaders. Writing about the third and fourth phases of the Bolivarian regime, Fernandes (2010) also notes increasing "manipulat[ion]" of the popular sectors by *Chavista* middle leadership, while Motta observed a "logic of governability and power dominates their actions" toward the popular sectors (cited in Spronk & Webber, 2011, p. 244).

brought them into contact with it and participants within it.¹³¹ I also attempted to access mission participants and workers without the knowledge of the state authorities, but I found that the disciplinary power of the state cast a large shadow over them and constrained their voices. One mission worker in Falcón told me she could lose her job if her employer were to find out I interviewed her. And a mission participant revoked her participation in my study when she became convinced that her answers to my questions would endanger her status with the state as well as potentially endangering President Chávez, in the run-up to the 2012 presidential election. Moreover, a former mission participant told me that when *Madres del Barrio* were interviewed on public television, their words were scripted for them by the mission's staff. The *madres'* public discourse upheld the magical state by following the public transcript of the mission, which my research aimed to go beneath.

Two former municipal mission coordinators and three former mission participants insisted to me that *Madres del Barrio* imposed no obligations on women in order to benefit from it. Yet my experiences of attempting to listen to popular women's experiences of the mission in 2011 and 2012 indicated that one key condition existed to which program beneficiaries and workers at several levels and in several locations had to submit. At that juncture in the Bolivarian process, they had to remain silent or when they did speak in the public sphere, their words were not their own but scripted for them from above. These examples indicate that their participation was both demanded and controlled. The *Madres del Barrio* were constantly made visible on the local, regional, and national stages in government events, television programs, and publications. Yet their presence in the public sphere was also concomitantly marked by the absence of their range of voices and experiences.

My blocked attempts to listen to the voices of the *madres* beyond their participation in publicized events and their sound bytes contained in government media raises important questions as to their power and control. What is the price of the silence of *Madres del Barrio* beneficiaries and workers, the silence of poor and working class women whose labor ensured that the poor survived? What does it mean about how their

¹³¹ This picture is detailed in the following chapter.

unpaid labor and their voices were valued? Moreover, what is the price of their silence to the public sphere—a public sphere that was supposedly constituted by and for the popular classes under the Bolivarian process— as they had to keep quiet about a *public* social program—a public good that supposedly put into effect a constitutionally-enshrined right—about which the public has a right to know? What would making public the mission’s hidden transcript endanger? And finally, as *Madres del Barrio* was discursively invoked as an expression of popular power in governance, what did it mean for the state of actually existing popular power that the *madres*’ publicly expressed words were controlled by government administrators— by the same actors who controlled the *madres*’ access to economic benefits?

My attempts to know *Madres del Barrio* Mission from the standpoints of its beneficiaries and its workers may raise more questions than answers as to what the mission meant for poor homemakers’ power and participation in the public sphere. However, I argue that the closed doors and silences I confronted do not automatically translate to a vacuum of knowledge about the mission. As Burawoy (1998, p. 17) asserts: “A social order reveals itself in the way it responds to pressure,” and its “resistance... discloses much about the core values and interests of its members...” My intervention in the social world of *Madres del Barrio*, my very presence—even from just outside its gates—the pressure of my persistent desire to know it, and the resistance I encountered from actors within it all revealed properties of how that institution was structured (Burawoy, 1998, pp. 6-7). I originally set out to construct knowledge about *Madres del Barrio* by placing myself as a participant observer within it; my blocked attempts at knowing the mission and the homemakers within it exposed some of the most intimate and fundamental contours of the mission’s structure and the kind of top-down state-society relations it was fostering with popular sector women in spite of the program’s rhetoric of articulating popular power.

4.7. Conclusion

The missions were a key institutional mechanism that produced the Bolivarian magical revolutionary state. Bypassing the legislature and state bureaucracy, President Chávez responded to mass social exclusion throughout Venezuela by enacting the

missions suddenly and expanding them rapidly through the conversion of state oil rent into goods and services for the popular sectors. In privileging co-responsible popular participation in the delivery of these new public goods and services, the missions were an integral part of the Bolivarian government's vision for reconfiguring state-society relations and advancing the revolution.

Through analyzing the institutional design of *Madres del Barrio* Mission, this chapter has shown that underlying assumptions about gender and the gendered division of labor were woven into the Bolivarian government's plan for the reconfiguration of state-society relations through the missions. In its design and development of *Madres del Barrio*, the Bolivarian government imagined the role of popular sector motherhood and women's unpaid labor in line with its objectives for the revolution's radicalization. The mission both drew on the extant hegemonic gender role of women as mothers and resignified it such that poor mothers were expected to be responsible for their communities' welfare and the advancement of the revolution in addition to their families' welfare. The production of a revolutionary maternalism through *Madres del Barrio* constituted part of the government's vision for the radicalization of the Bolivarian revolution.

The Bolivarian state was a magical revolutionary state not only because it suddenly produced new institutions, goods, services, and visions for the roles and work of the popular sectors, but also because it was opaque. The designers of *Madres del Barrio* Mission appeared to answer suspended claims for gender justice by invoking Article 88 in the development of this mission. Yet *Madres del Barrio* was a discretionary program, constructed around its lack of transparency to those outside its internal realms of decision-making powers. The mission's non-transparent structure both limited what could be known about its relation to Article 88 and enabled the state to persist with its public transcript that the mission constituted fulfillment of Article 88. While enhancing the Bolivarian state's magic, the mission's non-transparency reveals its development of top down state-society relations with popular sector women. The ways in which the mission held back the *madres'* range of voices and experiences from the public sphere calls into question the extent to which the mission was an institutional mechanism to promote popular women's power and control.

Chapter 5. Regulating Motherhood in *Madres del Barrio*: Intensifying yet Disregarding the Unpaid Labor of the Mothers of the Bolivarian Revolution

5.1. Introduction

After my repeated efforts to get into *Madres del Barrio* Mission to conduct my research were rebuffed by state gender institution authorities, I located *madres* who had been incorporated into the mission and had exited it. Through the accounts of these former *madres*, I began to uncover a bottom-up perspective of how the mission worked and the effects it had on popular sector homemakers' welfare, gender relations, and social and political participation. I was introduced to three former *Madres del Barrio*—Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya—who had each exited the mission because they were running their businesses with their respective cooperatives that they had launched with the assistance of the mission. The Bolivarian government had held up these three former *madres* as poster women of *Madres del Barrio* Mission, as they had stopped receiving their economic benefits, were continuing to carry out their socio-productive activities, and therefore had fulfilled the objectives of the mission. Because of their achievements, they were already accustomed to media attention and publicly telling their stories of “*echando pa'lante*” (a popular colloquial term in Venezuela for “getting ahead”) under the tutelage of the mission.

I set out to listen to these three women's stories of success and learn from them how they were able to *echar pa'lante* through their fulfillment of the mission's co-responsibilities, when so many of their fellow *Madres del Barrio* had yet to do so. Both these former *madres* and state gender institution workers often employed these terms (of *echando pa'lante* or *saliendo para adelante*) to describe them as the mission's success cases as well as to set them apart from the *madres* who had not exited the mission and gotten off state assistance. This discursive device differentiating

“independent” from “dependent” mothers and its implications for popular understandings of gender and state roles and responsibilities for social provisioning are discussed in detail throughout this chapter. Miriam’s, Marilyn’s, and Soraya’s stories were not representative of the majority of *Madres del Barrio*; their stories do not represent the typical *Madres del Barrio* experience nor the full range of the *madres*’ experiences. However, I tell their stories because they do reveal how the mission operated in practice and how popular women were positioned within it.

Utilizing Dorothy Smith’s (1987) “everyday world as problematic” methodology, I fleshed out these women’s accounts of their everyday experiences within and outside the ambit of the mission in order to explore “*from that perspective* the generalizing and generalized relations in which each individual’s everyday world [was] embedded” (p. 185). Over the course of three months, I visited Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya at work in their shops, talked with them and listened to them about their struggles, accomplishments, opinions and frustrations, and conducted an in-depth individual interview process with each of them.

This chapter thus begins with Miriam’s, Marilyn’s, and Soraya’s individual stories. After telling each of their stories, I weave them together to reveal their common threads, and then extend out to the voices, experiences, and interests of state actors and institutions and women’s movement activists and analysts to show the structural forces and social and political dynamics that shaped their experiences of *Madres del Barrio* and popular understandings of the mission in general. Continuing with the discussion from the previous chapter on the mission’s resignification of motherhood within the context of the Bolivarian revolution, I examine how the mission’s structure and practices empirically intersected with these popular understandings of the mission and of motherhood. I show that such resignification had regulatory effects for the *madres* who did not fulfill all their co-responsibilities. The imaginations of revolutionary maternalism that the mission produced and impressed upon the *madres* served to exacerbate existing divisions between popular sector women and generate new forms of social and economic divisions between them. I conclude by discussing how the structuration of the mission intensified popular women’s unpaid labor while perpetuating non-recognition of unpaid

care work within the heart of the very vehicle that President Chávez decreed as applying Article 88.

5.2. Three Former *Madres del Barrio* Who Had *Echado Pa'lante*

5.2.1. Miriam

Miriam was from a *barrio*, had three children, and was a single mother in her 40s at the time of the interview process. She performed only unpaid housework and community work for the approximately 25 years that she was with her former partner. Prior to launching her business with her cooperative and the support of *Madres del Barrio* Mission, Miriam only had about two and a half years of experience of performing paid work—in the retail and clerical sectors—and she never contributed to social insurance during that time. She cared for her ex-partner when they were together and she was responsible for caring for her father who was disabled and ill before he died. At the time of the interview, she continued to care for her two youngest children and her adult brother, who had become disabled from an accident. At times, Miriam was also caring for her adult child and his children, as well as for her adult sister who was sick with cancer and was also a beneficiary of *Madres del Barrio*. Before she entered *Madres del Barrio* in 2006, Miriam lived off whatever money her partner gave her. However, she noted that this money was “a pittance,” as it was rarely sufficient to meet her family’s needs.

Before President Chávez came to power, Miriam participated in her community’s neighborhood association. However, Miriam said that even though she had always been involved in her community and was previously also a community leader, she only became interested and involved in [formal] politics when President Chávez was in power. She said that she did not participate in the constituent process of 1999 (but she did vote in the referendum to approve the constitution) and she did not read the constitution prior to her participation in *Madres del Barrio*. Yet she notes that prior to her incorporation into the mission while Chávez was in power: “we were always in agreement with the laws in everything that was to be beneficial for us, for the inhabitants

of our country... Not because I love and admire the President, but because I know that what he is doing is because it is a benefit for all of us and not for one person only, but for the collective—for all.” Further, Miriam, became interested in politics because she identified with Chávez, with his discourse and with his practices:

the form of our president simply called my attention—the intellectual, the human being that he is with the people, with the children, with the elderly, with the people he wants to help, that he wants to benefit. Why? Because he is a person that comes from below, who knows and understands the needs of the people. Before... a president was talking and it made you sleepy; it did not provoke you. Now he is talking and one turns on the television to hear the things that he says.

She noted that it was Chávez’s way of doing politics that triggered her to become politically involved. At the time of the interview, Miriam belonged to the PSUV (the United Socialist Party of Venezuela), and with the PSUV, she worked with the *Madres del Barrio* committees.

Miriam was already a member of her community’s health committee for five years and acting as coordinator of the committee when President Chávez announced the launching of *Madres del Barrio* in 2006. When the government launched the mission, the health committee in her sector¹³² was charged with carrying out the census of all the mothers living in extreme poverty in her sector, and she registered herself on the list at that time. She participated in the registry of women in her community, as she accompanied the mission surveyor in the house-by-house visits and interviewing of potential beneficiaries. Of the list of 40 potential beneficiaries in her sector drawn up by the health committee, Miriam was one of the 20 women that were chosen to benefit from the mission, whom she said were approved by her community in a validation assembly. She says that she only had to wait one or two months from the time she signed up for the mission to when she began to receive the benefit.

Miriam described the arrival of the *Madres del Barrio* economic benefit as “a help—one more complement to what the father of my kids gave me for their nutrition and for all their needs because from that I had to... make miracles. And then the complement

¹³² The term “sector” refers to a smaller territorial unit within a *barrio*.

from the mission I believe that it arrived to me from heaven.” Even though Miriam used most of her benefit to provide basic necessities for her children and grandchildren such as food, clothing, and shoes, she noted the significance of the benefit for *her*, in that it belonged to her and did not come from her partner. “I had to spend my money, because it’s mine then. And he did not go on supervising me. It was for my needs. In fact, I helped my eldest son, my grandchildren, what they also needed... not only the two that were under my charge but also my eldest son and my grandchildren. They benefited from that help.” Miriam pointed out that how she spent the economic benefit was her choice, as neither her partner nor the mission instructed her how to use the money. The mission benefit gave her a newfound sense of control in decision-making and over resources.

Although Miriam noted that her welfare and the welfare of her family improved while she received the economic benefit from the mission, the gender roles in her household remained the same. She still remained responsible for household work and her partner did not assume household caring responsibilities, even while she was working with her fellow *madres* to launch their business.

When she was participating in *Madres del Barrio*, Miriam separated from her partner. The economic support that the mission had provided appears to have helped her when she made this decision, as she was economically dependent on him before she entered the program. In this sense, the mission cash transfer seems to have contributed to Miriam’s autonomy, as it enabled her to survive independently of her former partner.

Miriam benefited from other missions of the Bolivarian government as well. Through these missions, the Bolivarian state provided Miriam with a degree of recognition of her reproductive labor by helping to lighten reproductive burden. For example, with the assistance of *Madres del Barrio*, Miriam was able to access discounted credit from *Mi Casa Bien Equipada* Mission¹³³ for a refrigerator. She stated

¹³³ *Mi Casa Bien Equipada* Mission was launched in 2011. It offers discounted prices and low-interest credit through state-owned banks for Chinese-produced household appliances, such as refrigerators, stoves and ovens, air conditioners, televisions, and DVD players.

that other *Madres del Barrio* also received discounted refrigerators from the government in the same way.

Yet Miriam's engagement with other Bolivarian missions shows the limited extent to which they recognized her reproductive labor and how this burden restricted both her time and her ability to benefit from them. For instance, Miriam viewed Mercal Mission as a huge benefit, and she had used the mission to purchase subsidized food for her family. But, like the popular sector homemakers in Falcón state who are detailed in the following chapter, she noted that her care burden prevented her from being able to use the mission regularly, as she did not have time to wait in long lines to access food. And while in *Madres del Barrio* Mission, Miriam enrolled in Ribas Mission,¹³⁴ where she began to study toward her high school equivalency. However, she was not able to complete her studies with the mission because the timing of the classes conflicted with her care work, as her classes took place when she had to drop her son off at school. When I asked her, Miriam responded that she would still like to study and complete her high school diploma, but she did not see that as feasible, given that now that she had her small business, she had to work outside of the house up to six days a week in addition to carrying out her unpaid care work at home and in her family members' homes.

Seven of the *Madres del Barrio* in Miriam's sector formed a cooperative the year after they began to receive the *Madres del Barrio* benefit in order to start their socio-productive project, as per the co-responsibilities stipulated by the mission. They decided that their project would consist of sewing textiles. Miriam continued to be involved in this project at the time of the interview, five years later. The *madres* in her sector received training in accounting from *Madres del Barrio* and in cooperativism from the National Institute of Socialist Training and Education, which sent a facilitator to their community. After the training, Miriam's sewing group bought fabrics, worked on sewing assignments during the week, and came together to share their work products on weekends. Miriam noted how she saw her own and her partners' sewing capacities grow through this process, as she sewed a quilt out of a tablecloth: "I transformed it, I transformed it

¹³⁴ Ribas Mission is an educational mission that offers free continuing high school studies to adults within their own communities.

myself. And like this successively until each one saw that we could do it, that we could achieve it. We started like this, because it was useful for ourselves, and later we began to make things... to offer them to other people, to go on doubling, tripling the money until the mission gave us the credit..." *Madres del Barrio* Mission then granted her cooperative a loan to acquire sewing machines and primary materials so that they could develop their business.

According to Miriam, a *Madres del Barrio* promoter assisted her cooperative to start their business. At the time of the interview, she said that a mission promoter continued to visit them, though less often as they no longer received the mission benefit and there had been changes in mission personnel. A former mission coordinator linked her up with the local government to access discounted retail space rental from the municipality, from which she and Marilyn were jointly selling their respective cooperatives' products in 2012.

Miriam described her exit from the mission and her relinquishment of its economic benefit in 2011—five years after joining the mission— as voluntary, because she said that she had determined that her business was established enough to sustain her without the economic support of the mission. Yet, in interviewing Miriam after she had stopped receiving the benefit, it was obvious that she and her cooperative were struggling, as they went days and sometimes weeks without sales, and she was exhausted. Miriam's cooperative had lost members: from the original seven, four now remained, as two lost their houses to natural disasters and were offered houses by the government in another community, and one member found employment, which offered her more stability than the cooperative could. Miriam was now the only member of the cooperative available to sell their products from the shop. This meant that Miriam had to work at the shop five or six days a week. Her cooperative and Marilyn's cooperative had a joint loan from one of the state banks, and after Miriam's cooperative paid off their share of monthly debt to the bank, she was often left with very little to get by on.

The Bolivarian state's full-day schooling program had yet to reach the *barrio* where Miriam lived at the time of the interview process. Because she could not access this service, Miriam's youngest son attended a half-day school, and she in turn relied on

assistance from her sick sister, her disabled brother, and her eldest son in caring for her school-age son while she worked at the shop on weekday afternoons and Saturday mornings. But Miriam often found herself without their assistance, and, in such instances, she had to bring her son with her to the shop, where she had to simultaneously care for him and run the shop.

At the time of the interviews in 2012, Miriam had recently registered as an independent worker to contribute to social insurance, and she was waiting to begin contributing to this new public service. Miriam asserts that because of her participation in the mission, she felt more developed as a human being, as she had acquired knowledge that helped both her and her children and she possessed a stronger sense of self-confidence.

5.2.2. Marilyn

Marilyn was from a different *barrio* than Miriam. She had three children and was a single mother in her 40s at the time of the interview process. She had previously performed paid domestic and cleaning work for 22 years. When she became pregnant with her third child, she withdrew from her paid work to carry out unpaid care work in her home.

When *Madres del Barrio* was initiated in 2006, Marilyn was already participating in her community's health committee. She signed up for the mission that same year through a community census conducted by her community's land committee, and she was one of the 22 women from her sector selected to benefit from the mission shortly thereafter. Marilyn noted her surprise at how quickly she was allocated the economic benefit, as she and the other mothers in her sector believed *Madres del Barrio* would pan out like other unrealized state promises in the past. She said that the arrival of the mission economic benefit was a substantial help because she had no fixed work during that period of her life, and it gave her a temporary stability. She used most of the benefit to feed her family, but she was also able to use the benefit to pay for her children to participate in extracurricular activities and to financially assist her eldest son in attending university.

While participating in the mission, Marilyn organized with other women from her sector to take sewing classes and form a sewing project. They found a space in their community to carry out the project, and the mission gave them an interest-free loan to adjust the space to their work and to buy machinery and primary materials. At the time of the interview, four years after the granting of their initial loan, Marilyn's cooperative was still paying it off, even though the mission originally expected them to finish paying it back within two years.

Marilyn was elected by her *Madres del Barrio* Committee to serve as its principal spokesperson, and in this position, she was tasked with regularly meeting with the mission staff and serving as the principal articulator between the *madres* in her sector and the institution.

Like Miriam, Marilyn had also received low interest credit for discount household appliances through *Mi Casa Bien Equipada* Mission, which helped to lighten her household reproductive work.

Marilyn described participation in *Madres del Barrio* as “an eye-opener” for the women beneficiaries within it, as they received political education workshops and learned that a woman “not only served to be inside the home—taking care of the husband, of the kids— but also that she had to participate in society and that she had another place other than the home.” In spite of her community and political participation prior to joining *Madres del Barrio*, she was not aware of Article 88 of the Bolivarian Constitution. Marilyn said that the mission educated the *madres* about their constitutional rights, including Article 88. Marilyn viewed the mission as a vehicle for women's social inclusion and participation in the public sphere. She described the mission as a transformatory vehicle that had enabled herself to “*surgir* (arise) as a person”, because with her cooperative partners, she now had her own business, which she had never imagined she would have. Rather, she had previously imagined that her life would always be characterized by “having to be dependent on others.” While Marilyn spoke of the role of *Madres del Barrio* Mission in facilitating her economic independence, she neglected to mention how the mission had at the same time facilitated a new form of economic dependence in her life. She and her cooperative partners were now indebted

to the bank,¹³⁵ which she herself noted was hard to pay off given her cooperative's slow sales.

Marilyn said that, prior to *Chavismo*, she and her fellow community members were not participating in any community or political organization because “for us that was something distant. The truth is that no one participated in anything that had to do with politics, the government or related with the community. We were apathetic to that: every one in their work, at their house, and we didn't have to do with anything... Politics was distant from the popular sectors.” She described a shift in her and her community's political participation triggered by the process that Chávez's presence on the national stage began to unfurl, as she and her fellow community members supported the MBR-200 in its coup attempt in 1992. According to Marilyn, “beginning then, we opened our eyes and we understood that we had to become integrated in politics, that it was part of us.” She began to get involved in politics, and she assisted with the organization of her community for the constituent assembly referendums in 1999. She noted that she could become informed about the constituent process prior to voting in the referendums, because beginning then, “nothing was hidden. That arrived to the communities, the parties took charge... to bring information to the sectors.” And since then, her entire sector in her *barrio* was “100% *Chavista*.”

With the arrival of the missions to her *barrio* in the 2000s, Marilyn said that the mothers in her community learned that they could participate, express themselves publicly, and look for solutions to community needs. She described this as a process of awakening, wherein the people from her community realized that they were taken into account by the developing political process. She saw her community's political participation as a vehicle to create a better future for their children, and the mothers of her community as possessing the responsibility to make this future a reality for their children. Marilyn was now participating in whatever political, cultural, and educational activities in and outside of her community that she could. At the time I interviewed her, she was the financial spokesperson of her communal council, a member of her community's health committee, and a *patrullera* (patrol officer) in the PSUV. (Marilyn

¹³⁵ I am grateful to Juana Delgado for making this initial observation.

joined the PSUV when she was in *Madres del Barrio*.) The members of Marilyn's community now sought her out when they needed assistance and to be linked up to state programs and services. Marilyn remarked that she now felt complete.

Marilyn also described her exit from the mission and relinquishment of the mission benefit in 2007 as voluntary. She said that she chose to withdraw from the mission when she felt she could "more or less maintain herself, in order to make room for other people who really needed more..." Here, Marilyn's own words reflect an internalization of an expectation articulated by Gioconda Mota (in the previous chapter) in which she stated that the designers of the mission expected the *madres* to relinquish their benefits when they were sufficiently empowered so that more needy mothers could receive them. However, Marilyn noted that when she gave up the benefit, she was left "hanging in the air," as she all of a sudden found herself in an economically unstable position because her cooperative was operating within her community, where customers accumulated tabs instead of paying on time.

Even after recently acquiring the shop from which her cooperative was selling its wares, Marilyn was struggling economically. After her cooperative paid off its monthly loan, there were times when she could barely afford transport to work. (Marilyn was the only member of her cooperative who staffed the shop that it shared with Miriam's cooperative.) In spite of being exalted by the state as a success story, Marilyn's cooperative had no contracts with the state, even though it produced textiles that they could easily tailor to meet the specific requirements of state institutions. Nor, Marilyn noted, had the state provided her cooperative with support in formalizing their business and navigating formal institutional apparatuses such as banking, tax, and municipal authorities, with which she and her fellow cooperative members had no experience. After exiting the mission, the support that she and her cooperative received from the state was thin at best. Marilyn and her partners had launched their cooperative because of and through assistance from the state, which in turn was failing to connect them with other state institutions that could benefit from their services.

On the one hand, then, the state expected them to be the spokeswomen/ poster children of *Madres del Barrio*, and on the other hand, it had not completed its job of

providing them with services that would guarantee their ability to sustain their business and not return to receiving social assistance from the state. Marilyn, herself, was quite aware of this contradiction, as she pointed out instances when the state would hold publicized acts or ceremonies with *Madres del Barrio* in which it would promise the *madres* forms of assistance (like credit and procurement contracts with state institutions), and then after such acts were over, the *madres* spent months waiting for the state to fulfill such “promises.” And in times of patchy state support and poor business, Marilyn found herself having to turn to her female family members for assistance.

At the time of the interview process in 2012, Marilyn was working five to six days a week for about five hours a day at the shop from which her cooperative and Miriam’s cooperative sold their wares. At this time, Marilyn’s sister and mother, who were also both *Madres del Barrio*, helped her with the care of her children, as they continued to work as unpaid homemakers. Marilyn also received help in carrying out household care duties from her two oldest children from time to time. During school holidays, Marilyn often had to bring her youngest child with her to the shop and care for her while she simultaneously attended to the shop. Marilyn was returning home from work in the shop (which was an hour from her home on public transport) every day, not to rest but to care for her youngest child— as she remained responsible for household carework— and to sew from home. At times, Marilyn labored from home under difficult conditions, such as completing sewing orders by candlelight when the electricity went out. Often Marilyn was returning home from the shop to do community and political work as well. Marilyn’s labor had intensified since her departure from the mission, as she often performed her productive and reproductive labor simultaneously at home and at the shop. She carried out all of this work without ongoing assistance from the mission. She spoke of exhaustion as a common feature of her everyday life. Further, at the time of the interview process, Marilyn was preoccupied by the fact that the following year her daughter would be attending a school with a shorter school day, which conflicted with the hours Marilyn had to be attending the shop. Marilyn did not know how she could reconcile this added care burden with her productive labor.

5.2.3. Soraya

At the time of the interview process, Soraya was in her 50s, she had been a single mother for around 30 years, and she had never received monetary assistance from the father of her children since she had separated from him. She had four children to whom she gave birth and six orphaned or abandoned children whom she took in. All of her children were now adults, and she took pride in the fact that all of them finished high school and none of them had turned to delinquency.

Soraya was from a *barrio* that is extremely vulnerable to natural disasters, and displacement from her housing due to this vulnerability marks Soraya's life history. She lost her home from natural disasters four times in her life, beginning when she was a child and she and her family lost their home due to an earthquake and had to return to living in a shack in another *barrio* that was also vulnerable to disasters. Most recently, Soraya was displaced from her home in a natural disaster the year before I met her. During the interview process, she was temporarily living in a state-administered refuge as she waited for the state to build and grant her the subsidized house in a middle-class neighborhood that it had promised her. (During the three-month period in 2012 that I engaged Soraya in my research, the state postponed the delivery date of her house several times. But Soraya, unlike many of the other victims of the rains who lost their homes and were staying in refuges at the time, remained patient for her house to arrive.) Precarity and struggle for decent living conditions therefore ran through Soraya's life history.

Soraya had previously performed skilled health work on a contract basis, and often worked overtime to earn enough to maintain her family. She had to resign from this work after her last child was born because he demanded a lot of care and attention and there was no one else to take primary responsibility for his care. Her mother, who had previously assisted her with the care of her children, was now elderly and could not help. From home, while taking care of her children, Soraya also painted and sold ceramics, baked and sold cakes, and sold clothing in order to make ends meet. She never received assistance from the state to raise the orphaned and abandoned children for whom she cared.

While she performed paid health work, she contributed to social insurance, but did not complete all her contributions to be eligible for a pension. When President Chávez decreed that workers such as her could complete their contributions to social insurance,¹³⁶ Soraya finished contributing to it. At the time I interviewed her, Soraya had recently begun to receive her state pension equivalent to a minimum wage salary. After many years of income precarity, she now had a stable income.

Prior to *Chavismo*, Soraya already was a leader in her community, as she began her community organizing work when she was young, helping to organize cultural and recreational events and charitable activities in her neighborhood. Between the time President Chávez initiated the missions and the start of *Madres del Barrio*, Soraya worked half-days as an unpaid volunteer, accompanying the Cuban *Barrio Adentro*¹³⁷ doctors on their house-by-house visits throughout her *barrio*.

Soraya said she never participated in politics prior to Chávez's presidency. Only with Chávez's ascendancy to power did she begin to participate politically, as she voted in the constitutional referendums of 1999 because she was in agreement with Chávez's proposals and believed that they would begin to make things better. She noted she had read the constitution prior to voting for it, but she had not heard of Article 88 before becoming incorporated in *Madres del Barrio*. She later joined the PSUV. Soraya spoke of the new constitution and President Chávez as bringing improvements to women's conditions in Venezuela. She asserted that Chávez valued and took women into account where they were not recognized before. For Soraya, this was part of Chávez's larger approach of "favoring" the popular sectors and improving their welfare.

Apart from receiving the *Madres del Barrio* economic benefit, Soraya had concretely benefited from other Bolivarian government initiatives to improve the popular sectors' welfare. She previously ate daily in the popular cafeteria built by the Bolivarian

¹³⁶ President Chávez issued two limited duration decrees—one in 2006 and one in 2010—which granted workers who had not completed their mandatory public pension contributions the opportunity to complete them so that they could receive a monthly old-age pension equivalent to the minimum wage salary.

¹³⁷ *Barrio Adentro* is a free community-based public health mission that often relied on Cuban medical personnel to deliver health services in the *barrios*.

state in her *barrio*, and her children attended educational missions, where they did not have to pay for their learning materials.

According to Soraya, a government official whom she already knew came to her community in 2006 when *Madres del Barrio* was initiated, to identify and register the mothers most in need for the mission. Soraya signed up for the mission because she was unemployed at the time. She also assisted with the registry of mothers in need in her community for the mission, as she was working as an unpaid community health worker and because of this, she asserted that she knew the needs of the members of her community. Soraya waited a few months and the economic benefit arrived, and she was very happy because it was a significant help to her household and it marked the beginning of a process of improvement to her and her family's welfare.

Soraya used her *Madres del Barrio* benefit to buy building materials to fortify her house over time, as it was made only of zinc sheets and concrete. And with the help of her children's labor, she improved her house. Sadly, this was the same house from which she was displaced the year before. Soraya also used her *Madres del Barrio* benefit to meet some of her children's basic material needs.

Soraya served in her sector's *Madres del Barrio* committee as the vice-president and the health spokesperson. In her position as health spokesperson, she said she was alert to the health needs of members of her community, organized and assisted with community vaccination drives, and accompanied and assisted the Cuban doctor in his daily house visits of sick and disabled members of the community.

While in the mission, Soraya taught two occupational training courses to multiple groups of women— both from and not from *Madres del Barrio*— from her *barrio* and from outside her *barrio*. She was not paid for either of these teaching positions that she assumed.

Soraya said that the mission provided the *Madres del Barrio* with a broad education of the 1999 Constitution and their rights and focused on motivating them to “*salir adelante*.” She made a point to note that she did not receive training as such while in the mission, but rather that she provided training to other *madres* and community

members. She saw such training as enabling younger mothers to take care of themselves so that they would not have to depend on others to meet their own and their children's basic needs. For Soraya, then, the mission provided her a venue to develop her teaching skills, assert her leadership skills, and assist other women in their processes of asserting their agency and independence.

While in *Madres del Barrio*, Soraya formed a household and industrial supplies cooperative with other women. At the time of the interview process, she was the president of the cooperative. The mission linked her cooperative to the municipal government, which provided them with training in cooperativism. Once their cooperative was established, they received a discounted rental from the municipality for their shop, which they were sharing with another cooperative assisted by *Madres del Barrio*. And the mission assisted their cooperatives in accessing a loan from a state-owned bank for the start-up of their shop, which they were still paying off at the time of the interview process. Like Marilyn's cooperative, though, even as Soraya's cooperative was launched through state assistance, it had not received any state procurement contracts that would help them to sustain the cooperative.

In 2012, six years after her incorporation into *Madres del Barrio*, Soraya exited the mission and stopped receiving the economic benefit. Unlike Miriam and Marilyn, she described her exit from the mission as a decision made by the mission staff. According to her, this occurred once her cooperative had obtained its shop and the mission staff saw she would be making more money through the cooperative's business than she was through the mission's cash transfer.

At the time of the interview process, Soraya worked on manufacturing household and industrial supplies between her old *barrio* and the refuge where she was temporarily living and the shop where she sold them. Her workdays were long, but she said she was earning more money between her pension and her cooperative's earnings than when she received the *Madres del Barrio* economic benefit. She could afford to work these long days because she was still in relatively good health and her children now took care of themselves. The two forms of state assistance— *Madres del Barrio* and her pension— had enabled Soraya to reach a sense of income security.

5.3. New State Presences Generate New State Absences

Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya all spoke of the quick turnaround time between when they initially signed up for *Madres del Barrio* Mission and when they began to receive the mission benefit. As Marilyn noted above, the mission benefit arrived to her and other *madres*, unlike other state promises in the past that went unfulfilled. For them and the approximately 100,000 women across Venezuela who were initially incorporated into the mission in 2006 and 2007,¹³⁸ the arrival of the mission economic benefit signified the presence of a state that fulfilled its promises to them.

However, for the popular sector women that *Madres del Barrio* Mission did reach, like Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya, their stories indicate that the mission also made them wait at times for further state articulation according to its promises. While the mission had rapidly incorporated them, and they in turn worked to fulfill the mission's socio-productive co-responsibilities, the mission later made them wait for continued support to sustain their cooperatives and their independence from social assistance. The mission's absent follow-through generated frustrations amongst them.

At the same time, the Bolivarian state made many extremely poor homemakers throughout Venezuela, for whom it had raised expectations of incorporation into *Madres del Barrio*, wait for the mission to reach them. Following the announcement of the enactment of *Madres del Barrio*, the mission only reached targeted geographic areas in the country. According to *Madres del Barrio* (2007), in 2006, women from 68

¹³⁸ When President Chávez announced the launching of *Madres del Barrio* in the beginning of 2006, he stated that 100,000 women would originally benefit from the mission (Espina, 16 June 2006). In August 2006, the Viceminister of Social Security, Iván Espinoza, stated that 150,000 women were already receiving the *Madres del Barrio* economic benefit and 40,000 would be added to the beneficiary list by the end of the year (Tejero Puntos, 4 August 2006). As the previous chapter details, state institutions citing INaMujer gave vastly different total numbers of *Madres del Barrio*. However, various documents from the Ministry of Woman's Popular Power and Gender Equality (MinMujer) indicate that over time the numbers of women incorporated into the mission stayed around 100,000. For example, MinMujer's Bolivarian Gender Observatory stated that 99,633 women were incorporated in the mission in 2008 (Aguirre, et al., 2009, p. 93), and in its 2010 annual report, MinMujer stated that 98,373 women received the mission's economic benefit that year (Ministerio del Poder Popular Para la Mujer y la Igualdad de Género, 2010, p. 205). Yet, as the previous chapter discusses, I have no way of verifying this approximate figure.

municipalities of the 335 municipalities throughout Venezuela were included in the mission. The criterion for the selection of these municipalities was based on the determination of the three poorest municipalities in each state. In addition, *Madres del Barrio* stated that in 2006, it incorporated into the mission homemakers with “special cases”– specifically homemakers with disabilities or with people with disabilities dependent upon them– from 105 additional municipalities. In 2007, President Chávez announced that 160,000 women would be newly included in the mission in the latter half of that year. In that same year, 44 new municipalities were added to the geographic coverage of the mission and women from these municipalities were selected to benefit from the mission. However, the mission reported that funds were not transferred to it in time to carry out the new inclusions of selected beneficiaries from those 44 new municipalities that year, and the mission was only able to finish selecting about 40% of the new beneficiaries that had been announced would be included in the mission that same year (p. 5). These numbers indicate the presence of a state apparatus that could not keep up with the pace that the president had publicly set for the mission and for the popular women whom he told the mission would reach. Although I do not have access to *Madres del Barrio* documents that show the numbers of mission beneficiaries over time, various state gender institution workers informed me in 2011 and 2012 that *Madres del Barrio* had previously stopped incorporating new beneficiaries, and at that point, if the mission did incorporate new beneficiaries, it did so only when *madres* exited the mission or were removed from it. One state gender institution authority informed me that the state had halted the expansion of the mission and incorporation of new beneficiaries because of lack of funding for program growth.

From early on in *Madres del Barrio* Mission’s trajectory, communities began to raise concerns they had about the mission not reaching them. For example, in 2007, the National Homemakers and Assistance to Pregnant Women’s Association of Carabobo state expressed to representatives of the National Assembly that it did not agree with the mission’s selection methodology in Carabobo, as the organization stated that it knew of many homemakers living in extreme poverty outside of the three municipalities that had been chosen to be reached by the mission (Subcomisión de Familia, 2007, pp. 18-19). The organization did not understand why the government had prevented such women from benefiting from the mission (Subcomisión de Familia, 2007, pp. 18-19).

This phenomenon of popular women not understanding why *Madres del Barrio* had not reached their communities extended beyond Carabobo state and the first years of the mission's existence. In Falcón state in 2011 and 2012, the mission only existed in five out of the 25 municipalities in the state. In my 2012 interview with Gloria ("Second Interview with Gloria," March 2012), a Falcón state gender institution worker, she noted that women in the majority of the municipalities that she and her co-workers had been visiting had consistently complained about the mission not reaching poor women in their communities. According to Gloria, they raised this complaint because they did not know why the mission had not arrived in their communities. Apparently, the confusion about why the mission was absent in certain municipalities and why certain homemakers living in extreme poverty had not been incorporated into the mission had at least in part been generated by the mission's own practices. According to Gloria, representatives from *Madres del Barrio* had visited all the municipalities throughout the state and compiled a list of women who could be selected for the mission, but these women never received responses from the state as to whether and when they would be incorporated into the mission. So the state left them waiting.

This new state presence on the national stage in the form of *Madres del Barrio* concomitantly generated a new form of state absence, as the state did not fulfill the expectations that it spawned amongst popular sector women that this new mission would reach and benefit them. As new state institutions and services, such as *Madres del Barrio*, engendered new expectations for state articulation, when such articulations did not transpire, their absence did not go unnoticed, but rather was often felt most by the subjects they were supposed to reach. Such sustained state absence had triggered growing frustrations amongst popular sector women, as the Carabobo and Falcón cases illustrate.

Thus, in its absences and the unfulfilled expectations it raised for both the women it did not incorporate and those whom it did and who in turn had fulfilled its goals, *Madres del Barrio* contributed to upholding a state of income precarity for popular sector women. As Auyero notes (2012) notes in *Patients of the State* of poor people's waiting for state welfare delivery, *Madres del Barrio* Mission's "raising [of] expectations and then mutely crushing them, induct[ed] poor people into a process they [could] neither

understand nor control” (p. 74). Similar to Auyero’s (2012) conclusion, the mission’s forcing popular sector women to wait in uncertainty for initial or further assistance “constitutes an exertion of state power” (p. 2)—an act of everyday Bolivarian state domination—in and through which” popular women’s “political subordination was reproduced” (p. 2).

5.4. New Forms of Inclusion Generate New Divisions among Popular Sector Women

The mission’s targeted selection mechanism and lack of transparency served to generate new social and economic divisions amongst popular sector women through a dialectic of simultaneous state presence and state absence, social inclusion and exclusion, and rapid roll-out of and making people wait in perpetuity for social assistance. As *Madres del Barrio* brought popular sector homemakers together in community organizations and micro-enterprises, it also served to divide popular sector women between those touched and those not touched by the mission.

As detailed above, Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya all were participating as leaders in Bolivarian government initiatives in their communities prior to the arrival of *Madres del Barrio* to their communities in 2006. Both Miriam and Soraya also assisted with the initial registry of women from their respective communities for the mission. And female family members of both Miriam and Marilyn were also chosen to benefit from the mission. It is not clear if Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya (and their family members) were originally chosen to receive the mission benefit because of their prior participation in government initiatives in their communities (and not necessarily because of their socio-economic “states of need”). However, the lack of transparency about why certain women were chosen to benefit from the mission while others were not raised broader questions both within and outside *Chavismo* of clientelism, patronage, favoritism, cronyism, and nepotism with the mission’s selection mechanism.

For example, a *Chavista* feminist working within the national-level state women’s institution told me that she believed the women who were initially chosen to benefit from *Madres del Barrio* were chosen because of their social proximity to the state surveyors

charged with generating the lists of beneficiaries and not necessarily because of their needs ("Interview with Laura," 10 July 2012). And Paula, a former municipal coordinator of *Madres del Barrio* who was *Chavista*, shared with me stories of local "fiddling" with the selection of beneficiaries. When she assumed her post in the mission, she found that many community organizations had already chosen women who were not extremely poor to benefit from the mission. She said that she knew one city council member who allocated the mission benefit in exchange for votes ("Interview with Paula," 6 September 2012). Adicea Castillo, a Women's Studies professor in opposition to *Chavismo*, who did note the importance of the mission reaching very excluded women and families, at the same time contended that the selection of beneficiaries was managed clientelistically. She asserted that only *Chavista* women had been chosen to benefit from the mission ("Second Interview with Adicea Castillo," 5 October 2011). These interpretations of clientelism with *Madres del Barrio* Mission's selection mechanism coincide with Robert Gay's (2006) conclusion that targeted social spending programs can recreate and expand clientelist relations, because their limited nature allows state actors to exercise discretion in deciding who will benefit from them.

Gioconda Mota, the first president of the mission, contested such allegations of clientelist selection mechanisms. She asserted that, at least under her leadership from 2006 to 2008, the criteria for selection was always "the condition of extreme poverty independent of political orientation," and women from the opposition were chosen to benefit from the mission. She insisted that *Madres del Barrio* was "a policy of social protection of the Bolivarian government toward the most excluded population" ("First Interview with Gioconda Mota," 3 October 2011).

Without concrete data from the mission on who its beneficiaries had been and what their socio-economic profiles were, these questions about clientelism and favoritism in the mission's selection of beneficiaries cannot be definitively answered. Even so, these questions constitute subjects' understandings and experiences of the mission, and thus, following Gupta's theorization about state constitution, were part and parcel of the mission itself.

These questions also prove difficult to answer because of the very nature of the *Madres del Barrio*'s selection mechanism, as it depended on various forms of community organizations to act in co-responsibility with the state in deciding who should benefit from the mission. The extent of transparency in selection mechanisms would probably vary from community to community and according to the webs of existing power relations within particular communities. While this methodology for selecting women to benefit from *Madres del Barrio* was represented by the Bolivarian government as an articulation of popular power, as it was based on the idea that community members were experts in understanding problems within their own communities, it rested on assumptions that communities were internally organized and would act harmoniously and ethically in ensuring that limited social assistance resources would arrive for women most in need. Carolina, a feminist public official working at the national level, contended that such underlying assumptions were problematic because

there is scarce capacity for control. If you do not have capacity for control and you permit that the communities—which are not benevolent entities and free from internal conflicts—select and tell you that 'these are the persons who are going to receive X or Y benefit', you can generate firstly power relations in the community that can mar relations and, moreover, generate leaderships based on government transfers which you are politically usufructing the people that they are choosing. Imagine all the power that you have in an extremely poor community-- now you decide who is saved ("Interview with Carolina," 28 January 2012).

Reliance on community organizations to implement targeted selection mechanisms for social assistance could then potentially serve as both a vehicle for particularism and a mechanism to divert resources from those community members most in need. Such a

communitarian selection process could in turn exacerbate already existing and/ or generate new social, economic, and political divisions within communities.¹³⁹

Madres del Barrio Mission itself appears to have become aware of problems with its reliance on community organizations to select beneficiaries for the mission. Gioconda Mota admits “that there were tricks in the same bosom of the popular movement,” wherein community members would get their female family members who were not in extreme poverty into the mission (“First Interview with Gioconda Mota,” 3 October 2011). And in the *Madres del Barrio* 2007 General Report, the mission stated that in 2006, “during the inclusion process, some popular power authorities fell into the political error of proposing women that were close to their groupings, but were not found to be in extreme poverty” (Misión Madres del Barrio “Josefa Joaquina Sánchez”, 2007, p. 10).¹⁴⁰ The mission asserts that it took measures to address benefit mal-distribution problems with community-managed targeting mechanisms, including the removal in 2007 of 293 women from the mission who were found not to be extremely poor (Misión Madres del Barrio “Josefa Joaquina Sánchez”, 2007, p. 10). These statements indicate that, as the state positioned popular power organizations as mediators between it and popular women, some of these popular organizations and their leaders then used their authority to become vehicles for the mal-distribution of mission benefits to women within their own communities. That is to say, some popular power organizations became new mediums for patronage and corruption.

¹³⁹ I heard of Carolina’s conception of the worst implications of community popular power selection mechanisms for state assistance playing out in a rural town in Falcón. At a regional meeting with women in this community that was organized by the Secretariat for Development and Gender Equality, one woman who was divorcing her abusive husband told us of her struggle to obtain public housing for her and her children. She had sought assistance from the leader of the communal council, who was a man and was well connected with regional-level party and state authorities. The community women present at this meeting described him as performing his leadership role in an authoritarian way. According to this particular woman, this communal council leader told her he would assist her in obtaining housing if she had sexual relations with him.

¹⁴⁰ This report of patronage with selection mechanisms is not unique to *Madres del Barrio* Mission, as Hawkins, Rosas, and Johnson (2011, pp. 193-194) also note that Robinson Mission experienced problems with patronage and cronyism in the distribution of scholarships during its first year of existence.

Gioconda Mota asserts that such “illegitimate practices” had been magnified out of proportion with what really happened (“First Interview with Gioconda Mota,” 3 October 2011). Even if that is the case, the absence of publicly accessible and reliable information about the mission’s beneficiaries created the environment for perceptions of such practices to be magnified and gain a foothold in popular discourse and understandings of the mission. This is especially so in a context in which only a select number of poor homemakers received the mission benefit and many poor homemakers did not, yet they got to watch those who did benefit in their own communities and/ or through state media channels.

This simultaneous inclusion of some popular sector women into and exclusion of others from *Madres del Barrio* Mission, combined with the absence of transparent selection criteria, served to generate resentment and stigma amongst popular sector women. For example, Miriam and Marilyn told me that some women from their communities were envious of them and other *Madres del Barrio* because they had remained waiting to be included in the mission while they witnessed Miriam, Marilyn, and their co-*madres* receiving the economic benefit. And in Falcón state, Ana María, a regional-level gender institution worker, joked with me that a popular saying existed amongst older women who had not benefited from the mission that the mission beneficiaries were not *madres del barrio* (mothers of the *barrio*) but rather “*vagas del barrio*” (slackers of the *barrio*). When I asked Ana María to explain this term, she noted that such women saw the young *Madres del Barrio* hanging around the *barríos* and remarked how the benefit was wasted on them.¹⁴¹ This tension generated between popular women included in and excluded by the mission’s incorporation process is similar to the scenario described by Molyneux regarding Mexico’s CCT program producing in areas where its coverage was more selective (Molyneux, 2008, p. 35), and shows that selective targeting measures can serve as vehicles to divide popular women.

Processes of state dis-incorporation of beneficiaries from *Madres del Barrio* also generated and/ or reproduced divisions amongst popular sector women. For example,

¹⁴¹ Such terminology also connotes a perception that the participants in the mission were lazy and not productive— a popular understanding that reproduced the non-recognition of the unpaid labor that mission beneficiaries performed and will be explored in detail below.

Paula, the former municipal coordinator of the mission in a *barrio* of Caracas, said she encountered women who were not extremely poor receiving the mission benefit when she assumed her post. She stated that she then removed these women from the mission to ensure that the mission benefit arrived to women who were really in a state of need.¹⁴² Paula noted that she “gained many enemies” in this process of “purifying” the beneficiary list (“Interview with Paula,” 6 September 2012). And while this same former municipal coordinator recognized that in the context of the *barrios*, many needs did exist, she blamed such mal-distribution of the *Madres del Barrio* benefit on the lack of ethics of community members who chose the women to benefit from the mission. Paula did not engage in an outwardly reflexive turn that linked the mal-distribution of the benefit to the structural design of the mission— a design that was both quickly formulated and that relied on community organizations without first assessing their representativeness, transparency, and accountability mechanisms. Rather, she attributed this mal-distribution to community members’ failure to ethically fulfill their co-responsibilities. This explanation extended beyond this particular former municipal coordinator’s viewpoint to constitute a popular discursive phenomenon that placed blame on the *madres* and popular sector organizations for the failures of the mission, as she, other state gender institution workers, and several former mission beneficiaries consistently invoked such a discourse, which will be examined further below.

5.5. Improving Family Welfare, Fulfilling their Role as Mothers

For the popular sector women who had been incorporated into *Madres del Barrio*, the mission economic benefit and services appear to have contributed to improvements in their welfare and their families’ welfare. Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya all remarked how their participation in the mission improved their welfare and the welfare of their children. Both Miriam and Marilyn primarily used the mission benefit to meet their children’s basic welfare needs and fulfill their roles as mothers as well their role as “policy conduits” for enhanced family wellbeing. In addition, Miriam and Marilyn were

¹⁴² Paula did not tell me how many women she dis-incorporated from *Madres del Barrio* because they did not fit the profile of the population the mission was targeting.

able to purchase discounted household appliances through their association with the mission, which also helped them to more easily fulfill their roles as mothers within their households. Paula stated as well that, while she served as a mission coordinator, many *madres* purchased washers, stoves, and refrigerators ("Interview with Paula," 6 September 2012). And like Soraya, who used part of her mission benefit to gradually build her house, Adriana—the former municipal mission coordinator in Falcón state—noted how several *madres*, who had been living in overcrowded conditions with family members, used their mission benefits to improve their housing ("First Interview with Adriana," 20 April 2012). This finding is consistent with evaluations of Mexico's CCT program, where beneficiaries reported enhanced wellbeing as well as means to enhance their assets to mitigate risks (Escobar Latapí & González de la Rocha, 2009; Molyneux, 2008).

Madres del Barrio appears to have contributed to improvements to the *madres'* and their children's welfare by linking them to the state health and educational systems. According to Adriana, this included health officials giving the *madres* talks on family planning and providing them with free access to birth control. Adriana stated that, through the intervention of the mission, children of *madres* who had not been attending school entered the school system ("First Interview with Adriana," 20 April 2012). Both she and Paula in Caracas noted that under their respective coordinations, they encouraged the *madres* to pursue their education, and as a result, *madres* enrolled in the various educational missions—at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels ("First Interview with Adriana," 20 April 2012; Interview with Paula," 6 September 2012). And Adriana took great pride in the fact that five *madres* from her municipality had graduated from Sucre Mission with university degrees ("First Interview with Adriana," 20 April 2012).¹⁴³

¹⁴³ I do not have figures on how many *Madres del Barrio* entered the educational system, how many graduated from the education missions, how many remained within the education missions, and how many dropped out like Miriam did. In the Case of Falcón state, the Collective Authority for Women's Issues and Gender Equality consistently held Adriana up as successful in comparison to the other municipal coordinators in the state, referencing her work in ensuring that *madres* in her respective municipality pursued and completed their education. Such comments imply that the mission had not been successful in the other Falcón municipalities in assisting *madres* to study and complete their education.

Yet, in targeting only women for improvements to family welfare, *Madres del Barrio* reified maternal models of care, like the CCTs in Argentina (Tabbush, 2009), Mexico (Molyneux, 2006, 2008), and Nicaragua (Bradshaw, 2008; Bradshaw & Quirós Viquez, 2008). As Tabbush (2009) asserts, the *Madres del Barrio*'s conditionality that the *madres* use their cash transfers to care for their families functioned to "naturalize traditional female roles" and responsibilities "within the family around motherhood and care" (p. 314). That is, the conditionalities served to reinforce women's maternal altruism and gender differences at the level of the household.

5.6. Tensions in State-Based Provision of Political Education to the *Madres*

Unlike other CCTs in Latin America, *Madres del Barrio* Mission provided program beneficiaries with political education in addition to health and welfare education. Through their participation in *Madres del Barrio*, the beneficiaries received education about their rights, though the content and extent of this rights education seemed to vary across time and space. Both Marilyn and Soraya said that the mission provided the *madres* with education about their constitutional rights. Yet they could not tell me about specific constitutional rights and laws, but only about general ideas, such as the right to equality. Soraya responded that the mission did not educate them about specific constitutional articles, nor Article 88 in particular. Both former municipal mission coordinators whom I interviewed— from Caracas and rural Falcón— noted that under their leadership, the *madres* received education in the 2007 Organic Law of the Right of Women to a Life Free from Violence ("First Interview with Adriana," 20 April 2012; Interview with Paula," 6 September 2012). And Adriana in rural Falcón stated that the mission gave the *madres* a workshop on why President Chávez created *Madres del Barrio* Mission as a means to address extreme poverty amongst women and how the mission's formation was based on Article 88 of the Constitution ("First Interview with Adriana," 20 April 2012).

Yet the planning, design, and evaluation of this political education and the extent of the *madres*' participation in it were not necessarily under the *madres*' control and driven by the *madres*' expressed needs, voices, and feedback. Marilyn said that while the mission always provided *madres* in her community with workshops on women's

rights, these were not participatory spaces for the *madres* to exercise their control by providing input over their design and evaluating them. While I did observe a School of Socialist Formation for Gender Equality facilitator provide the space for the *madres* from one rural town in Falcón to evaluate the workshops she was giving them, she had no evaluation planned. She asked me to design and conduct the evaluation even though I had not attended all the workshops that needed to be evaluated. Nor she did not document the oral evaluations that the *madres* did provide.

It appears that the structure of the *Madres del Barrio* Mission had enabled it to be a space for both participatory and critical education and didactic, controlled, and non-reflexive education about women's rights, depending on who led the mission at particular times and in particular places, who delivered the political education, and what their particular pedagogical and political frameworks were. For example, the "Ana María Campos" School of Socialist Formation for Gender Equality (*Escuela de Formación Socialista para la Igualdad de Género "Ana María Campos"*– EFOSIG), a state-led political education school that was under the administration of the Ministry of Woman's Popular Power and Gender Equality and had branches in every state in the country, was contracted to provide political education workshops to *Madres del Barrio*. According to the director of the school in Falcón state, under María León's leadership of the national ministry from 2008 to 2010, the school's curriculum focused on socialism, feminism, and gender. After Nancy Pérez assumed leadership of the ministry, the content of the school's curriculum shifted focus to the construction of communes and the defense of national sovereignty, while retaining a component on feminism and gender ("First Interview with Luisa," October 2011).

Within the EFOSIG education delivered to *Madres del Barrio* in Falcón, I observed different facilitators employ didactic and participatory pedagogical approaches in the rights and political education workshops that they led for *madres* in different communities throughout the state. For example, in one rural town in Falcón in 2012, I attended a workshop on violence against women that one EFOSIG facilitator gave to a small group of *Madres del Barrio*. She spent the first part of the workshop lecturing the *madres* on how to organize women in the "battle" to re-elect Chávez as president. She then used the second part of the workshop to quickly deliver a Power Point presentation

on what violence against women is, how it functions, what its consequences are, and the Organic Law of the Right of Women to a Life Free from Violence. The facilitator encouraged the participants to know their rights and use such knowledge to help the women in their lives, but did not provide them with copies of the law or other resources for women experiencing violence. Nor did she provide much space for the participants to discuss the concepts and rights she was presenting and how they applied to their own lives and their own communities.

Yet, the previous month, I attended a workshop given by a different EFOSIG facilitator, Luisa, the director of EFOSIG in Falcón, on empowerment to a group of *Madres del Barrio* in the capital of Falcón, where she employed both more participatory pedagogical methods and a more radical political framework in her facilitation. In this workshop, Luisa and the participants discussed empowerment as women's increased decision-making about their own bodies, in their own communities, and in political and economic arenas. They also discussed empowerment as the transformation of asymmetric power relations to relationships based on equality, beginning in the home with everyday practices and interactions and extending out to the national democratic institutions and economy. Luisa stressed that because of women's role in social reproduction as "transmitters of culture," they were crucial actors in driving the transformation toward a socialist, participatory and protagonistic society. Likewise, in the same *Madres del Barrio* office in Coro in 2011, I attended an accounting workshop given by a facilitator from the Woman's Development Bank where several *Madres del Barrio* were present and the facilitator used popular and participatory education methods to advance participants' numerical literacy and accounting skills. The facilitator linked that educational experience to women's constitutional rights to education and training, their insertion in socio-productive activities, and the larger national process of constructing a socialist society.

In these snapshots of state-provided educational workshops to *Madres del Barrio* in Falcón state, the facilitators all emphasized that the *madres* were bearers of rights—a key part of which entailed the right to be central participants in their households, in their communities, and in national political and economic processes. Yet their facilitation styles and the content of their workshops reflected a tension between state actors

promoting a form of popular participation controlled from above and from outside the *madres'* communities and promoting a radical democratic popular participation from below, from the *madres* themselves.

When I asked Luisa, the director of EFOSIG in Falcón, about this tension in the political education delivered by the state to *Madres del Barrio* and its implications for the type of popular power the state was promoting, she recognized this tension between different actors within state gender institutions and the state apparatus more broadly. Within this contested space of the state apparatus, Luisa drew on President Chávez to legitimate her advocacy for the articulation of women's popular power in her work as an educator and regional director of EFOSIG. She stated that the work of the school was to promote socialism and feminism because "the lines of the school are the lines of President Chávez" ("Second Interview with Luisa," 17 October 2012). In her strategic usage of Chávez to legitimate the facilitation of a radical political education project amongst popular sector women, her own words reflected this tension between popular participation from below and participation controlled from above: she justified this approach by stating that "popular power is decreed" ("Second Interview with Luisa," 17 October 2012). At the same time, Luisa asserted that in the educational programs with *Madres del Barrio*, "the idea that they are autonomous has to be encouraged. And that is a right, because it forms part of sovereignty: you decide the destiny of your country, not a third person. And when we talk of a participatory and protagonistic democracy, it means that I don't have an interlocutor" ("Second Interview with Luisa," 17 October 2012). She contended that this type of education in radical democracy was well received by the *Madres del Barrio*, but resistance to it existed within the state institutions, because "when the population becomes conscious of its rights and the importance that it has within this process, you are putting in danger a status... of power that the institutions give you" ("Second Interview with Luisa," 17 October 2012).

5.7. Mothers of the Bolivarian Revolution: State Mobilization and Containment of Chávez's Women

This tension around popular power and gender relations that the Bolivarian state was promoting amongst *Madres del Barrio*—between popular women's participation

from below and popular women's participation controlled from above— seems to have run through the political activities in which the *Madres del Barrio* participated in addition to the mission's educational programs. As Espina and Rakowski (2010) point out, President Chávez often employed a discourse that the participation of revolutionary mothers was necessary to advance social and political changes necessary for the Bolivarian revolution. They note that this revolutionary maternalist discourse both honored and reinforced women's maternal altruism, which extended from the household to performing unpaid work in their communities in service of the revolution (p. 194). Sujatha Fernandes (2007) contends that Chávez's use of the trope of revolutionary motherhood also contained contradictory implications for popular sector women whom it interpellated, like the *Madres del Barrio*. According to Fernandes, such rhetoric both reinforced and challenged traditional gender roles for popular women because it "created the groundwork for new possible roles and identities to emerge" (p. 102). With the *Madres del Barrio*, their participation in the mission opened up possibilities for the development of new political roles and identities. Yet, their political protagonism often was based on, reflected, and reinforced their role as mothers. The mission's promotion of their revolutionary maternalism served as regulatory device, wherein the madres' dependence on the mission benefit enabled the state to demand their political protagonism and to direct and contain their political identities and activities.

For Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya, Chávez's leadership inspired them to take on new political identities, as they remarked that they became involved in party politics during Chávez's presidency. Many *Madres del Barrio* appeared to have become involved in party politics as well, as informal accounts from state actors indicate that many *madres* joined the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) since they joined the mission. And these new political identities provided opportunities for them to exercise leadership roles in local political organizing. For example, Marilyn became a patrol officer (*patrullera*) for PSUV and was assisting with organizing community members for the 2012 elections. Paula (the former municipal mission coordinator in Caracas) and Luisa (in Falcón) stated that other members of *Madres del Barrio* had also become *patrulleras* for PSUV and had conducted house-by-house organizing drives in their communities for the elections ("Interview with Paula," 6 September 2012; Second Interview with Luisa," 17 October 2012). Further, Luisa asserted that she had noted a

political maturation amongst some *Madres del Barrio* with whom she had been working over time: they were no longer “only Chávez’s women, but they now also express other opinions about what is happening in their environment” (“Second Interview with Luisa,” 17 October 2012).

Yet, the *madres*’ new political identities and activities as revolutionary mothers were vulnerable to manipulation by the state, as other Bolivarian state actors appear to have been keenly aware that the *Madres del Barrio* were “Chávez’s women” and interpellated them as such.¹⁴⁴ Such authorities constantly called on the *madres* as revolutionary mothers to focus their mobilization on support for Chávez and thus to organize as *patrulleras* for his re-election. The gendered political opening for the *madres*’ political participation, which was legitimated through a discourse of revolutionary motherhood, also constituted an opportunity for the state to attempt to direct their political organization. For example, the state authorities speaking at the sixth anniversary celebration of *Madres del Barrio* in Falcón state in March 2012 used much of their speeches not to remark on the progress that the mission had made in the state in the years since its inception. Rather, they focused their speeches on calling on the *madres* to campaign for president Chávez’s re-election. They posited the *madres*’ electoral campaigning for the re-election of Chávez as a logical continuation of their protagonism and political participation in the revolution.

The Falcón state coordinator of the mission, in particular, made this connection by employing a discourse of revolutionary motherhood to beckon the *Madres del Barrio* to campaign for Chávez. He began his speech by recognizing the centrality of the *Madres del Barrio* and their labor to the Bolivarian revolution, as he noted that the women present “were making the homeland day by day.” He attributed the *madres*’

¹⁴⁴ “Chávez’s women (*mujeres de Chávez*)” was a term I observed employed by MCs and authorities at Bolivarian state events across times and spaces to hail the popular women in the audience. In other words, they consistently used this term as a shout-out to the popular women in the crowd. For example, the most common way in which I heard the term used at such events was: “where are Chávez’s women?! (*¿donde están las mujeres de Chávez?!*)” And I observed many women in the crowds shouting back jubilantly in recognition of this hailing. In functioning as a call and response between the Bolivarian state and popular sector women, it therefore served to interpellate popular women’s political identity as not just tied to Chávez but also belonging to him.

centrality to the revolution to Chávez's leadership of it, because Chávez had given these popular sector women "the opportunity to participate and be protagonists in this process in all spheres of society," from which they were previously excluded. Before the Bolivarian regime, he emphasized, "no president had ever thought of the poor, the humble, the oppressed of the homeland" like them. The state coordinator stated that their particular struggle for social inclusion and visibility was the broader revolutionary struggle. He declared the greatest mission that lay before the *Falconiana*¹⁴⁵ *Madres del Barrio* then was the 7 October mission to re-elect Chávez as president. And as the opening quote to this dissertation shows, he stressed that the *madres* would be central to the success of this great mission because of their maternal altruism, their love for their commander, and their greater political protagonism (as implicitly compared to men). Thus, he framed the continuation of the revolution as depending upon their political participation.

Yet, at this same event, the *madres'* voices about the political process in which they were held by state authorities to be central protagonists were contained to chanting, singing, and shouting for Chávez's health and re-election. On this day state authorities announced they were "paying homage" to the *Madres del Barrio*, they staged the event to both mobilize and contain the *Madres del Barrio* in line with what Fernandes (2010) has described as a broader vertical and instrumental Bolivarian state approach to the political organization of the popular sectors.

While the *Madres del Barrio* present at the sixth anniversary celebration of the mission in Falcón state responded jubilantly to state authorities interpellating them as revolutionary mothers organizing for Chávez, not all *Madres del Barrio* appear to have been content with the way state authorities were framing and, in some instances, controlling their political participation. One of the former *madres* reflected to me how she observed the state using the *madres* for its own political ends in 2012. For example:

Former *madre*: It seems like a lie, but now it has turned into pure politics, a pure joke (*broma*) that people want to sign [in to attendance registers at official events], show things that they are not

¹⁴⁵ This is the term for a woman from Falcón state.

doing. And the truth is that the *madres* are not being attended to as they should be.

Rachel: And what are they doing with the madres right now?

Former *madre*: They only use them when there is a march...

This former *madre*'s choice of the term "use" in analyzing the political dynamic unfolding between the state and the *madres* around her is apt, given that some of the state actors calling on the *madres* to organize and attend political events were the same officials who controlled the *madres*' access to the mission economic benefit. According to her, the *madres* she knew were quite aware of how the state was using them, and they were willing to participate in this arrangement as long as they continued to receive their mission benefit. This former *madre* said the temporary nature of the mission benefit lubricated this political dynamic. The *madres* were aware that the benefit was temporary, she noted, and some understood this to mean that if they did not participate in state marches and public events and prove that they had by signing attendance registers at them, then the state could take away their benefit.

With this former *madre*, I too observed the importance attributed to the *madres*' signatures of attendance registers at state-run political events that she described. One afternoon several months before the presidential election in 2012, we traveled together to a *barrio* to attend a government event/political rally at which President Chávez was expected to speak. When we arrived, the *madres* from her *barrio* were already in attendance and waiting for the president to arrive, and local mission authorities were also there. The mission appears to have expected the *madres* to attend this rally, and to

arrive early at that, because the *madres* were signing attendance registers before the event began in order to prove to the mission staff that they were present.¹⁴⁶

In addition, unlike the *madres'* stories of rapid incorporation into the mission, I heard stories amongst them about the state not transferring the mission benefit to *madres* for months at a time. Similar stories about months-long absent mission cash transfers in various regions across Venezuela also appear on the internet in the comments sections of articles about the *Madres del Barrio* benefit on Bolivarian state media and Chávez websites. I heard rumors circulating that *madres* would be disincorporated from the mission in the run-up to the presidential election in 2012.¹⁴⁷ Whether or not there was any truth to these rumours, some perceived the potential risk to be real. This was the case, for example, for one of the *madres* who was still in the mission in 2012, and who agreed to be interviewed by me then without the mission's knowledge, but who subsequently withdrew her participation from my study less than two months before the presidential election because of fears that state authorities would discover what she told me.¹⁴⁸ Thus, following Auyero (2012, p. 131), I assert that the importance of these accounts does not lie in whether these rumors and fears about the state stripping *madres* of their benefits were verifiable, but in how the *madres* perceived

¹⁴⁶ Bolivarian state expectations of popular women to arrive early and sign attendance registers at state-led political events extended beyond *Madres del Barrio* Mission. At multiple political events that state women's and gender equality institutions held with popular women's organizations organized by or through the state in Falcón, including *Madres del Barrio*, I observed state authorities informing popular women to arrive early and having them sign into attendance registers. Even though the state authorities expected popular women to arrive early, the state-led events I observed almost always started late—sometimes hours late, even when they were held outside under the heat of the Caribbean daytime sun. Thus, the state's expectations for state-led popular women's political participation included that they wait for the state.

¹⁴⁷ I also heard a rumor from a Falcón state women's institution worker who was not *Chavista* that there was an "under-the-table decree" that stipulated that no *madre* should be stripped of her mission benefit in 2012 because it was a "political year", and "when you take away what you have given her for six years, she is going to switch sides... and surely you are going to have one less political activist..." ("Interview with Carla," 5 June 2012). Her remarks illustrate that, in the absence of clear and transparent guidelines about the duration and conditions of the mission benefit, it could be understood to be used politically by state authorities in a multiplicity of ways.

¹⁴⁸ This *madre* was referred to me by one of the former *madres* featured in this chapter. She gave informed consent to participate in an interview, and I interviewed her. Later, she rescinded her consent to participate in my study, and I therefore destroyed the data from my interview with her.

the state and how such perceptions shaped their interactions with the state. What these accounts reveal is that *madres* understood the continuation of their benefits to be uncertain and linked to their political voice and participation in support of and in line with the Bolivarian state.

Even if state actors were not explicitly or implicitly threatening to strip *madres* of their benefit in the electoral year of 2012 if they did not toe certain lines about how to participate politically, the lack of guidelines and transparency around how long and under what conditions *madres* were entitled to receive the mission benefit created the environment for the mission economic benefit to be used by mission officials or at least understood by mission beneficiaries to be used as a device to control the *madres'* political voice and participation. This indicates that not only was *Madres del Barrio* a social policy created, funded, and sustained at the discretion of the president, but that it could also serve as a discretionary tool for regional and local state authorities to determine under what conditions popular sector women could and would continue to benefit from it. The discretionary and temporary nature of the mission's cash transfer could create what Nancy Fraser terms an "exploitable dependency" of the *madres* on the whims of state officials (1997, p. 46). Those conditions could be political, and in turn shape the political participation of mission participants, who may have depended on the mission benefit to support themselves and their families. Thus, the selective nature and uncertain duration of the mission benefit provided the grounds for state authorities to use the mission as a clientelist vehicle for the political mobilization and containment of the *madres*.

Indeed, Adriana, the former municipal mission coordinator in Falcón who served in this position after Gioconda Mota's presidency of the mission, informed me that part of the *acta compromiso*— the commitment agreement that the *madres* signed with the mission when they entered it— consisted of a "political commitment." She explained that this was a commitment by the *madres* to "active political participation," which included "giving support to the current system of government, which is that of president Hugo Chávez Frías" ("First Interview with Adriana," 20 April 2012).

The politics of “giving” between the *madres* and the president appear to have both informed and facilitated the dynamics between the *madres* and the state. For example, Adriana referred to the mission benefit as a “benefit that the president gave to women of scarce resources to improve their quality of life” (“First Interview with Adriana,” 20 April 2012). Across several geographic regions of Venezuela, I heard *madres* refer to the economic benefit and services that they were receiving through the mission as things that President Chávez was “giving” them. In this discourse of positing the *Madres del Barrio* economic benefit as an executive gift, the language of rights was absent, even though Chávez himself decreed that the mission in accordance with the constitutional right of state recognition of the socio-economic value of unpaid housework.¹⁴⁹ Yet the economic benefit granted to poor mothers by *Madres del Barrio* could be popularly interpreted as a benefit that Chávez had “given” women because it was enacted by executive decree and disarticulated from legislative processes and the long struggle by women’s rights activists for state recognition of unpaid housework and allocation of social security to homemakers. In fact, the *madres* who referred to the *Madres del Barrio* economic benefit as something the president was “giving” them appeared to be unaware of the legislative and women’s movement processes for state recognition of unpaid housework and provision of social security to homemakers. The fact that the executive only granted the *Madres del Barrio* economic benefit to a select number of poor homemakers also enabled the benefit to be popularly interpreted as a gift and not a right by the women who received it and the state authorities who administered it. This historical disarticulation and selective nature of the mission benefit served to enhance Chávez’s executive magic, allowing him to be understood as personally using his magnanimous powers to pull benefits/gifts out of his magician’s hat for the *madres*. Yet when economic benefits granted by the state to citizens are understood as gifts and not as rights, then they can also be understood as needing to be reciprocated by their recipients.

¹⁴⁹ A popular discourse existed as well that the *Madres del Barrio* economic benefit was a “scholarship”, as three state gender institution workers whom I interviewed referred to it as a “scholarship” upon which women become dependent. This discourse was also disarticulated from a rights-based conception of social assistance.

The discretionary design of the *Madres del Barrio* Mission therefore intersected with popular interpretations of the mission benefit, ties between the *madres* and president Chávez, and revolutionary motherhood to create a context in which the mission could be—and appears to have been—used as a vehicle for clientelist exchanges between the Bolivarian state and the *madres* in the 2012 presidential election year. Because the benefit was not universally accessible to all extremely poor homemakers in Venezuela, mission authorities could use it politically and/ or be understood to be using it politically. Where clientelist exchanges occurred, *madres* received and/ or understood that they received crucial material benefits—or “gifts”—from the executive in exchange for their ongoing political mobilization in line with state expectations. The clientelist exchanges that occurred appear not to have been about vote buying, as the *Madres del Barrio* I observed and heard spoken of appeared to have already supported President Chávez and the Bolivarian government. This is consistent with Hawkins’ (2010b) findings more generally regarding popular participation in other Bolivarian missions. Rather, the clientelist exchange of the *Madres del Barrio* benefit appears to have been for the *madres*’ continuous political presence, voice, and organization in support of the Bolivarian state. Thus, the exchange was also for the *madres*’ time to devote themselves to such political activities. The above accounts indicate that such exchanges were unequal, as the state and not the *madres* controlled who had access to the mission benefit, and under what conditions and for what duration. And these accounts indicate that the conditions and duration of the mission benefit were not fixed and clear but uncertain. This uncertainty about benefit conditionality and duration positioned the *madres* as uncertain clients of the Bolivarian state.¹⁵⁰ With this uncertain status, *madres* appear to have understood that their continued receipt of the mission benefit hinged on their continuous political performance as revolutionary mothers in support of and in line with the Bolivarian state.

¹⁵⁰ I owe the concept of “uncertain clients” to Elisabeth Jay Friedman.

5.8. Mothers of the *Barrio*: Extending the *Madres'* Reproductive Labor from the Household to the Community

In spite of the state's expectations of the *madres'* continuous political performance discussed above, Miriam, Soraya and both the former municipal coordinators of the mission I interviewed asserted that women did not have to fulfill any obligations in order to benefit from the mission. Yet, when I probed further, all of them except for Miriam noted that *madres* were expected to perform volunteer community work.¹⁵¹ Both Soraya and the former municipal mission coordinator in Falcón said that such work formed part of the *acta compromiso*—the commitment agreement—that the *madres* signed with the mission when they entered it. In addition, as stated in the previous chapter, the executive decree establishing the mission stated that the *madres* should “assume the commitment”...“to participate with their families in organizing processes of the communities to which they belong” (Chávez Frías, 24 March 2006), and the *Madres del Barrio* committees were designed as the vehicle for the articulation of the *madres'* community organizing work.

The state actors who had worked or continued to work with *Madres del Barrio* whom I interviewed all spoke of the *Madres del Barrio* committees as spaces for previously socially isolated and excluded women to come together, share knowledge and experiences, build their self-confidence, organize, and develop their community leadership skills. For example, Gioconda Mota asserted that

¹⁵¹ This finding is not necessarily made to disprove Miriam's claim, as it is possible that no obligations were imposed on her and other *Madres del Barrio*, especially as it appears that guidelines and procedures for executing and monitoring the mission did not become standardized across time and spaces in the country. But it is also possible that Miriam was providing me with what James Scott calls the “public transcript” (1990) of the mission because of the power and context effects that shaped our interaction. As an outsider and a U.S. American academic researcher at that, I sought to know and document her experience of a Bolivarian government mission that had come into question within Venezuela and that was a component of her government— a government to which my government had been historically and overtly hostile. Miriam was not immune from the larger geopolitical confrontations between her government and mine, as I was told that Miriam initially suspected me of being a spy. Her answers to my questions therefore could potentially be inflected with such suspicions.

it was really beautiful, because we are talking about women who never left their house, never left their intimate circle. First to start to meet with the women in their *Madres del Barrio* Committee... Already there is a giant feminist political step, which is to recognize oneself in the other, to start to make friends with others, and to start to do things in common. Then they begin to take charge of many other things like political participation, because they are highly combative women, the social participation in the seat of their communities, that then the responsibility of reproductive care is also extended to the care of the community ("First Interview with Gioconda Mota," 3 October 2011).

Both former municipal mission coordinators whom I interviewed spoke of how such a process of meeting and organizing with other women built the *madres'* self-confidence by giving them a space to exercise their voices and skills. As Soraya's story shows, the *Madres del Barrio* committee provided her with the space to share her professional and occupational knowledge and experience by training other *madres* in these areas, and, as such, develop her teaching and leadership skills. And both former municipal coordinators and the director of EFOSIG in Falcón noted that many of the *madres* made use of their enhanced self-confidence and leadership skills by joining and participating in their communal councils. Miriam insisted that *madres* she knew who were previously ashamed to speak and participate in social activities were now actively participating in their communities. And such community participation could serve to enhance the *madres'* status in their respective communities. Both Marilyn and Soraya remarked that members of their respective communities now saw them as leaders and sought them out for assistance. These accounts from former *madres* and gender institution workers are consistent with evaluations of Mexico's CCT program, where it was found to provide a space for women participants to boost their self-confidence, develop solidarity with each other, engage in expanded realms of activities, and thereby enhance their autonomy (Molyneux, 2008, pp. 35-36).

Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya all participated in their respective community's *Madres del Barrio* committee, and in so doing, they fulfilled their community welfare co-responsibilities laid out in the executive decree by extending their reproductive roles from their individual households to their communities and attending to the social provisioning needs of vulnerable members of their communities. They all spoke of their respective committees as a vehicle to bring them together as *Madres del Barrio* and

exercise leadership roles within them, as well as a vehicle to organize to meet health, education, food, recreation and transport needs of vulnerable members of their communities. Marilyn described this community work performed by the *Madres del Barrio* committees as “collaborating with everything”— the health system, the education system, and the feeding system in the community. They looked after these systems in their communities, ensuring that they were working and that community members in need were incorporated into them.

To facilitate this community work, each community’s *Madres del Barrio* committee elected a spokesperson for each area of social provisioning. In order to fulfill the duties of community work, Marilyn, Miriam, and Soraya all described carrying out what were termed “censes” or *diagnósticos*, or community needs assessments. Paula explained that the *madres* were well suited to conduct *diagnósticos* of needs that existed in their communities because they were the community members who spent the most time at home and in the community and, in turn, knew best the “reality of the household and the community” (“Interview with Paula,” 6 September 2012). This former municipal mission coordinator therefore invoked the *madres*’ physical and geographic ties to the household and community because of their roles as mothers to explain their positioning here as social policy conduits. Using the *diagnóstico* to inform her community work meant that in her role as the health spokesperson of her *Madres del Barrio* committee, Miriam said that she knew the names and addresses of everyone on her community suffering from an illness or disability. She used this information to assist and accompany the *Barrio Adentro* doctor in attending to these community members in house-by-house visits or channeling them to more advanced medical services. Soraya was also the health spokesperson of her committee, and carrying out this role had her working half-days every day of the week during her time in the mission, accompanying the *Barrio Adentro* doctor in his house-by-house visits, and bathing, cleaning, vaccinating, and doing the washing for sick and disabled members of her community as well as vaccinating members of other communities. Performing *Madres del Barrio* committee community work therefore could constitute a substantial workload for the *madres* and at the same time could be essential to channeling many vulnerable community members to appropriate services and meeting their basic welfare needs.

As Women's Studies professor and former advisor to the National Assembly, Alba Carosio, notes, the *madres'* community care work made an important contribution to re-building collective life and community in the *barrios* because "Venezuelan society was very fractured... there was a great individualism, above all in the cities. That mutual collaboration, that sharing that has to be in social spaces was not there, and really the mothers of the *barrio* that are currently the *Madres del Barrio* have contributed to articulating those social spaces..." ("Interview with Alba Carosio," 9 March 2012). Thus, while *Madres del Barrio* Mission had been a dividing force between popular sector women in communities, it had at the same time served as a unifying force in re-building social cohesion and collective life in popular sector communities.

Yet this vital community work came with costs to the *Madres del Barrio* who performed it. Part of the co-responsibility of the *Madres del Barrio* performance of community work appears to have consisted of *madres* contributing part of their monthly economic benefit to meet the social provisioning needs of other *madres* and vulnerable members of their communities. Soraya described how this worked with the *Madres del Barrio* committee in her community: "We organized ourselves as a committee... when the mission [benefit] was paid." Out of the 300 Bolívares that they each received monthly, they each contributed 20 Bolívares to one pool. "Then we went to the Mercals and we bought all that in food... then we prepared bags—10 bags or more... and in each bag we put flour, sugar, rice, pasta, oil, sardines... and we took the bags to those who were poorest." While the three former mission beneficiaries and the former municipal coordinator in Caracas, Paula, whom I interviewed asserted that this contribution was not mandatory, their responses showed that across times and spaces, the *madres* were contributing their own money to organize to meet community members' needs. And because such organizing was consistent across times and spaces in the country, it appears to have been a standard procedure within the mission. Adriana, the former municipal coordinator of the mission in rural Falcón, spoke of such organizing as standard operating procedure in her municipality, as she said that each committee in her municipality organized "solidarity pots" with a portion of each *madre's* benefit, and the pots were used to cover medical, food, clothing, transport, and funeral costs of members of the *madres'* communities ("First Interview with Adriana," 20 April 2012). Both former municipal mission coordinators and Miriam referred to organizing "solidarity pots" from

the *madres*' benefit to cover community needs as "socialist" work. For example, Adriana said that this practice gave the *madres* a "socialist... vision": "in other words, the government is helping you, because of that, you can also help others" ("First Interview with Adriana," 20 April 2012). And Miriam said that as a socialist, she had to "look beyond her own interests also at the needs and concerns and problems that her neighbor or whatever person who needed" her had.

While some referred to such organizing as a socialist measure, in essence, the *madres* were organizing to make up for the shortfalls in the state's social policy measures. In the absence of progressive tax reform and substantive wealth redistribution,¹⁵² some of the economic burden for meeting the social provisioning needs of the poorest members of communities was not being offloaded onto members of society with sufficient economic capacity to contribute, but on to the *Madres del Barrio*—women excluded from the formal economy whose monthly income was 80% of the minimum wage salary. Thus, where the state's social assistance programs did not reach, the poor mothers of the *barrio* reached into the social assistance they received from the state to organize mutual assistance for those even poorer and more excluded than themselves.

As Bradshaw (2008) and Tabbush (2009) contend in their respective gender analyses of CCTs in Nicaragua and Argentina, these accounts also indicate that *Madres del Barrio* hinged on an extant ideology of maternal altruism, which encompassed the performance of unpaid labor for the community in addition to the household. As Luccisano and Wall (2009) point out, CCTs interact with "local cultural understandings of gender and motherhood," which themselves are "moral regulatory processes" (p. 200).

¹⁵² The Bolivarian government conducted no progressive non-oil-tax reform during Chávez presidency, yet it did increase non-oil-tax revenue by improving its income tax collection from businesses and individuals (Weisbrot, 2011, p. 203). Venezuela's reported public social spending increased from 18.6 to 21.4% of GDP from 2004 to 2011 (Sistema Integrado de Indicadores Sociales de Venezuela, No Date). Yet its public social spending to GDP ratio fell below the ratio of Costa Rica for 2011 and far below that of Cuba (ECLAC, 2013, p. 159). As Webber (2010) points out, poverty reduction measures and new social policies under the Bolivarian government during Chávez's presidency were financed not through increasing wealth redistribution to the poor from the elite and the expanding private sector but through a regional primary commodity boom.

These accounts of the *madres'* household and community organizing and provisioning show that *Madres del Barrio* also hinged on the intersection of such an extant maternalist ideology with state imaginations of women's unpaid labor and popular power within the Bolivarian revolution. In addition to promoting a model of a virtuous empowered woman willing to sacrifice herself and perform unpaid labor for her family and her community, the mission promoted a model of a virtuous mother sacrificing herself for the broader goals of the popular socialist revolution. Further, as Bradshaw (2008) concludes in the case of Nicaragua's CCT, the Bolivarian state did not "problematize" the *madres'* maternal altruism for their homes, their communities, and the revolution but rather promoted it as "the social norm" (p. 201).

5.9. Challenges to Becoming "Productive" Protagonists when the State Externalizes the *Madres'* Reproductive Labor

While *Madres del Barrio* Mission expected the *madres* to become mothers of their *barrios* by extending their reproductive work and giving their own money out from their households to their communities, the mission also expected them to become independent of state assistance by joining together in economic associative units, receiving training in productive occupations, and launching and sustaining their own small businesses. According to Paula and Miriam, part of the *acta compromiso* consisted of the *madres* committing to form economic associative units and engage in socio-productive activities. For Paula, this was an integral part of the *madres'* commitment to "*salir adelante*," or to get ahead. The mission expected the *madres* to *salir adelante* through intensifying their labor by performing both reproductive and productive labor, sometimes simultaneously. According to Marilyn and the director of EFOSIG in Falcón, the mission promoted that the idea that the *madres* start their socio-productive activities from home, so that they could attend to their households and their businesses at the same time.

Miriam, Marilyn, and both former municipal mission coordinators noted that the mission did not provide the *madres* with childcare services during periods of productive work or training for their productive occupations (nor when they were participating in

other mission activities).¹⁵³ Both Miriam and Marilyn also said that the “idea” of the mission was that they attend to their productive activities while their children were at school. Paradoxically, even though the government stated that the mission was born out of the constitution’s recognition of unpaid housework, the mission treated the *madres*’ unpaid reproductive work as an externality when the *madres* aimed to fulfill the mission objective of insertion into productive occupations.

The words of the former municipal mission coordinator in Falcón, who worked with the mission from 2009 to 2011, show that the mission itself appears not to have taken the *madres*’ need for alternative care services into account, as she said that she “imagined” the *madres* would either leave the people whom they cared for with family members or they would perform their productive labor while their children were at school (“Second Interview with Adriana,” 23 April 2012). Gioconda Mota, one of the designers of *Madres del Barrio* and the president of the mission from 2006 to 2008, admitted that the mission “did not arrive” at the issue of the provision of alternative care services for the *madres*’ dependents under her leadership.¹⁵⁴ And Miriam’s, Marilyn’s, and the two former municipal mission coordinators’ responses indicate that after Mota left her post, the mission had still not resolved the issue of alternative care services.

Indeed, as Miriam’s and Marilyn’s stories show, they often brought their children with them to the site of their productive occupations and performed their productive and reproductive work simultaneously. In the absence of institutionalized public mechanisms

¹⁵³ The state’s lack of provision of alternative care services when popular sector women were participating in state activities is not unique to *Madres del Barrio*. One telling example is the cinema forum on violence against women that the Falcón state women’s and gender institutions held one night in 2011 for the women in a newly established community for families displaced by the recent floods. While the Secretariat aimed to bring its services directly to the community by holding the event within the community and at a community member’s house, it made no provision for the care of the women community members’ children when they attended the forum. Because the topic of the forum was not appropriate for young children, the state workers told the young children to leave, and in turn, their caregivers—the women whom the event was aimed to reach— also had to leave.

¹⁵⁴ Mota said that the mission was “heading in that direction” of addressing the provision of alternative care services because feminism began to “enter the mission” and the mission was engaging in a reflexive analysis of its policies and functioning under her leadership (“First Interview with Gioconda Mota,” 3 October 2011). Yet accounts indicate that Mota, who since had become a leader in national feminist organizations, was forced to resign from her position (Mendez, 22 April 2008).

to substitute these women's unpaid care work, the key to *saliendo adelante* and entering the sphere of the market rested on the intensification of their labor and not only being able to perform a double shift,¹⁵⁵ but also being able to perform two jobs at once. Carolina, a feminist national-level public official problematizes this scenario:

The curious thing there is that the law selects you because you fulfill non-market responsibilities, the mission selects you for that reason. When you enter to take part in the mission, the mission prepares you so that you form part of the market, and all the nonmarket work that you did that was previously recognized, is not taken up... In other words, ... they facilitate access to the market, and you can now be a 'productive' person, but that does not resolve what was keeping you out of the market, which would be the situation of need or dependency that people in your family grouping have. That would require for example that there were care policies, daycare policies, policies of attention. What appears to me to have happened by way of events—I'm not sure it was planned this way—is that the mothers that have achieved their entrepreneurship have done so inside of their homes so that they can maintain simultaneity. And that... can represent a problem when you are not freed from the responsibility, when you are not socializing the care. The care is still the mothers' responsibility and furthermore they are asked to be active in the market. In other words, the double demand is clear, with some facilities yes, but it remains. And the society or the state does not share the care that kept you 'on the margins' ("Interview with Carolina," 28 January 2012).

Thus, the mission's lack of provision of structural alternatives to women's unpaid reproductive labor and by extension, its implicit assumption that *madres* would individually find alternatives and in many cases turn to the unpaid labor of other (female) family members, belie Article 88. In starting out claiming to recognize poor women's non-market care work, *Madres del Barrio* ended up reproducing the non-recognition of that very same work.

¹⁵⁵ And in some cases a triple shift if they continued with their community and/ or political work, as both Miriam and Marilyn were doing after they left the mission.

5.10. Dividing the *Madres* Who “Get Ahead” From Those Who “Stay Behind”

While the various popular sector women, state actors, and women’s movement activists and analysts with whom I talked were not in agreement whether *Madres del Barrio* Mission constituted partial fulfillment of Article 88, the women whom I interviewed who had (direct) involvement with the *Madres del Barrio* as former *madres* or as current/former state actors were all clear that the mission benefit was meant to be temporary and to assist *madres* while they received training and started up their socio-productive projects. As Marilyn stated: “the purpose is very clear...: it is temporary assistance where you can carry out another activity that you can do, train oneself as a woman, and do a socio-productive [activity] where you can later take care of yourself and you improve your quality of life. In other words, it’s not that you stay there, but that you try to better yourself.” And according to Miriam and Marilyn, the *madres* who were originally incorporated into the mission were informed that the benefit would last for six months. Apparently the mission informed the *madres* that they should relinquish their temporary benefit in order to become independent of social assistance. According to Gioconda Mota, Marilyn, and Soraya, the mission also informed them that they should do this so that their spaces in the mission could be taken up by other women in states of need. As with their respective communities, the mission posited the *madres* as responsible for other poor women’s welfare. The mission connoted that limited state social assistance resources were available and *madres* should fulfill their co-responsibilities to uplift themselves (and their families because of their roles as mothers) as well as ensure that those limited resources would reach other poor women from their communities.

Yet, by 2012—six years into the mission’s existence— all accounts I heard from both the former *madres* and state actors and authorities indicated that few *madres* had left the mission and stopped receiving their economic benefit, in spite of all the economic

associative units that had been formed amongst them¹⁵⁶ and all the public events where high-level state authorities up to President Chávez had granted them loans to launch their businesses. For example, Marilyn said that several hundred women from her *barrio* had been incorporated into *Madres del Barrio*, and only three socio-productive projects had been launched by *madres* from her *barrio*, and Marilyn's cooperative was the only one that had made advancements. As Miriam expressed, the rest had "*quedado en el camino*," "stayed behind." In contrast, the state had held up Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya as poster children of the mission, as they had launched their cooperatives, stopped receiving their mission economic benefits, and had their own shops. These three former *madres* had "*salido en adelante*," or "gotten ahead," as both they and state actors said. While Marilyn stopped receiving her benefit a year after joining the mission, Miriam stopped receiving her benefit five years after joining the mission and Soraya stopped receiving hers six years after joining the mission. Why, in 2012, in spite of the mission's multi-dimensional conception of poverty and its corresponding professed provision of various forms of economic, social, and political assistance to the *madres*, had so few of them exited the mission? And why had it taken years for the few of them who had exited the mission to exit when the mission had purportedly originally envisioned that they would stay in it for only six months?

I posed these questions to the former *madres* and all the state actors I interviewed who had worked with the *madres*, the mission, or possessed knowledge about the mission. In response, the majority provided explanations about why so few *madres* had left the mission by focusing on the (individual) behavior of the *madres* themselves, although several provided a different explanation that highlighted structural barriers with both the mission and the state more broadly. An example of the latter was provided by Soraya who responded that *madres* who had children with disabilities had not been able to exit the mission because no one else would assume their childcare, and these were the majority of the women who remained receiving the mission benefit. While Soraya's remarks indicate a structural care deficit in regard to people with disabilities,

¹⁵⁶ In the same month in 2012, *Madres del Barrio* Mission stated on its website that since 2006 the *madres* had formed 4000 socio-productive projects (Misión Madres del *Barrio* "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", 13 June 2012) and that they had formed 5000 socio-productive projects (Misión Madres del *Barrio* "Josefa Joaquina Sánchez", 27 June 2012).

she did not extend her explanation to identify the state as potentially responsible for assuming part of this care burden and in turn alleviating part of the care burden of these *madres*. Alba Carosio¹⁵⁷ noted that many *madres* had not exited the mission because their care burdens had actually intensified, as they were fulfilling their co-responsibility to carry out community work in addition to their household work, and they did not have time to successfully pursue paid work ("Interview with Alba Carosio," 9 March 2012). In addition, Marilyn noted that the mission was no longer monitoring and supervising the *madres*, as many of the new mission staff were not going to the *barrios*,¹⁵⁸ attending to the *madres* in them, and assisting them with getting their socio-productive projects off the ground. Adriana in Falcón also noted discontinuity in supervision of the *madres*, as much of the previous mission staff who had developed close relationships with the *madres* in her municipality had been dismissed and the new mission staff that replaced them did not regularly visit and supervise the *madres*. And Claudia, a municipal-level state gender institution worker in a different municipality in Falcón where *Madres del Barrio* Mission was present, argued that the *madres* were not achieving the objective of exiting the mission because the state was not providing adequate monitoring and supervision of them ("Interview with Claudia," 29 May 2012).

Yet when asked about why so few *madres* had exited the mission, the majority of the people I interviewed (including the former *madres* themselves) tended not to identify structural problems. Instead, they turned the mirror inwards to the *barrios* to scrutinize the *madres* and their behavior and blame them for not "*echando pa'lante*," not making an effort to get ahead. For example, Miriam explained to me that the other *madres* had not exited the mission "because they do not want to do the socio-productive [project], they don't want to do something, except nothing more than merely collect the money and that's it. You collected, you spent it, and that's it—there you go spending your time. And that's not the idea; the idea is to instruct yourself to undertake something." Here, Miriam attributed the *madres*' failure to undertake socio-productive projects to their lack of

¹⁵⁷ To the best of my knowledge, Alba Carosio never worked directly with the *Madres del Barrio*. She did, however, serve as an advisor to the National Assembly in the drafting of the Social Protection of Homemakers Bill, which, amongst other objectives, aimed to legislate *Madres del Barrio* Mission.

¹⁵⁸ Marilyn's comment speaks to how class and spatial divides between the mission participants and mission staff were intersecting.

initiative, and in so doing, implied that these *madres* were doing nothing except continuing to collect and spend the money the state gave them. She posited them as non-productive mothers—like the popular perception of the *vagas del barrio* (slackers of the *barrio*) that Falcón state gender institution worker Ana María described (earlier in this chapter). Even though Marilyn identified problems with the supervision practices of the mission staff (as cited above), she concurred with Miriam in blaming the *madres* who had “stayed behind” for remaining in the mission. Yet she went even further by explicitly asserting that, in not following the mission objectives and continuing to depend on the state, the *madres* were acting out of self-interest and doing nothing:

... the idea is that it had been for six months, but there are women that are there four years collecting and they have not arisen as persons; they remain there expecting nothing more than the benefit... In other words, they don't have perspective. Sometimes I would like to get inside their heads to see how they can spend the whole day without doing anything... They are accustomed to everything being given to them. Then, nothing is for free. Things have to be earned... they are always on the lookout for what is going to be given to them—interest first.

Miriam and Marilyn both argued that the *madres* who had “stayed behind” in the mission were not working. Here then, we see two popular sector women, who had “gotten ahead” with the assistance of a mission that explicitly stated that it recognized the value of women’s unpaid housework, turning around and not recognizing that same work that their fellow *madres* were carrying out in their homes and communities.

These former *madres* were not alone in blaming the individual *madres* for not incorporating themselves in market activities, exiting the mission, and “getting ahead.” State women’s and gender equality institution workers also did this. For example, Carla, a regional-level women’s institution worker in Falcón, stated:

With the question of *Madres del Barrio*... there are *madres* that have been benefiting from it for five, six years... and you have not gotten ahead? Because in some moment you have to survive because you don't have that assistance. But now what are you doing? It's as if you have a pension and you are an old lady. And you are not an old lady; you are someone who can do many things ("Interview with Carla," 5 June 2012).

Here, Carla echoes Miriam and Marilyn's explanations in implying that the *madres* who remained in the mission were not working, overlooking the household work that they carried out, in addition to the community work they performed where the state did not reach and the political work they did in support of the revolution. Likewise, Yolimar, a national-level gender institution worker ignored the value of the non-market activities that the *madres* were carrying out in support of their households, their communities and the Bolivarian state, and chose to cite the mission's co-responsibilities to justify blaming the *madres* for not exiting it. She argued that the *madres*' continued dependence on the state violated the intention of the mission benefit as temporary social assistance:

They have to leave the benefit... the mission was not made so that people were receiving a scholarship for their whole life; the mission was made as a process of transition toward the training and incorporation into productive work... That is the fundamental condition and objective of the mission. In other words, it is finite... But then so that the women understand, you have to tell them, not hand them over the money as if you deserve it... They believe that they deserve it. 'And because Chávez gave it to me and I earned it and that's it.' No, it's not like that; you have to know why I am a candidate for this benefit, why they are giving it to me, in what I am contributing in the formation of a new model of a country of new men and women, why an activity has to do with the interests of the community to which I belong... they have to be made to understand, we have to understand the role that we play in our social space and that is important, most important. Because if not, the state has a bloodletting: all the money lost... but no one remained at least ideologically trained ("Interview with Yolimar," 24 July 2012).

Yolimar blamed the *madres* who remained in the mission for violating the mission objectives, and she argued here that they were violating the objectives of the revolution, and in so doing, they were freeloading and bleeding the nation dry of its resources. For Yolimar, the *madres* who had remained behind in the mission had not assumed the participatory and protagonistic character that the Bolivarian state and revolution expected of them because they had not weaned themselves off state assistance and inserted themselves into market activities. Similarly, Paula, the former mission coordinator in Caracas, contended that the *madres* who remained in the mission had not fulfilled their co-responsibilities that the state had set out for them.

In turning the mirror inward to blame the *Madres del Barrio* for failing to fulfill their co-responsibilities and exit the mission, several state gender institution workers attributed this failure to what they saw as the *madres'* entrenched culture of dependency. They argued that these *madres* were dependent mothers who had become accustomed to an ever-present “paternalistic” state. Paula, for instance, stated that in popular sector communities, “a culture of paternalism to which we are always accustomed” is “difficult to leave behind...” (“Interview with Paula,” 6 September 2012). Several other state gender institution workers went on to assert that the state’s continued “giving” of the mission benefit to the *madres* perpetuated such a culture of dependency amongst them. For example, Yolimar explained:

Because if you keep giving a scholarship to a person... you are creating a dependent person who is waiting for a scholarship in order to be able to live and who, even being of the age and having the strength and training to incorporate herself in a productive activity or a productive job, she is not doing it because it is easier. Because I stay here in my house waiting for... what *Madres del Barrio* gives me, and I don't work (“Interview with Yolimar,” 24 July 2012).

In other words, Yolimar believed that the economic benefit exacerbated the *madres'* laziness and lack of productivity— a view that was shared by Adriana, the former municipal mission coordinator in rural Falcón, and apparently by the national leadership of the mission in 2012. Adriana repeatedly cited Nancy Pérez, the then Minister of Woman’s Popular Power and Gender Equality, who apparently had stated that the mission “mutilates the *madres*.”¹⁵⁹ Adriana explained that the minister asserted this because

the *madres* get accustomed... there are many *madres* who do not progress inside of the mission because they think that always being in the same poverty, the state will never strip them of the benefit. Then when she says that it mutilates them, it's because it doesn't utilize them: the mother doesn't seek to fulfill other roles for the simple fact that the state is giving them economic support (“Second Interview with Adriana,” 23 April 2012).

¹⁵⁹ Ironically, the minister is said to have made this claim, even though, according to Yolimar—a worker within the national women’s and gender equality institutions—, the ministry’s greatest programmatic focus under Pérez’s leadership was *Madres del Barrio* Mission.

These state gender institution workers identified a paternalistic culture amongst popular sector women as a key barrier to *madres'* economic independence in the context of a state that they saw as present and actively assisting the *madres*, and upon which the *madres* had become dependent. Yet their explanation appears not to have been informed by a bottom-up perspective in which *madres* themselves had identified the barriers they had encountered to exiting the mission.

Such an explanation blaming the bulk of *madres* who continued to depend on social assistance deflected the mirror away from Chávez, the magnanimous sorcerer who enacted *Madres del Barrio*, and the Bolivarian state and reflecting on how their structuration of the mission had only enabled a few women to “get ahead.” In attributing the failures of the mission to an entrenched culture of paternalism amongst the *madres* who “stayed behind,” these former *madres* and state gender institution workers did not identify the *structural paternalism* in terms of state absence in the provision of care services, the state’s implicit assumption that popular women would fill in such gaps and provide such care for free, and thus how the state *depended* on them to fill in the gaps in its social provisioning. Nor did they identify men’s absence in the provision of care work and in household maintenance in the *barrios*. This in turn reinforced the privatization, individualization, and feminization of care, wherein the burden of care work was placed on individual women’s shoulders. As Luccisano and Wall (2009) conclude, failure to fulfill co-responsibilities “becomes both individualized and gendered, and mothers who do not take advantage of the opportunities” that CCTs provide “have no one but themselves to blame...” (p. 213). Such reinforcement of regulatory gender norms neglected to address how women’s unpaid work constituted a significant obstacle to their ability to engage in socio-productive activities and economically support themselves and their children without state support.¹⁶⁰ As Molyneux (2008) asserts, CCTs depend upon poor women’s unpaid labor, yet they do not problematize it; they both deploy poor women’s unpaid

¹⁶⁰ This includes not only unpaid household and community work, but also political work. For example, when I went with Marilyn to the political rally mentioned above at which President Chávez was expected to speak, after waiting a while with the *madres*, we were informed that the event was postponed to the following afternoon. The *madres* were also expected to attend the next day. If a *madre* were trying to launch a small business with other *madres* in addition to carrying out her housework, how could she afford to lose two afternoons in a row of paid work time at short notice?

labor and “take it for granted” (p. 7). In the context of *Madres del Barrio*, the *madres*’ unpaid social provisioning and political work was indispensable yet its value remained invisible. The *madres* in turn were blamed for not *saliendo pa’lante*, for not forming socio-productive activities, and for not exiting the mission—in essence for continuing to depend on the state and “not work.”

This antagonism toward the *madres* who “stayed behind” in the mission was exacerbated by the deployment of the image of the *madres* who had “gotten ahead” by getting off the mission benefit. The image of these success cases is one that former *madres* themselves used to set themselves apart from the *madres* who have not left the mission. For example, Miriam asserted:

the idea is to... unite with other women... and form your socio-productive [project]. But there are many that don’t want that, but only to collect the incentive and pass by unnoticed without doing anything. And that is not the idea; the idea is to capacitate yourself, do something—like we did, like we capacitated ourselves and we studied... they stayed behind... they only wanted to collect the money and continue doing nothing... But us, we did, because the idea was to push forward and progress.

The former municipal mission coordinators I interviewed also used the success cases as examples against which the *madres* who stayed behind were judged. For example, Paula mentioned former *madres* who had “gotten ahead” through launching their businesses and exiting the mission and compared them favorably to the “dependent” *madres* who remained in the mission (“Interview with Paula,” 6 September 2012). Adriana said that the mission staff held up the handful of *madres* who had studied, found work, and exited the mission in spite of their heavy care loads as examples for the other *madres* to follow. Once again, *Madres del Barrio* served as a dividing force amongst popular sector women, both between the *madres* themselves and between the *madres* and the mission staff who judged them. Instead of serving as a vehicle for poor women to come together to interrogate how their unpaid work was positioned within the mission, the community, and the economy more broadly, the mission and popular discourses about it served as vehicles to set them against each other.

In making these comparisons, both the former mission participants and staff differentiated “independent” from “dependent” mothers, and in so doing reproduced a discursive dichotomy between good and bad mothers. Yet, building upon Molyneux’s conclusion that the co-responsibilities that CCTs expect mothers to fulfill resignify conceptions of good and bad motherhood (Molyneux, 2008, p. 57), I contend that these former mission participants and staff resignified an extant discursive dichotomy between good and bad mothers within the framework of the Bolivarian revolution. In the context of *Madres del Barrio*, they framed a good mother not just as a mother who would stay at home to care for her children and her household, but also as a mother who would form and sustain a small business in order to care for her children and sometimes would carry out both activities simultaneously, in addition to performing grassroots community and political organizing work. For example, Miriam expressed that a good *madre* would start her own socio-productive project and get off state assistance because it “is something for your children and your family, for your own progress...” A good mother would become an independent protagonist in market activities and get ahead and progress for the sake of her family. Whereas a bad mother would act out of self-interest, continue to be involved in solely non-market activities and to depend on the state, thus failing to embrace her participatory and protagonistic character. In the worst of cases, a bad mother would use her economic benefit on something other than her family.¹⁶¹ In popular discourse, a bad mother expected the state to “give to her” without working for her “scholarship.” So here *Madres del Barrio* completed a vicious about-face: in starting out claiming to recognize the socio-economic value of poor women’s non-market care work, the mission appeared to end up reproducing the non-recognition of such work, even as the mission intensified it. The deployment of this reproduced and resignified good mother-bad mother dichotomy enabled the failures of the mission to be attributed to the *madres* instead of attributing them to the structure of the mission, state care services,

¹⁶¹ While the former *madres* whom I interviewed told me that the mission staff did not instruct them on how to use their mission benefit, the responses of the two former municipal coordinators indicate some degrees of regulatory and disciplinary controls by mission staff of the *madres*’ use of their benefits. For example, Paula stated that the benefit “was for the food, health and care of your children” (“Interview with Paula,” 6 September 2012). And Adriana noted that when a *madre* “diverted the money” or did not spend it where it was intended to be spent—on things such as the consumption of alcohol—the mission staff would “educate” the *madre* to follow the guidelines of the mission (“First Interview with Adriana,” 20 April 2012).

and the economy more broadly. In addition, persistent gender roles that charged women with the burden of household maintenance, especially in the absence of the fathers of the *barrio*, enabled the failures of the mission to be attributed to the *madres* as individuals. Further, instead of creating solidarity, or sisterhood amongst popular sector women, the deployment of this discursive dichotomy reproduced and reconfigured divisions amongst them.

But if one looks to the example of the living and working conditions of the good mother produced through this mission— a mother such as Marilyn or Miriam— a woman who worked non-stop both inside and outside the home, simultaneously fulfilling productive and reproductive responsibilities alongside community and political responsibilities, a woman who was no longer dependent on the welfare state but now dependent on the bank and without a stable and guaranteed income— why would a *madre* reasonably have chosen to become a “good mother” if she did not have to? These few examples of good *Madres del Barrio* were exalted—they were interviewed, highlighted in the press, some of them even got to meet the president. But, at the end of the day, their lives and incomes often remained precarious, state assistance to support the sustainability of their socio-productive projects was often thin at best, and they were exhausted.

In addition, Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya all possessed years of experience exercising organizing and leadership positions in their communities prior to their incorporation into the mission. Marilyn and Soraya also possessed years of experience in the paid labor force prior to joining the mission. They drew on the skills and experience they had previously acquired once they were in the mission to take advantage of the opportunities that the mission offered them. However, the beneficiaries of *Madres del Barrio* were supposed to be extremely poor, previously excluded homemakers in a “state of need.” All the *madres* probably did not possess similar levels of skills and experiences to Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya, which would enable them to *salir adelante* and form their own businesses with the support of the mission.

Why would a *madre* who remained in the mission, who may have had less organizing, leadership, and paid labor experience than Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya, who

continued to receive 80% of a minimum wage, and whose labor already had been intensified, choose to intensify her labor further if she was to become indebted and have no guaranteed income? The mission appears not to have been asking this question in evaluating its design, performance, and achievement of its publicly stated objectives. Yet the *madres* who “stayed behind” appear to have been answering it by making a strategic choice for both themselves and their families in remaining in the mission and continuing to receive their economic benefit in spite of the stigma they faced so long as the state and the economy could not offer extremely poor women viable alternatives to care for their dependents and income precarity.

5.11. Conclusion

As *Madres del Barrio* Mission had not reached all extremely poor homemakers in Venezuela, questions around the transparency of whom the mission had reached and how it had come to reach them had arisen. At the same time, the mission appears to have served as a vehicle for improvements to the welfare for the limited numbers of extremely poor homemakers that it had reached. Through receiving the monthly mission economic benefit of 80% of the minimum wage, the *madres* who had been incorporated into the mission had gained some income security—if only temporarily. The responses from the former *madres* and former mission coordinators indicate that the *madres* had both been expected to and used their benefits for their dependents’ welfare. The mission benefit and related economic benefits from the state (like access to discounted household appliances through *Mi Casa Bien Equipada* Mission) had helped them to fulfill their roles as mothers, similar to CCT program benefits and services targeting women in Mexico (Molyneux, 2006, 2008), Nicaragua (Bradshaw, 2008), and Argentina (Tabbush, 2009). For women like Miriam who had male partners, the mission benefit may have also given them a newfound control over resources and household expenditure. In such cases, the mission benefit may also have contributed to *madres*’ bargaining power within their households and independence, as appears to have happened with Miriam, who separated from her partner while in the mission. As Miriam herself stated, with the *madres*, now they were not going to be “cheated, manipulated... treated badly by any man, because there are men all over who want to minimize women. Then, listen, that

has now ended.” Both former mission coordinators also spoke of cases of *madres* who were able to leave or transform situations of domestic violence because of their involvement in the mission.

While *Madres del Barrio* contributed to improvements in the welfare of the *madres* and their families, the mission appears largely not to have contributed to changes in gender roles and the gendered division of labor, similar to CCTs in Argentina (Tabbush, 2009), Mexico (Molyneux, 2008), and Nicaragua (Bradshaw, 2008). Extremely poor women were incorporated into the mission through their roles as mothers, and through their participation in the mission, their reproductive function and labor was intensified through the extension of their caring work from the household to the community. In so doing, these women became the mothers of the *barrio*. Yet the mission did not target the fathers of the *barrio* and aim to enhance their roles in household and community reproduction in a context in which many of the program beneficiaries were single mothers heading households. The mission had not involved nor sought to make the fathers of Marilyn’s and Soraya’s children responsible for their maintenance. And as Miriam’s story shows, her former partner did not assume any more household responsibilities because of her involvement in the mission and her socio-productive project. If and when the mission reached and involved the fathers of the *barrio* in its activities, it appears to have been incidental and not by design. Even as the Bolivarian state had reached more poor, vulnerable, and excluded members of the *barrios* through its new social policy measures, it had turned to the *madres* to organize and contribute their time, labor, and even their own money to make up for the shortfalls in its social policies. In the absence of increased support from men and the state in care provisioning and with the expectation that they care not just for their own dependents but also for vulnerable members of their communities, the *madres*’ gender role and gendered work as mothers appears to have been intensified and the gendered division of labor appears to have deepened.

At the same time, organizing as women as mothers in their communities provided the *Madres del Barrio* with new spaces for sharing their knowledge and experiences, building their self-confidence, developing their community leadership skills, and training for productive occupations. Miriam, Marilyn, Soraya, the state gender

institution workers who had worked with the *madres* whom I interviewed, and the *madres* whom I observed participating in an EFOSIG workshop in Coro all spoke of increased self-esteem and social and political participation amongst the *madres*. Stories like Marilyn's and Soraya's indicate that their increased social and political participation in their communities vis-à-vis the mission had enabled them to become leaders within their communities or further their leadership positions where they were already exercising them. Where this had occurred, the *madres* appear to have enhanced their status in their communities through their incorporation into the mission as mothers and extending their mothering roles to caring for the community.

Yet, as this chapter has shown, while *Madres del Barrio* Mission served as a vehicle for the social inclusion of some extremely poor women, the mission simultaneously served as a vehicle for social exclusion of popular sector women both within and outside the mission. With the unfulfilled expectations it raised, its targeted and non-transparent selection mechanisms, and its reliance on local "popular power" organizations to select beneficiaries, the mission divided popular sector women between those touched and those not touched by it. The mission also served to divide women touched by it into independent, i.e. good, mothers and dependent, i.e. bad, mothers through their fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the co-responsibilities it had established for them to carry out. The mission, in its presences, its absences, its everyday institutional practices and discourses, and the state society-relations that it promoted and fostered, constituted both a unifying force and a dividing force in the *barrios*.

Madres del Barrio was able to both unify and divide popular sector women and popular sentiment in general because it rested on motherhood as its central basis for incorporation. In other words, poor women were incorporated to the mission through their role as mothers—a socially valued yet traditional gender role for women, which if fulfilled as per the state's, the community's, and popular expectations, served as a basis for gaining status and respect. However, if they did not fulfill these expectations of them as mothers, they became the subject of stigma from state actors and other popular sector women. In this sense, the mission served as a vehicle to reproduce popular regulations of motherhood. Yet, it not only reproduced such gender regulations; it also resignified them by introducing the expectation that mothers incorporate themselves into

productive activities, which fit the larger Bolivarian state framework for the national revolution, and become independent of social assistance, which was treated not as a right but as an executive gift. This expectation was not merely determined by the state and one-sided. Rather, it filtered down and was internalized by the *madres* themselves because it drew on popular conceptions of mothers as responsible for their families' welfare, beliefs about the articulation between president Chávez and the popular sectors, and conceptions of popular participation and protagonism in the Bolivarian process.

Dividing the good mothers from the bad by judging the *madres'* performance of their roles as mothers in their households, their communities, the market, and the Bolivarian process in turn deflected scrutiny away from the state and how its structuration of the mission may have largely prevented women from exiting it and becoming independent of social assistance. Paradoxically, even though President Chávez stated that Mission *Madres del Barrio* was in accordance with Article 88 of the Constitution—with the rights to recognition of the socio-economic value of unpaid housework and social security for homemakers—, in both its design and its everyday institutional discourses and practices, the mission treated the *madres'* reproductive labor as an externality. The mission assumed that extremely poor homemakers' poverty was largely due to a deficit of participation in the productive sphere, but it did not address some of the key underlying causes of their lack of participation in this sphere. As it was a requirement to join the mission, most *Madres del Barrio* probably had heavy household care burdens. Indeed, as Miriam's, Marilyn's, and Soraya's stories show, they withdrew from the paid labor force and experienced income precarity because of their family care burdens and the lack of family members and/or institutions that could assume these burdens so that they could re-enter the paid labor force. Like the CCTs in Argentina and Mexico that neither provided care services for program participants' dependents nor took their need for such services into account (Molyneux, 2008; Tabbush, 2009), *Madres del Barrio* Mission did not conceptualize nor address the structural care deficit that kept the *madres* from participating in the productive sphere. As Molyneux (2008) concludes, such poverty relief programming is “abstracted from the social relations that” produce women's poverty” (p. 61). Rather, the mission expected the *madres* to join the productive sphere by starting their own small businesses with other *madres*, while not

providing them with substitute care services to free up their time labor time and power so that they could. Nor did it provide them with substitute care services when they conducted their community organizing and social provisioning work and political work, which they were not only expected to carry out as per mission guidelines but they may have been expected to perform at short notice. As Molyneux (2008, p. 48), Tabbush (2009, p. 318), and Luccisano and Wall (Luccisano & Wall, 2009, p. 213) note, CCTs create added time burdens for women, while not considering how such responsibilities may potentially overburden them. To meet all the expectations of *Madres del Barrio* Mission in the absence of family members who could assume their care burdens, the *madres* would have had to intensify their labor, flexibilize it, and be able to perform their reproductive and productive functions simultaneously.

Few *madres* were like Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya and had been able to accomplish this feat, even with economic assistance from the mission. And even for the *madres* like Miriam and Marilyn who had, they had not achieved income security and it had come at costs of personal exhaustion and anxiety about paying off debts, making ends meet, and organizing care for family members.¹⁶² Yet the majority of *madres* were judged to be lazy and unproductive when they did not follow the examples of independent *madres* set by women like Miriam, Marilyn, and Soraya who were publicly exalted by the state, because they had not fulfilled their co-responsibilities and *Madres del Barrio* Mission's expectations of them.

Thus, the *Madres del Barrio*—the same popular sector women who state authorities and actors discursively invoked as key participants and protagonists in sustaining the Bolivarian revolution— were held responsible and blamed for state failures in designing, rolling out, monitoring, and evaluating the mission. The mission turned its back on Article 88 by demanding and intensifying yet disregarding the value of the work that the *Madres del Barrio* performed for their households, their communities, and the state. Far from the spirit of this constitutional article, the mission appears to have

¹⁶² Soraya had achieved income security in large part because she was now receiving a contributory old-age pension and her children were now all independent adults.

entrenched popular gendered conceptions of unpaid reproductive labor as not constituting work.

Chapter 6. In the Shadows of the Magical Revolutionary State: Popular Women's Work where the State Did Not Reach

6.1. Introduction

Following the Bolivarian state's revolutionary narrative of its promotion of popular women's power, I moved to Coro, Falcón to conduct my field research on contemporary relations between popular sector women and the state. State women's and gender equality institution workers from both Falcón and national offices had presented Falcón to me as a special case of state promotion and advancement of women's issues at a regional level. The governor at the time, Stella Lugo de Montilla, was one of only two female governors in the country and one of few women to be elected as governors in the history of Venezuela. She had previously led state-based women's organizing initiatives in Falcón when she was its first lady, and once she assumed the position of governor, she enhanced the Falcón state level gender institutions through the dedication of regional resources beyond the national gender institutions' resource allocations to the state. In 2008, Lugo de Montilla was the first governor in Venezuela to grant cabinet-level status to regional gender institutions. The Falcón government's commitment to women's and gender issues and the Falcón gender institutions' work with popular sector women, I was told, were advanced compared to the regional governments and gender institutions in other states. The fact that they had the largest state-organized women's front in the country, in spite of being a rural state with a relatively small population, in addition to multiple programs organizing, assisting, and educating popular women, were testimony to the articulation between state gender institutions and popular sector women in Falcón.

Falcón state gender institution authorities and workers granted me access to multiple sites of their articulation with popular sector women in the region; yet, they could

not grant me access to *Madres del Barrio* Mission in Falcón. Blocked from directly engaging with *Madres del Barrio*, I set out to learn about the experiences of women in Falcón who were potentially eligible for the mission but had not been reached by it, in order to understand what state recognition of unpaid housework meant for their work, welfare, gender relations within their families and their communities, and social and political participation. I wanted to understand their relations to the Bolivarian state, their experiences of (non)incorporation into other state programs, and the meanings that they attributed to these relations and experiences with the state.

This chapter sheds light on the everyday experiences of *barrio* women that underlie the appearance of rapid and massive social inclusion associated with the magical revolutionary Bolivarian state by telling their stories of non-incorporation and/ or patchy and slow incorporation into Bolivarian state programs. Focusing on women's experiences of non-incorporation into state programs and waiting for incorporation, I draw from Javier Auyero's (2012) theoretical contributions developed in *Patients of the State* on the experiences and meanings of poor people's waiting for the state to act on behalf of their welfare to explain what happens to popular sector women in one *barrio* of Falcón state "when nothing apparently happens" (p. 19). These everyday experiences of popular women illuminate the temporal disjuncture between the rapid, radical transformations in state rhetoric, policy, and presences and the uncertain and extended amounts of time spent by some popular women in waiting to be reached by them. This chapter reveals what Auyero (2012) terms the "everyday political domination" that constituted the fabric of these women's relationship to the Bolivarian state during Chávez's presidency.

In *Patients of the State*, Auyero analyzes the everyday and routine relations and interactions between the urban poor and the Argentine state as producing and reproducing an order of political domination. To do this, he uses what he terms a "tempography of domination: a thick description of how the dominated perceive temporality and waiting, how they act or fail to act on these perceptions, and how these perceptions and these (in)actions serve to challenge or perpetuate their domination" (p. 4). This hermeneutical focus on poor people's experiences of waiting for the state to act on behalf of their welfare reveals the temporal dimensions of political domination.

Examining multiple experiences of poor people's waiting across multiple sites of engagement with the state in Argentina, Auyero shows how the state uses multiple means—veiling its operations, delaying or rushing service delivery, and giving confusing messages (pp. 73-74)—that force the poor to wait in “zones of uncertainty and arbitrariness.” Auyero is careful to note that such diffuse subtle tactics comprise part of a “strategy of domination without a strategist” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992 cited in Auyero, 2012, p. 61) because they are not part of an explicit state “master plan” (p. 61) for its dealings with the poor. Yet he contends the state's forcing poor people to wait does constitute “an insidious but banal exercise of power” (p. 80). For it obliges the poor to surrender their power and time to others and reveals that the poor do not control processes of state welfare distribution.

At the same time, Auyero asserts that this form of state power is not merely repressive, but is also productive. Drawing on Foucault and Bourdieu, he argues that state power over welfare daily produces and reproduces a doxa of welfare delivery—a common sense shared understanding amongst both state actors and the poor of how welfare is to be distributed. He finds that this form of state power also routinely produces patiently compliant subjects—whom he terms “patients of the state,” or subjects who understand that they must act according to this established doxa and “yield to the state's dictates” (p. 9) in order to benefit from welfare services. In turn, on a daily basis, the Argentine state produces and reproduces an order of political domination of the poor in place of their incorporation as full, active citizens in Argentine society.

While Auyero's writing in *Patients of the State* focuses on the urban poor in general, he begins to elucidate how the constant production and reproduction of this order of political domination in Argentina recreates poor people's subordination in general and entrenches female dependence in particular. He notes that the patients of the Argentine state are primarily women, as welfare policies and institutions are structured around gender divisions. Auyero asserts that by making welfare services inefficient and unreliable, the Argentine state “implicitly coerces women to attach themselves to male breadwinners” (p. 126) who can provide them with material security that the state does not.

In this chapter, I further elucidate gendered implications of waiting for the state—in this case of waiting in the shadows of the magical revolutionary Bolivarian state—by employing Dorothy Smith’s (1987) “everyday world as problematic” methodology to focus specifically on popular sector women’s experiences of non-incorporation and/ or slow and patchy incorporation into state programs. Following Auyero, I examine popular women’s experiences of waiting for the state and the meanings they attribute to these experiences. At the same time, I analyze how their experiences of waiting for state social provisioning interacted with their experiences of community disorganization and disintegration, everyday violence, and persistent gender roles to produce a negative feedback loop of non-substantive recognition of their unpaid labor. I begin from the standpoints of these *Falconiana* popular women in order to locate the state practices and social relations that shaped their everyday world and work.

I briefly describe the care burdens, work histories, and family structures of the ten *Falconiana* popular sector women not incorporated into *Madres del Barrio* who are featured in this chapter. I weave their stories together by illuminating the common threads between them in terms of their understandings of their work and their right to state recognition of their unpaid work. I then explore how these popular sector women diverged in their understandings of their ties to the Bolivarian state and their interactions with it. Yet their stories reveal how the Bolivarian state’s patchy social provisioning, for which it made them wait, coupled together with community disorganization and disintegration, everyday violence, and persistent gender roles that charged them with the bulk of unpaid care work, reproduced their social and economic vulnerability. I conclude by discussing how, in the absence of social and political organization to channel these women’s interests, the Bolivarian state’s presences and absences and actions and inactions upheld relations of gender and class domination in this popular sector *barrio* of Falcón state.

6.2. Ten *Falconiana Barrio* Women

In a popular sector *barrio* of Coro, I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with ten popular sector women,¹⁶³ ranging in age from their 20s to their 60s with differing care burdens and family structures. Some of these women dedicated themselves exclusively to unpaid housework, while others combined unpaid housework with paid informal work that they carried out mostly in their homes, but they all were responsible for caring for others in their household. They all had either no income or their income was below minimum wage. Thus, all of these women potentially met the criteria for *Madres del Barrio* Mission, but had not been incorporated into it.

Diana was in her 50s and cared for her male partner, with whom she lived, and her two adult male children, one of whom lived with her. Diana had worked as a waiter in a bar, and she withdrew from paid work ten years prior to the interview because she did not like her work and her partner wanted her to leave it. She had no income of her own, and she lived off what money her partner and her eldest son gave her. Since her son who lived with her had recently started working, his contributions to her and the household had enabled her to become less dependent on her partner. She had never contributed to social insurance.

Joana was in her 40s. She withdrew from her paid work as a domestic worker when her elderly parents became ill and they needed extensive care. Her father had recently died. She was now caring for all of the family members with whom she lived: her blind and infirm mother, her four nieces and nephews, and her granddaughter. She had made all her contributions to social insurance, but was unable to collect social insurance money because she was not yet of retirement age. Her mother did not receive a pension either because she did not contribute to social insurance, and during the interview process, she was waiting to receive one from *Amor Mayor* Mission. Joana had no income and lived off what money her daughter could contribute to her.

Sara was in her 60s and had always worked as a homemaker. Her adult child now lived apart from her. So Sara now cared for her husband and her pets. She had no income or pension of her own and she lived off what money her husband gave her.

Daniela was in her 40s. She previously worked in the retail sector, but at the time of the interviews, she worked solely as a homemaker, caring for her husband,

¹⁶³ Nine of the women lived in the *barrio* where the interviews were conducted, while one lived in a neighboring *barrio*.

her three children and her one grandchild. She had never contributed to social insurance, and she lived off what money her husband gave her.

Jenny was a mother in her 20s and a mother of two young children. She dropped out of high school when she became pregnant with her first child. She used to live off what money the father of her children gave her, but they had recently separated. Since the separation, she had started a business with her friend, where they sold clothes they have bought in bulk from the house where they lived together. She was also studying for her high school equivalency through Robinson Mission. She had never contributed to social insurance.

Hilda was in her 30s. She lived part of the month in a different city in a different state, where she cared for her pre-school age son, and the other part of the month in this *barrio* of Falcón, where she cared for her two other children and her sick, elderly mother. She used to live off what money the father of her children gave her, but they had recently separated. After the separation, Hilda worked for a year in an informal baking business, but she had to leave this work to care for her mother when her mother became ill. Hilda now lived off the rent of a room in her house to a tenant. She had never contributed to social insurance.

Carol was in her 30s. She previously worked in a pharmacy, but she had to leave this work when her newborn baby incurred a developmental disability through an accident and subsequently needed extensive care. Carol had also been studying for her university degree through Sucre Mission, but had to drop out of the program in the wake of her baby's accident. Carol now stayed home caring for her husband and five children. Even though her disabled child was now seven years old, she still required regular intensive care. This persistent need for care prevented Carol from continuing her studies and re-incorporating into the paid workforce as she would have liked. She had never contributed to social insurance and she lived off what money her husband gave her and occasionally from selling clothing (bought in bulk) from her house.

Irene was in her 60s. She worked as a kitchen assistant for six years before starting her family and dedicating herself to unpaid housework. She now cared for her husband and her sick, elderly mother who lived in another *barrio* of Coro. She never contributed to social insurance and she did not receive a pension even though she was of retirement age.

Inés was in her 40s. She cared for her son, her adult nephew, and her aunt. She did piecework sewing from her house to maintain herself and her son, but she earned less than minimum wage. Because she had been sewing since she was a teenager, she had developed an occupationally acquired disability with her hands. This disability in turn limited the amount and kind of sewing she could do and how much money she could make. Her aunt did contribute to household expenses. Inés previously worked as a seamstress in a factory in Caracas. While she worked there, she did contribute to social insurance, but she had not paid all the contributions necessary to benefit from a state pension once she reached retirement age.

Veronica was in her 30s. She cared for her two pre-school age children and her elderly mother who was in an advanced stage of Alzheimers and required round-the-clock care. Her mother did not receive a pension. Veronica received some monetary assistance from the father of her second child. To supplement that child support and pay her own and her other child's expenses, she took in piecework laundry when she could, but she earned less than minimum wage. She had recently worked as a shop attendant, but she had to withdraw from that work when her mother became very ill. Prior to her mother's illness, she dropped out of high school when her father became terminally ill, and then she began to work as a nanny. She had never contributed to social insurance.

While this sample of research participants was not representative of popular sector homemakers in Venezuela nor in Falcón nor in Coro, it was constitutive of the fabric of popular sector women's ties with the state, as their experiences show how the state's practices penetrated their everyday world (D. E. Smith, 1987, p. 187). This sample of popular women does shed light on the dialogical process between state recognition and non-recognition of unpaid housework and popular sector women's engagement with their rights and the state.

I used the interview summary review process as an opportunity to conduct short follow-up interviews with most of the participants, especially in regard to their experiences of (non)incorporation into state social programs since the initial interviews. The follow-up interviews illuminated the centrality of waiting for most of these women's engagements with the Bolivarian state. I conducted more extensive follow-up with two of the women, as I attempted to use my contacts within the state to link them to state programs and services because of their particular situations of acute vulnerability. These experiences provided additional insight into the often slow and non-transparent process of state incorporation and the uncertainty that this produced amongst these women, which seemed to characterize the process of state incorporation for many popular sector homemakers.

6.3. Understandings of Work Disarticulated from Rights

None of the women I interviewed in this *barrio* expressed awareness of the constituent assembly process of 1999, and only one of the participants was aware that the 1999 Constitution entitled her to social security as a homemaker. When I asked them

what constitutional rights they had as women, three of them were able to name a right—to live free from violence—and one of these women also named the right to receive social assistance from the state for her dependents.

Yet, despite their lack of awareness about how the constitution recognized their unpaid labor, nine out of the ten women interviewed expressed awareness of their unpaid household labor as work, with several of them referencing the replacement cost of unpaid housework to explain how their housework was work. Moreover, four of the women explicitly spoke of how they were workers who received no salary and how this lack of remuneration placed them in disempowering positions. For example, Carol concluded that housework was not rewarded:

Yeah, chances are that your children and your husband give thanks that the house is cared for... but who recognizes us now? Nobody, nobody recognizes us. Then, goodness! Sometimes I prefer to go out onto the street¹⁶⁴ to be less stressed, clean less, wash less, iron less. And in the street at least you have your middle of the month and your end of the month payment and your schedule.

Similarly, Joana noted that now that she worked taking care of her own household—as opposed to when she took care of another family’s house as a domestic worker—she worked for free, her workload was greater, and her work hours were longer. Further, Sara’s insight into her status as an unpaid worker and her economic dependence on her husband sheds light on how the non-recognition of her labor rendered her vulnerable: “at least they give me everyday for food and that is not for my salary—that is to eat. Then, I don’t have a salary. And if one were to at least charge, the husband would leave the house because he wasn’t going to pay what one has to pay.”

What accounts for this disarticulation between these popular women, almost all of whom recognized their unpaid labor as work, and their constitutional right to state recognition of their unpaid housework? Furthermore, what accounts for this disarticulation amongst popular sector women in a state which had been heralded by the Bolivarian government for being one of the few in the country to have a female governor,

¹⁶⁴ Colloquial term for work outside of the house.

for being the first state to create cabinet-level gender institutions, and for having the largest state-organized women's front in the country? With so much presence of women's issues within the government of Falcón state—a government which was aligned with a national government that expanded state gender institutions and appropriated the language of feminism— why was there such absence of rights awareness amongst popular sector women in the very capital of Falcón?

The answers to these questions lie in a contextual analysis of the mutual imbrications of much longer processes of state disarticulation, absence, and patchy social provisioning, community disorganization and disintegration, and persistent gender roles that charged women with the bulk of unpaid care work and relegated them to the private sphere of the household. These interviews both provided snapshots of those longer intersecting processes and were embedded within them.

When I spoke to these ten popular sector women in Coro about their knowledge of the 1999 Constitution and their constitutional rights as women and specifically as homemakers, three of them responded that these issues were not of interest to them. These three explained their rights were situated within in a broader context of state disarticulation, wherein the state failed everyday to reach women, enforce women's rights and promote and defend women's welfare. For example, Sara said to me: "It doesn't interest me. Or rather, if I am going to know a thing which I am not going to benefit anything from, why am I going to be interested and apply my mind to that thing? It's neither here nor there, let's leave it like that." Her daughter, Daniela, explained further why the constitution and their rights were not of interest to her mother and her: "What happens is that they do it, they set it out, and it stays in the air. For example, they tell you that they are going to do something and they don't do it. Then, what are we going to with burying ourselves in that?" For these homemakers, they understood that while their rights may have existed on paper, they were irrelevant to their everyday realities because they were supposed to be enforced by a state that they had not seen deliver on its promises to women citizens. Their words show that they understood that, as popular women, they did not control processes of state delivery of services to them. They viewed engaging with and waiting for the state for social assistance as futile, and they turned instead to their male partners to help make ends meet.

For many of the women I interviewed in this *barrio* of Coro and not just the three mentioned above, state non-delivery and/or patchy or insufficient delivery of services and enforcement of rights appeared to characterize much of their relationship with the Bolivarian state. The majority of the women did use *Barrio Adentro* Mission and Integral Diagnostic Centers—two free public health programs established by the Bolivarian government—and they spoke favorably of these programs, noting their accessibility. Yet these positive experiences with new state presences in welfare provisioning did not extend to their experiences with other popular Bolivarian programs. For example, both Diana and Veronica had studied in Ribas Mission to receive their high school equivalencies. Diana quit after a few weeks because the teacher did not come to class, and the substitute teacher only showed videos and did not explain anything. Veronica said she successfully completed all the coursework in the mission, but the mission never granted her high school degree nor the scholarship it had promised her.

Half of the women interviewed chose not to use Mercal Mission, even though they could stand to benefit from purchasing subsidized foodstuffs, because they said they did not have the time to wait in line at Mercal—lines that the women interviewed spoke of lasting anywhere from three to eight hours.¹⁶⁵ This group of women not using Mercal included Inés— a single mother running a piecework sewing business from her home—and Joana and Carol, whose extensive care burdens of dependents with disabilities demanded they spend almost all of their time at home. Daniela also said she did not use Mercal because of violent incidents that had broken out in such long lines.¹⁶⁶ The women interviewed who did use Mercal used it because their poor economic circumstances left them with no other choice, even though using this service could add considerably to their workdays and create problems with providing care for their dependents while they were away so long from their homes.

¹⁶⁵ It should be noted that these lines to purchase food from the mission were outside in the open air. In Coro, where average daily temperatures range between 30° and 40°C and levels of humidity are often quite high, standing in line outside for hours therefore is not just exhausting due to the long wait but also due to the exposure to extreme heat.

¹⁶⁶ While I was in Coro, several incidents of violent outbreaks at Mercals in the city had occurred and were publicized. Also, during this time, in a Falcón state municipality to the east of Coro, where the Falcón state women's and gender equality institutions were hosting a community day, a group of assailants used firearms to attack the Mercal that the institution had arranged for the community.

Carol pointed out the political subordination of the poor in her *barrio* that the state produced by forcing them to wait in line for food for many hours under the hot sun. She noted that poor elderly women would wait in those lines, while the governor and the governor's mother would not because they could afford to shop at private supermarkets. She concluded with a rhetorical question drawing attention to the contradiction between state rhetoric and practice of welfare delivery: "Then, where is the government if they [the poor elderly women] are the priority?"

6.4. Waiting for the Magical Revolutionary State

At the end of 2011, President Chávez announced that the executive was taking further measures to prioritize the welfare of the elderly poor and extremely poor children of Venezuela by enacting two new "great missions"—*Misión en Amor Mayor*¹⁶⁷ (Great Mission in Elderly Love) and *Misión Hijos de Venezuela*¹⁶⁸ (Great Mission Children of Venezuela)—in which the state would transfer cash to them. Upon signing the executive decrees enacting these great missions, Chávez stated that they constituted social justice measures that were part of the greater national revolutionary process of constructing socialism.

¹⁶⁷ *Gran Misión en Amor Mayor Venezuela* was decreed by President Chávez in December 2011. It establishes a special pension regime for the allocation of a pension equivalent to the minimum wage salary to all elderly adults who live in households with incomes less than the minimum wage salary. According to the presidential decree, women 55 years of age and up and men 60 years of age and up are eligible for the *Amor Mayor* pension, whether or not they have contributed to the social security system. The decree also grants priority to the most elderly adults and elderly adults who suffer from disabilities or illnesses that prevent them from being able to take care of themselves (Presidencia de la República, 13 December 2011).

¹⁶⁸ *Gran Misión Hijos de Venezuela* is a conditional cash transfer program decreed by President Chávez in November 2011 as an "extraordinary measure" to tackle "extreme poverty" in Venezuela. It establishes a special regime of "universal" family allowances for households that have incomes less than the minimum wage salary and children under eighteen years of age. An allowance is distributed for each child and for up to three children in such a household. According to the decree, pregnant teenagers, pregnant women, children under eighteen years of age, and all children with disabilities are eligible to receive benefits from the mission. To receive the family allowance, pregnant teenage mothers must remain in school, while adult parents must join *Gran Misión Saber y Trabajo* to receive training in socio-productive occupations if they are unemployed and ensure that their children stay in school and pass their classes. Children with disabilities under fifteen who receive the allowance must attend special education programs and all children with disabilities must regularly visit therapy centers (Presidencia de la República, 12 December 2011)

The roll-out of *Amor Mayor* and *Hijos De Venezuela* was aligned with the Bolivarian state's framework of decentralization, in which state policies of social inclusion of the popular sectors were accomplished in large part by delivering services to them in the same communities where they lived. The primary means by which the executive designed the official registration of the elderly poor and extremely poor children in these great missions was through community visits by local multidisciplinary teams called "quartets"¹⁶⁹ in a house-by-house census process.¹⁷⁰ In the case of *Hijos de Venezuela*, potential recipients were supposed to go through a further layer of screening after being surveyed and registered by the quartets, wherein popular power organizations from their communities would conduct "validation assemblies" to verify that potential recipients were really in need of state cash transfers (Gran Misión Hijos de Venezuela, 2012). Thus, rather than making potential recipients visit welfare state offices, an articulation between the state and organizations of popular power would conduct outreach throughout popular sector communities to screen and register potential recipients for these great missions.

Many of the elderly and child dependents of the women I interviewed in this *barrio* were eligible for these great missions, and many of the interview participants registered their dependents for incorporation into these two new missions. Although the *Amor Mayor* pension and the *Hijos de Venezuela* economic benefit were targeted at these women's dependents, incorporation of these women's dependents was of immediate interest to these women because they were the ones who cared for them. State economic assistance to their dependents could therefore alleviate some of their

¹⁶⁹ The quartets were comprised of: a social activist whose role was political; a registrar whose role was technical; a medical student whose role was to assess the health conditions and needs in the households visited; and a popular power spokesperson, who could be a *Madre del Barrio* or a local community organizer and whose role was to guide the other members of the quartet through their respective community (Segunda Vicepresidencia para el Area Social, March 2012). Thus, these new Bolivarian social programs also drew on the extended reproductive labor of the *Madres del Barrio*.

¹⁷⁰ Potential elderly and child recipients could first be signed up for these great missions through registration tables that the government temporarily placed in communities throughout the country. However, after signing up, the quartets would visit them at home to verify their living conditions and determine if they met the eligibility criteria for incorporation. The quartets could also visit households not previously registered in their house-by-house censuses (Segunda Vicepresidencia para el Area Social, March 2012).

own care burdens. As I interviewed these women several times over 2012, I could follow part of the processes of their dependents' incorporation into these missions. Auyero (2012) notes that waiting for the state is "stratified," because different people do not experience it equitably (p. 27); these Falconiana *barrio* women's experiences and understandings of waiting illustrate this point. Below I chart these *barrio* women's different experiences of waiting for incorporation into the great missions in terms of the time they waited, the ways the state treated them, the ways they chose to engage with the state, and how they understood these waiting processes.

Irene was the only participant of the seven women I interviewed whose dependent had received a benefit from a great mission for which she had registered. Irene's elderly mother, who lived in another *barrio* of Coro, had recently begun to receive her pension from *Amor Mayor*. Irene described the arrival of this pension as a relief for her mother and for herself because her mother was previously surviving on whatever monetary and non-monetary assistance Irene could give her. Now with this pension money, Irene was able to buy her mother her medicines and a refrigerator. Irene concluded that the *Amor Mayor* was both "well done" and an "act of justice."

But for most of 2012, Irene's case of her mother's incorporation into the great missions was unique in the group of women from the same *barrio* that I interviewed. Rather, for all but Irene, the women interviewed who had registered their dependents for state social assistance spent most of 2012 waiting for such assistance to arrive and not knowing if and/or when it would arrive. As with *Madres del Barrio* Mission, these popular women's experiences of waiting for *Amor Mayor* and *Hijos de Venezuela* and not knowing if and when their dependents would be incorporated into them shows that these new Bolivarian welfare state presences concomitantly generated new state absences in welfare delivery to the popular sectors, and thus unevenness in state incorporation.

In *Patients of the State*, Auyero (2012) asserts that, by ensnaring the poor in often arbitrary and shifting processes that confuse them while forcing them to wait, the state mystifies its power over them. Auyero further asserts that mystification of state power plays a key role in the acquiescence of the poor to its dictates (p. 34). In the case of the Bolivarian government's great missions, the state further mystified its power

through its design of the missions according to its framework of decentralization and promotion of popular power. This decentralized process made state power over incorporation into these great missions particularly diffuse and opaque for the women I interviewed who attempted to register their dependents in them. It masked who had decision-making authority over access to and distribution of benefits and, in turn, shrouded follow-up and recourse procedures. All but one of the women I interviewed said that the quartets visited them at their respective homes and officially registered their dependents for the great missions. Yet they spoke of not knowing what the quartets did with their dependents' information once they left. They said the quartets did not return to visit them again and no validation assemblies occurred. Nor did they know with whom or how to follow up on their dependents' registrations. What they did know was they had to wait for the state to incorporate their dependents, though they did not know for how long.

For the women interviewed who attempted to follow up on their dependents' registrations in the great missions, they spoke of a long, non-transparent, and confusing process of engagement with the state bureaucracy. For example, after waiting for five years for state economic assistance for her elderly mother from the National Institute for Social Services (INASS), Veronica's family registered her mother for an *Amor Mayor* pension at a great mission registration table.¹⁷¹ When I first interviewed Veronica in May 2012, her mother had not received assistance from either state agency, nor had a quartet visited her and her mother. She had gone to INASS to inquire on the status of her mother's application for a pension and according to her, "then they tell me to wait, to wait in the other list [*Amor Mayor*]. I go to the other list, I don't appear on it, they tell me the other list..." Veronica's story illustrates the confusing and delaying processes Auyero (2012) explicates—processes by which the state ensnares the poor—as Veronica was given "contradictory and puzzling messages" and "kicked around" (pp. 73-74) from one state service to the other, leaving her still waiting and uncertain.

¹⁷¹ According to the presidential decree enacting *Amor Mayor*, "elderly persons who suffer from some disability or illness that impedes them from managing on their own will be prioritized" (Presidencia de la República, 13 December 2011). Given the state of Veronica's elderly mother's illness and her inability to care for herself, her incorporation in to the mission could be considered a priority according to the decree.

Visiting Veronica at her home—her workplace— I found her situation of vulnerability to be particularly acute compared to the other women I interviewed in this *barrio* of Falcón. She had two pre-school age children running around, a demented mother who constantly relieved herself all over the house, and she had to do all the household laundry by hand. She found herself in regular conflict with her family over the care of her mother. These care burdens left Veronica with very little time to work for an income. I offered to bring her mother’s and her children’s needs for social assistance to the attention of the state gender institution authorities, given my research relationship with them. I wrote a brief report about Veronica’s dependents and submitted it to the head of the regional gender institutions, who informed me that she would request a social worker visit them at their house. When I inquired over a month later about the state’s follow-through on Veronica’s family’s case, this authority responded to me that she had not yet addressed it because she had been very busy doing work out of the office in communities around the state. Much of this was political work in the run-up to the presidential election. When I visited Veronica at her home again in July 2012, neither her mother nor her children had been incorporated into the great missions. Yet, she had managed to find out that they had not been officially registered for the great missions, so she was trying to find out how to register her dependents for them again.

At the other side of the *barrio*, the Bolivarian state at first appeared to be more attentive to Joana’s dependent’s incorporation into one of the great missions, yet the state later made Joana wait in suspension as well. In April 2012, a quartet from the great missions informed Joana that her mother had appeared on the beneficiary list for *Amor Mayor*¹⁷² and that Joana should go to the bank to collect her mother’s pension. Joana did go to the bank, only to find out that her mother’s pension had not yet arrived. When I visited Joana again in September 2012, the pension had still not been deposited in the bank, and Joana had received no news as to when it would come.

Auyero (2012) describes such incidents when state cash transfers are not deposited in bank accounts as “veiling” state power over the poor, because “human

¹⁷² Like Veronica’s mother, Joana’s elderly mother could be considered a priority for incorporation into the mission according to the presidential decree, because she was blind and could not care for herself.

actions responsible for the extensive wait time are masked behind the operation of nonhuman operations” and “no individual is presented as responsible for it” (p. 73). The veiling of the human forces behind the absent bank deposit made the error appear technical. Yet Joana and her mother were left to wait further, not knowing when the banking operations would be rectified. Anna Secor (2007) notes that such veiling incidents also “freeze with indifference the circulation” that the state “sets in motion” (p. 42). In Joana’s case, the Bolivarian state first promoted Joana’s sick and disabled elderly’s mother’s claim for a pension and later suspended it. And the state literally set Joana in motion over this claim—between first registering her mother for the mission at a registration table and later traveling back and forth to the bank only to be turned back without assistance to wait further in a “zone of uncertainty.”

Other women I interviewed who had registered their dependents for the great missions at the end of 2011 or the beginning of 2012 chose to wait to receive news about the arrival of the social assistance. At the same time, several of these women did not express confidence that the social assistance would arrive, as they had not received follow-up communication from the state or popular power organizations as to the status of their dependents’ registrations. The state’s lack of follow-up made them doubt whether their registrations were being processed. For these women who expressed doubts, the great missions seemed like they could amount to another instance of state disarticulation and failure to follow through and deliver on its promises to their *barrio*.

When a couple of women who chose to wait did express hope that the social assistance would arrive, they spoke of appearing on the beneficiary list as a “question of luck.”¹⁷³ For example, when I first interviewed Hilda in June of 2012, she told me that the night before the interview, she had seen President Chávez announce on national television that no grandparent in the country would go without a pension. Hilda, in turn, told her mother “to have hope because that is the last thing to be lost.” Hilda’s words reflected belief in Chávez’s promise that the Bolivarian state’s new magical social

¹⁷³ These women’s description of appearance on the great mission beneficiary list was particularly apt, given that the mechanism for beneficiary notification was not unlike the lottery. After submitting their information in the mission’s registration and screening process, potential beneficiaries waited for their numbers to be called—in this case, for their national identity numbers to be published by the state on beneficiary lists in state media.

provisioning presences would reach her family. She was in a magical state, receptive to Chávez's spell. Yet, in this same year, when on television, president Chávez also repeatedly admonished the people to exercise "patience, patience, and more patience" in their expectations of being reached by the Bolivarian state's revolutionary transformations. When I visited Hilda again in October of 2012, her mother had still not received her pension and they did not know when it would arrive. Nonetheless, their expression of hope that they would be "lucky" enough to receive social assistance for their dependents was disarticulated from an understanding of social assistance as a right that pertained to them and their dependents as citizens of Venezuela.¹⁷⁴ Rather, their hope was based on their faith in Chávez's word and the potential fruitfulness of their waiting for his word to be made good.

Carol was undergoing the same experience in 2012 of waiting without information as to when her disabled daughter would be incorporated into *Hijos de Venezuela*.¹⁷⁵ She contended that this process of waiting without information and follow-through from the state was common to the functioning of the missions in Falcón. For example, Carol had previously signed up for *Madres del Barrio* Mission, but she had never received a response from the state as to whether and when she would be incorporated into it. She noted that when and where she had been able to receive economic assistance from the state for her disabled daughter, she had achieved it not through waiting as she was told to do, but only through persistent struggle, circumvention of regional-level authorities, and direct appeal to national-level authorities in Caracas. For example, even though Carol volunteered for six years at the Falcón state institution, which Governor Lugo de Montilla previously headed when she was first lady of the state, she never was able to receive assistance from Falcón state institutions in accessing discounted credit for housing. She only received credit from the state to purchase her house when she traveled to Caracas pregnant and stormed the security gates of the presidential palace, where she demanded to speak directly to President Chávez. Chávez and his advisors then received her. Carol said that in less than three

¹⁷⁴ Article 86 of the 1999 Constitution states that "every person has the right to social security."

¹⁷⁵ According to the presidential decree enacting *Hijos de Venezuela*, children with disabilities living in households that are extremely poor are a population that the mission targets (Presidencia de la República, 12 December 2011).

days after that she received the credit to purchase her house in the *barrio*. Carol's story of contention with the state reveals that the order of everyday political domination of popular women in this *barrio* was not total. While the Bolivarian state was largely opaque, it was porous enough in some areas for her to be able to make certain state authorities hear and fulfill her demand.

Yet the majority of women I interviewed from this *barrio* did not take Carol's combative, frontal approach to demanding resources and assistance from the state. In the absence of making such demands either individually or collectively, they remained waiting in "zones of uncertainty" for answers from a largely non-communicative, non-transparent state apparatus.

Their waiting in silence, without protest, for state social assistance that they and their families were supposedly due reveals a doxa of state assistance for subaltern women in Bolivarian Venezuela. My interactions with Inés, in particular, illuminate this doxa—a normal and normative arrangement between state actors and poor women on the way state resources were distributed. When I first met Inés, she was waiting for her child to be incorporated in *Hijos de Venezuela*. I witnessed her struggle to make ends meet for herself and her child through her sewing piecework, which was compounded by her occupational disability. I informed her then about the Woman's Development Bank (*BanMujer*)¹⁷⁶ so that she could potentially access discounted credit from the state to purchase better equipment to carry out her work. After discussing the bank and its services, Inés's communication showed me that she would only approach the bank to ask for assistance if I directly connected her to it.

Given my connections with and knowledge of state authorities, Inés appeared to see me as a "*palanca*"—literally a "lever", and a term that is popularly used in Venezuela to connote someone who has leverage or influence with state authorities. So I approached the bank on Inés's behalf, and after some persistence, I managed to secure a visit to her house with a bank fieldworker. The fieldworker registered her for

¹⁷⁶ *BanMujer* is a state micro-finance institution that grants loans to women organized in socio-productive activities and also provides them with non-financial services such as political education.

incorporation into the bank. The fieldworker also treated me as Inés's *palanca*, noting that I had basically done the pre-screening for Inés's potential incorporation into the bank because the fieldworker trusted me. The fieldworker told Inés that her application for credit would be sent to the bank's national office in Caracas, where it would be reviewed and decided upon. She informed Inés that this process would take some time, but she did not give her a precise time frame for how long she should expect to wait. After waiting just over a month without any news, Inés contacted me to inquire about the status of her application. I responded to her that I did not know anything about it since I was not a state authority, but I could give her the fieldworker's contact details, in case she had lost them, or she could go to the bank offices in Coro to inquire. Inés replied to me that she did not want to "bother" the fieldworker or the bank; she would just wait.¹⁷⁷ As her *palanca*, then, I voiced her needs to the state; without my assistance, she would remain silent—a patient of the state. Yet this mode of communication with the state was so normal, so assumed, that it went without explanation. My intervention, the fieldworker's words and actions, and Inés's response shed light on a doxa— a set of "accumulated shared understandings" on the fundamentals of state assistance—which shaped her interactions with the Bolivarian state. Inés understood that access to state assistance was contingent on *palanca*, on possessing contacts within the state. Inés knew she must not be passive and just wait for assistance; she must act strategically and use her *palanca* for her request to be heard. At the same time, she understood that she must pull the lever and then silently wait for it to act on her behalf. Inés, like the patients of the state Javier Auyero (2012) writes about in Argentina, knew that, as poor people to "obtain the much needed 'aid'... they have to show that they are worthy of it by dutifully waiting. They know they have to avoid making trouble..." (p. 9). Inés's knowledge and actions thus reveal a deeply entrenched doxa of the importance of both waiting patiently and cronyism for the distribution of state resources in a historical context of patchy state incorporation of the popular sectors.

¹⁷⁷ Inés did wait further, and her waiting eventually paid off. Around three months after she registered for the bank, the fieldworker informed me that the bank had approved her application, but she would have to wait further for the funds to arrive from Caracas. The year after I left Venezuela, I received news from my research assistant that Inés had received the *BanMujer* credit, thus indicating that she waited approximately a year to receive it.

6.5. Gendered Implications of Community Disorganization and Disintegration

One of the reasons why the women I interviewed were waiting for the state without making demands for social assistance was because they were not collectively organized. While community organization is not necessarily always a vehicle for women to raise their awareness about their rights and their work and to formulate demands around them, it can potentially serve as such a vehicle.¹⁷⁸ However, none of the women I interviewed belonged to the *Frente de Mujeres Josefa Camejo* or the *Puntos de Encuentro*, in which the Falcón state women's and gender equality institutions organized popular women territorially as women.¹⁷⁹ Further, none of the women interviewed belonged to a communal council. Only one woman interviewed had participated in a community or political organization.

A chief reason why many of these women were not participating in organizational life that could potentially assist them in making demands of the state to meet their gender interests was because of the lack of integration and organization in their communities that could serve to channel their demands. In a national context in which popular community organization had not only been heralded but also legislated as a

¹⁷⁸ The Organic Law of Communal Councils does include community work toward gender equality as one of the potential ambits of work of the communal councils through the "family and gender equality committees" (Asamblea Nacional de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2009). According to the Collective Authority for Women's Issues and Gender Equality in Falcón state, the proposal for the inclusion of gender equality committees in the Organic Law of Communal Councils came from Falcón ("Encuentro Zonal, Eje Paraguaná," 14 October 2011).

¹⁷⁹ This is not to assert that the *Frente de Mujeres Josefa Camejo* or the *Puntos de Encuentro* were necessarily vehicles for women to make demands of the state (especially because they were not autonomous of the state), but they were vehicles to organize women territorially in Falcón state and two of the few women's political organizations in Falcón state of which I am aware.

means through which to meet community members' needs,¹⁸⁰ many of these women found themselves embedded in a local context in which their communities failed to unify, organize, and become legal entities. In turn, their communities did not receive resources from the state as alternative forms of government. Rather, they described their communities as lacking social cohesion.

For example, Carol, Inés, and Sara were all from the same sector of the *barrio*, where a few community members had made several attempts at organizing the community into a communal council, yet none of these attempts proved successful. Carol explained that the communal council had not been formed in their sector because of conflict within the community about why the organization should exist and for whom it should exist:

The people do not want to attend a communal council. They do not want a communal council to be formed because they say it is more of the same, that that it's the same question of forming a communal council and the people do not work, but they get nominated, those who stay always want to be them. Then there is that rivalry and that question that 'no, the communal council didn't give to me.' Then I say that we also have to change our way of thinking: we can't say all the time that the government has to give to us or that the communal council has to give to us; we have to change ourselves to support the community or support the government in something in order to be able to receive.

¹⁸⁰ The National Assembly passed the Organic Law of Communal Councils in 2006 and reformed it in 2009. According to this law, communal councils "are instances of participation, articulation and integration between citizens and the diverse community, social movement and popular organizations, that allow organized people to exercise communal government and the direct administration of public policies and projects oriented to responding to the needs, potentialities and aspirations of the community, in the construction of the new model of socialist society of equality, equity and social justice". It stipulates that in urban environments, between 150 and 400 families in a self-defined geographical area can constitute a communal council. To start a communal council, at least 10% of the adults in the community must attend a citizens' assembly. To make any decision, a communal council must have a quorum of 30% in a first meeting, and if that is not met, a quorum of 20% in a second meeting. Part of the cycle of communal council decision-making and public administration consists of conducting an assessment of community needs and designing a plan and formulating a budget to implement projects to meet those needs. The law states that state organs must prioritize the satisfaction of the community needs that community councils identify through public policies and the allocation of public resources (Asamblea Nacional de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2009).

Carol viewed the struggle to form a communal council in her sector as a theater for the playing out of local power relations in which certain community members would use the communal space of legalized organization to serve their own interests rather than the broader interests of the community and the particular interests of the most vulnerable within it.

Sara noted that community relations were not always this way in this sector, as in the time of the *juntas de vecinos*,¹⁸¹ she said that “the mothers who did not have a house, obtained a plot here in [the *barrio*] and help and a block for the house was asked of the neighbors and their houses were made. Now no.... Right now there is no union; before there was.” Inés also noted how community unification had diminished over time, and she added that now in their sector, all her neighbors were shut into their individual houses all the time and they were resistant to coming out and meeting with each other.

This reticence to leave their individual houses and meet and engage as a community could have been at least in part due to the increased levels of violence and delinquency in their sector, which these women described, some of them in detail and with great trepidation as they asserted that the state did not guarantee their safety but rather treated their community in general as perpetrators of violence. For example, Sara’s daughter, Daniela noted that “here the police pass by once in a while, when they agree to. Or when a police is robbed in his house... or when they hold up a bank, the first that they [the police] invade is [this *barrio*]. And that happens when they rob over there [in another section of the city]: they come to look for the things here in [this *barrio*] because this is the red zone now.” What Daniela described here appears to be a historical continuity with the neoliberal era when the Venezuelan state increasingly entered the *barríos* as a repressive force, with security forces carrying out raids against *barrio* residents (Fernandes, 2010, pp. 66-67 & 76-77). Her words also support Petras and Veltmeyer’s (2009) assertion that the police in Bolivarian Venezuela tend to view poorer *barríos* as “criminal breeding grounds” (p. 176).

¹⁸¹ The *juntas de vecinos* or *asociaciones de vecinos* (neighborhood associations) were territorially-based organizations that represented the interests of local communities and their constituent residents. They emerged in the 1960s and spread throughout Venezuela by the 1990s after municipal governments were mandated to foster their growth (Friedman, 2000b, pp. 266-267).

Since the Bolivarian government had assumed power, proclaimed its anti-neoliberal stance, and created more state policies, programs, and institutions aimed at the social inclusion of the popular sectors, the national homicide rate had increased by more than 150% from 2000 to 2012 (OAS Hemispheric Security Observatory, N.D.). At the time of my research, Venezuela had the highest homicide rate in South America and it ranked amongst the countries in the world with the highest homicide rates (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013). Coro and its *barríos*, though located far from the most dangerous centers of the country, were not immune from these high and increasing rates of violence and homicide. In Falcón state, the number of homicides—arguably the most severe form of violence—had increased by 170% from 1999 to 2011 (Ministerio de Salud y Desarrollo Social, 2000, p. 370; Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Salud, 2014, p. 348).¹⁸² I was unable to access homicide statistics for Coro and its *barríos*, nor statistics on various other forms of violence, including forms of gender violence, in the area.¹⁸³

Both Sara and Daniela expressed that the increasing violence in their community bore down especially hard on the women within it. For example, Sara told the story of a woman who was nearly raped outside on the corner by Sara's house, but the woman's attackers ceased to attack her when Sara began screaming. Now Sara was waking up two or three times in the middle of the night to keep watch over her house. During the time that I was conducting interviews with these women, Diana was attacked and robbed right outside of her house and my research assistant heard of several women attacked on the same street where Sara, Carol, and Inés lived. These experiences of everyday violence in this *barrio*, lack of state protection from it, and their impediment to community integration and organization therefore lend credence to the claim by Petras and Veltmeyer (2009) that “ ‘popular power’ will only become meaningful” to the popular classes when they feel safe enough both to enter and use public spaces and stay in their own homes (p. 177).

¹⁸² My own calculation derived from numbers of homicides provided in these two national state reports.

¹⁸³ Yet, experiential accounts do speak to high homicide rates in Coro and its *barríos*. In the less than one year I spent doing research in Coro, two of my friends there each lost a friend to violence, including a friend of my research assistant who was killed in this same *barrio*.

In addition to high levels of violence, the intensity of several of the women's unpaid work also restricted them from participating in community organizations. For example, community members had successfully organized in Veronica's sector and formed a communal council. Veronica would have liked to participate in it, but she could not because she did not have time to due the heavy care burden she had with taking care of her sick, elderly mother and her two pre-school age children. Veronica's case shows how the gendered division of labor shaped social and political participation in popular power organizations. As scholars of gender and citizenship have contended, women's primary responsibility for reproductive labor can serve to constrain their access to political processes (Lister, 2001; Orloff, 1993).

Several of the women interviewed also indicated that their individual care burdens themselves constituted a barrier to gaining awareness about their rights and organizing around them. For example, two of the homemakers spoke of not knowing about how the constitution recognized them as homemakers and the value of the work they did precisely because of the nature of the work that they carried out everyday. Joana and Carol had very long workdays and especially heavy care burdens, as they both respectively cared for a disabled family member in addition to other family members. They spoke of not having the time or space to read about their rights and become knowledgeable in them. As Joana explained:

There I have my nephew's constitution stored away. Not even do I have the time to open it and read it because there is no time... Now at least, I don't know anything about that. Right now I don't read the news, nor the newspaper, nothing... At least here, I am paying attention to this [the house]. I am not paying attention to the tv, nor anything. And I turn on the radio, and that is like I don't even hear it.

Ironically, the very work for which the Bolivarian Constitution specifically interpellated them as bearers of rights restricted them in the first instance from becoming aware that they had such rights. As with the *Madres del Barrio*, the value of these popular women's unpaid reproductive labor was not recognized.

Persistent gender roles and gender divisions of labor that charged these women with the bulk of care work in their households, if not all of such work, in turn limited the

time that they could potentially be involved in community and political activities and organizations. Three of the women interviewed said they did not receive any help from family members in carrying out their reproductive labor, while seven said they received varying degrees of help from family members in carrying out their work. When women did report receiving help from family members with their work, it was more often than not from female family members. Four of these women also did receive support from the state in the form of day care and education for the pre-school age children for whom they cared, where these children also received meals.¹⁸⁴ Yet, for three of these four women, while their children's attendance at pre-school did lighten their work burden, it did not necessarily free up their time, as they were also caring for elderly, sick or disabled family members who did not have access to state care services. Where the women identified changes in their care work, they noted technological and infrastructural changes that lightened the burden of their work, such as running water, electricity, refrigerators, and washing machines. They did not identify changes in gender roles within their households.

6.6. Reading Popular Women's Acquiescence to Everyday Social and Political Domination

The women I interviewed tended to talk about care work within the household as women's implicit responsibility, with four of them explicitly stating that they did not discuss responsibility for care work with the fathers of their children and/ or the men in their households. Three of them noted that they chose not broach responsibility for care work with the men in their lives in order to avoid conflict with them, as they knew they would not win and such conflict would only complicate things for them. For example, below Diana and I discuss how it was decided who was responsible for the work in her household:

¹⁸⁴ In these cases, it appears that all the children were attending *Simoncitos*— free state-run early education centers for children zero to six years of age initiated by the Bolivarian government. *Simoncitos* run for eight hours daily and provide daily meals to children.

R: You have told me about your daily activities inside the home. Can you describe to me the daily activities of the other members of your home, of your partner and your son? What daily activities do they do?

D: What do they do? Sleep, eat, and go to the bathroom... Inside the home... they do not do anything.

R: And how is it decided who carries out which activity in the home? How was it decided that you are going to do everything—the cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing—and they are going to sleep and eat and go to the bathroom?

D: Myself.

R: You decided that?

D: Yes, myself.

R: And why did you decide to do all that work?

D: Because if one orders someone to help, then they don't take notice. Then what one does is become angry, irritated, and to say bad words, fight with them, growl at them, and they don't do anything. Then it is better to do it alone and not to say anything to anyone in order not to be arguing. Because you are the one who is going to get angry... I get angry and no one pays attention. And in all cases, I have to do my work, because even if I become crazy and fight and scream, no one is going to take notice. It's like that in the majority of homes here in Venezuela.

R: So that there is peace inside the home?

D: Yes. And then no one orders anyone. One does their own things, and everyone is happy.

R: And the men do not want to participate?

D: No! For nothing. In my case, I live with two males, three males. And I don't know why; maybe that it will strip them of their manliness if they are going to wash a plate, if they use a broom or if they wash clothes...

While women such as Diana spoke of “choosing” to do all or almost all the housework, Diana’s own words illustrate how such a “choice” was often not made willingly but rather was profoundly shaped by gendered assumptions and gender inequalities that played out in these women’s everyday lives.

Several of the women I interviewed spoke of not wanting to bother or disturb (“*molestar*”) the state to assist them in their reproductive burden in addition to not wanting to bother or disturb the men in their lives to assume responsibility for care work. The majority of these women’s reluctance to demand or even ask assistance from men and from the state in sharing this burden constitute “acts of recognition of the established political order” (Auyero, 2012, p. 9) of everyday gender and class domination. Yet their acquiescence to their subordination was not necessarily willing, as they were well aware of the tensions that this created within them. They talked as if this was their fate, which would only be exhausting and futile to challenge. In the absence of collective organization to support potential claims for recognition of their work and support and assistance in carrying it out, their chances of successfully challenging their fate indeed seemed slim.

Yet this does not signify that these women were merely passive subjects. As Auyero asserts: “The overall lack of contention over what is for us as observers a rather grievous process should not be seen as passivity on the part of the welfare recipients and applicants... Poor people are actively seeking solutions to their problems and strategize accordingly” (2012, p. 121). In not raising their voices for changes in social provisioning, these *barrio* women therefore avoided conflicts where they knew the odds were stacked against them. They understood that processes of state welfare delivery were outside their control. While the Bolivarian state produced differences in these women’s understandings of their ties to it, it was a state upon which these women knew they could largely not depend. So whether or not they decided to wait for the state to reach them, they looked elsewhere for immediate and everyday solutions to their and their dependents’ social provisioning needs. While their acquiescence to their subordinate positions vis-à-vis men and the state was conflictual, these were measured and rational choices given the history of patchy and non-transparent state social provisioning in their community, their lack of control over state practices, the failure of their community to organize, and the limited resources that they had at their disposal.

6.7. Conclusion

These women's stories illustrate that what was taking place in this popular *barrio* of Coro was not the unfolding of a process of popular participation and empowerment of popular sector women triggered by the constituent process and the broader revolution, but rather a negative feedback loop of non-substantive recognition of their labor that tended to reinforce their vulnerability. These women did not participate in community organizations because they did not have time to, they felt unsafe, and/or they did not see the point of doing so in a context of community disintegration and slow and/or unresponsive state social provisioning. This in turn created a gap in collective women's and community organization, which could have potentially challenged their conditions of vulnerability vis-à-vis the state and the men in their lives. And in the absence of strong state and community organization (that was now supposed to act as a local instantiation of the state), these women and their families in this *barrio* were left to their own devices for social provisioning. Thus, as individual families, they continued to fill in the gaps in social provisioning where the Bolivarian state did not reach. Some women, in turn, depended economically on the men in their lives, and if not on men, on female family members. Where women did not have men or family members to depend on, they struggled to make ends meet for themselves and the people they cared for by doing home-based work and piecework, which they combined and often performed at the same time as their unpaid housework. Not only did the women interviewed speak of not having time to participate in community organizations that could potentially address some of their and their families' needs for social provisioning, but they also noted the widespread violence in the community as an obstacle to community organization. Indeed, the violence and the state's failure to prevent and arrest it, served to reinforce both women's place within the home and individual family mechanisms of survival (instead of community mechanisms), as women either remained or retreated to working behind family gates and fences. These women's stories therefore tell of a process of reinforcement of gender roles, the gendered division of labor, and the state of ruling relations—the everyday order of gender and class domination—in this popular sector *barrio* lying in the shadows of the magical revolutionary state.

Chapter 7. Mobilized yet Contained within *Chavista* Populism: Popular Women's Organizing around the 2012 Organic Labor Law

7.1. Introduction

In this final fieldwork chapter, I examine the last effort by women's rights activists to legislate Article 88 during Hugo Chávez's presidency, when Chávez enacted the Organic Law of Work and Workers by executive decree in 2012. I do so by focusing on the contestation over popular women's participation and inclusion in this executive legislative process and how the dialectical relationship between forces from above and below within *Chavismo* affected popular women's organizing and claims for advancing their labor rights.

This chapter uses extended case study methods to reveal multiple and conflicting interests within *Chavismo* and popular women's organizing around the organic labor law in particular and how these interests were shaped by contradictory state-society relations and the regime of power in the Bolivarian process. I connect voices and interests within popular women's organizing to broader social and political structures and processes by drawing on participant observation and interviews with multiple women's movement and state gender equality actors and organizations across several geographic spaces and levels of organization and combining this data with media and document analysis. Employing extended case study's comparative strategy (Burawoy, 1998, p. 19), I examine differences in popular women's organizing and their relation to the Bolivarian state during the organic labor law drafting process. I contrast radical, participatory, bottom-up popular women's organizing driven by social movements with vertical, top-down popular women's organizing directed by the state. I explore the tensions between these two forms of popular women's organizing, and how these divergent cases were connected through and shaped by their containment within a

Chavista populist dynamic and the larger political context in which the labor law drafting process was embedded. Their containment within this populist dynamic both opened up and closed down opportunities for their mobilization for the inclusion of their gender interests within the 2012 organic labor law. I argue that their convergence as popular women in defense of state authorities' vision of the broader interests of the Bolivarian revolution reveals the type of popular women's participation and inclusion that the Bolivarian state was promoting. That is, the state held popular women's organization and mobilization as central to the continuation of the Bolivarian project, yet it attempted to limit their autonomy and marginalize the advancement of their particular interests within the Bolivarian process.

To ground my argument, I first provide a framework for my use of the concept of populism to explain popular women's organization around the 2012 organic labor law drafting process. Providing a historical background of social and women's movement mobilization for labor law reform, I place President Chávez's populist initiative to enact a new organic labor law by executive decree in context. I then discuss the central tensions that this initiative, combined with the national political conjuncture, generated for *Chavista* popular social movements and organizations in general and popular women's organizations in particular. I conclude with a discussion of how the Bolivarian state treated popular women's demands for inclusion in the law and its drafting and the implications of this top-down initiative for the recognition of unpaid homemakers and their right to social protection.

7.2. Defining Populism

This chapter draws on a conceptualization of populism as a political phenomenon—a mode of competing for, gaining, and exercising political power (Weyland, 2001, p. 11). Populism is not defined as an ideology or principle (Laclau, 1977, 2005), nor as an economic phenomenon— as a mode of wealth distribution and redistribution (Weyland, 2001, p. 11). This political definition explains why populism emerges on the right as well as on the left.

What makes a political phenomenon populist, then, is what Ernesto Laclau (1977, 2005) terms an articulation of an “equivalential chain” of unfulfilled “popular-democratic demands” against a dominant political system and ideology. Such popular-democratic demands emerge from subjects excluded by the dominant power bloc and mobilized against it. According to Laclau (1977), these demands can arise and cohere with each other when a dominant political-institutional system undergoes crisis and can no longer maintain its hegemony and its ability to absorb and neutralize such demands. The range of subjects making popular-democratic demands comes to constitute the “people”— an empty signifier that can represent, contain, and synthesize the heterogeneous and divergent democratic discourses within this assemblage against the dominant bloc (Laclau, 2005). This coherence of various popular subjects and demands as the “people” against the dominant bloc is at once unifying and divisive. For, as Laclau (2005) explains, the “people” in populist phenomena are not all subjects in that polity, but rather a “partial component” of a political community that aims to be seen “as the only legitimate totality” of that community (p. 81).

As a mode of gaining political power through representing and uniting a range of popular-democratic demands, populism is also a mode of linkage between political leaders and subjects. A populist leader leads because, as an empty signifier, s/he shares features common to the various links on the chain of popular-democratic demands and the links on this chain, in turn, identify with her/him (Laclau, 2005, p. 60). Thus, populism is not an anti-democratic, despotic mode of gaining and exercising political power (Laclau, 2005). Rather, in incorporating previously excluded subjects, such as popular sector women, it can be a deeply democratic phenomenon (Kampwirth, 2010, p. 13). Further, populism can be a mutual and dialogical relation between a leader and the “people.” For, as Fernando Coronil asserts, if a charismatic leader is to exercise power, s/he requires a charismatic community that confers her/him this power (Coronil, No Date, p. 5). Populism, then, is just as much about the people as it is about the leader—the empty signifier—that represents them, and it is fundamentally about the dynamic relation between the two.

Since the basis of populism is the “people,” it posits popular participation and direct popular “involvement in political decision making as an absolute good” (Hawkins,

2010a, p. 172). Populism therefore can generate openings for popular organizing (Olcott, 2010, p. 44), especially of previously excluded sectors. In recognizing popular demands and critiquing the old dominant institutional-political system, populist state leaders aim to articulate the will of the people directly (Beasley-Murray, Cameron, & Hershberg, 2009, p. 324). They tend to bypass bureaucracy and previously established institutions of interest mediation, such as legislatures and political parties, in order to do so. Populist linkages between state leaders and society tend to be characterized by low levels of institutionalization of mediating organizations. Previously excluded groups, like popular sector women, thus can take advantage of “populist leaders as rams that batter holes through ossified structures and create openings for improvement” (Weyland, 2010, p. x).

At the same time, as Laclau (2005) asserts, what gives counter-hegemonic strength to particular democratic demands, such as popular women’s demands for expanded labor rights, is their articulation within the chain of popular democratic demands that together constitutes the “people.” Yet, such particular demands can be compromised or sacrificed within the larger chain of popular-democratic demands of a populist movement (Laclau, 2005, p. 87 & 122). A populist leader’s will and control can also compromise particular demands within populist movements (Hawkins, 2010a), as populist linkages between state and society tend to be top-down (M. A. Cameron, 2009, p. 336) and mediating organizations tend to have low levels of identity and control independent of populist leaders (Hawkins, 2003, p. 1139). Top-down state-society linkages and low levels of organizational intermediation can render particular demands vulnerable to state leaders’ disregard or instrumentalization of them. Low levels of institutionalization can also contribute to low levels of accountability by populist state leaders (Weyland, 2010, p. x) and for the ways in which they treat particular democratic demands.

Populism therefore, as Laclau contends, is a double movement between the homogenization of the empty signifier and the heterogeneous particular demands it represents (Laclau, 2005, pp. 162-163). A populist leader—an empty signifier—must represent the particular demands for them to coalesce and cohere around him/her; he/she cannot act completely autonomously of them. Yet a populist leader is more than the

sum of the particular demands s/he represents; s/he transcends them. S/he “constitutes that totality, adding a qualitatively new dimension” (Laclau, 2005, p. 162) that necessarily imposes order on and subordinates particular demands to that totality (Laclau, 2005, p. 122). Populism is at once both a unifying articulation and a tense linkage among particular popular demands and between such demands and the leader that represents them. It is an inherently dialectical political phenomenon, contingent on a balance between opposing forces of particular demands and their homogenization.

In directly expressing popular antagonisms against dominant power blocs and generating strong affect for and between the “people” and their leaders, populist politics, as Karen Kampwirth (2010) points out, are “passionate politics.” Because populist politics entail passion and charisma and the expression of passion and charisma is mediated by gender, populist politics are also about performances of gender (Kampwirth, 2010). Thus, populist politics too are about the articulation of gender, gender differences, and gender divisions within an assemblage of popular demands and direct linkages between state leaders and the subjects they represent.

7.3. Gender and Populist State-Society Relations under *Chavismo*

At the beginning of the 21st century, in response to the broad-based failures of the neoliberal model for the popular sectors and the fragility of liberal democratic institutions, a number of countries throughout Latin America experienced a resurgence of radical populism combined with new aspirations for socialism—a political confluence supported by a regional commodity boom (Beasley-Murray, et al., 2009, p. 325). In the case of Venezuela, as Chapter Two details, Hugo Chávez rose to power at the end of the 1990s by taking advantage of a crisis of the dominant political-institutional system—the breakdown in legitimacy of *Puntofijismo*, exacerbated by the nation’s engagement with neoliberalism—and by articulating popular-democratic demands unfulfilled by *Puntofijismo* under the broad rubric of Bolivarianism. In uniting a diverse range of social, political, and economic actors and forces against *Puntofijismo* to come to power, Chávez originally served as an empty signifier (Ciccariello-Maher, 2013b, p. 236). Later, boosted by high oil prices that increased state capacity to finance public goods and services for

the popular sectors in the wake of the failed employer lockout of 2002-2003, President Chávez increasingly articulated and fulfilled left demands within the Bolivarian movement that supported him. In 2005, Chávez steered the Bolivarian government leftward when he declared that he and his government would be pursuing socialism for the 21st century—a form of socialism that would recognize and promote popular participation and direct democracy. Responding to popular demands, he and his government began developing a juridical-institutional framework to support the construction of this vision of socialism. Thus, as Ciccariello-Maher (2013b, p. 237) notes, Hugo Chávez, the empty signifier uniting and leading a heterogeneous ensemble of popular forces throughout Venezuela, became increasingly imbued with definite radical content. And *Chavismo*, the movement encompassing the dialectical relations between popular forces aligned with Chávez and the Bolivarian government and forces within the government, became increasingly radical. Chávez radicalized his government in part by bypassing entrenched bureaucratic structures and modes of interest mediation and promoting, institutionalizing, and granting decision-making authority to local popular power organizations.

Although Chávez and the Bolivarian government moved toward popularizing and decentralizing power under the framework of socialism for the 21st century and popular social movements and organizations grew, *Chavismo* also retained top-down populist state-society linkages. Scholars of Bolivarian popular social movements and organizations observe internal differentiation amongst them, especially in their relation to the state, as they have found them to be located on a spectrum between autonomy and dependency (Azzellini, 2010; Fernandes, 2010; Schiller, 2011). Ciccariello-Maher (2013b) and Fernandes (2010) note increasing self-organization and autonomy amongst Bolivarian social movements over time as the Bolivarian process radicalized. Yet, as Fernandes (2010) points out, with Bolivarian state promotion and support for popular power organizations, came their dependency on the state. This dependency in turn rendered them vulnerable to control and manipulation by state authorities, similar to the dynamic detailed between *Madres del Barrio* and the state described in Chapter Five. A concurrent centralization of power within Bolivarian state and party authorities transpired, following what Sara Motta (cited in Spronk & Webber, 2011, p. 251) calls a “state logic” of “power over” popular organizations, which undercut participatory

decision-making and organization building processes. Both Motta (cited in Spronk & Webber, 2011, p. 251) and Ciccariello-Maher (2013a, p. 7) refer to this as an encroaching state strategy of governance toward popular organization and movements, wherein state authorities aimed to reign in popular sector organizations and their radicalization, and, as Fernandes (2010, p. 85) notes, impose a party line over them.

Thus, Bolivarian state and party authorities both promoted popular sector political organization and mobilization and attempted to delimit their politicization and autonomy. Or as Motta (cited in Spronk & Webber, 2011, p. 251) puts it: the Bolivarian state reinforced a political “division of labor in which there are... leaders and followers.” Fernandes (2010, p. 237) concludes that this resulted in popular movements’ successful organization around defending President Chávez and the Bolivarian revolution, yet encountering “difficulty in sustaining a common agenda to represent their own interests before the state.”

This tension between popular and populist political practices, between social movement radicalization and governability within *Chavismo*, shaped the ways in which popular democratic demands for labor rights were made and contested. A key persistent and unfulfilled popular democratic demand amongst left forces within *Chavismo* was the crafting of labor legislation, bodies, and institutions to steer socio-economic relations toward the construction of socialism. And popular women’s demands for enhanced labor rights recognizing their gender interests, including the legislation and implementation of Article 88, fit within this chain of radical popular demands for a socialist labor law.

This chapter focuses on how popular women, their organizations, and their democratic demands for labor rights were positioned within the *Chavista* populist dynamic. President Chávez’s bypassing of the legislature, with his announcement that he would enact a new labor law by decree, opened up a gendered political opportunity for popular women to organize and directly lobby the president and the presidential commission drafting the law for their labor rights. Yet, in highlighting multiple instances in which popular women’s gender interests were overshadowed by organizing and mobilizing for Chávez’s re-election during the labor law drafting process, this chapter also shows how the compromising of particular popular democratic demands and

organizing within populist phenomena is also shaped by and in turn shapes gender and gender differences.

Some scholars of popular Venezuelan social movements such as Motta (2010, p. 32) critique others for classifying *Chavismo* as populist, arguing that they “are complicit in the silencing of the multitude and their delegitimization as political subjects.” However, my analysis of how popular women did and did not organize for the advancement of their labor rights in the 2012 organic labor law illuminates how *Bolivarian state and party authorities* attempted to control and silence a multitude of popular sector women for what officials saw as the broader interests of the Bolivarian revolution. Bolivarian state and party authorities promoted and expected popular women’s political mobilization at the same time as they attempted to constrain the political autonomy of popular sector women and their organizations. Shedding light on popular women’s containment within this populist dynamic thus throws into question central issues about their organizing, such as for whom they were organizing, who controlled their organizing, and the instrumentalization of their organization. Ultimately, then, this chapter examines what Motta conceives as the tense relationship between forces from above and below within the Bolivarian process over the shape of popular democracy (Motta, 2010, p. 42) and popular women’s participation and inclusion within it.

7.4. Bolivarian Social and Women’s Movement Struggles to Reform the *Puntofijista* Organic Labor Law

According to the 1999 Constitution, the National Assembly was charged with reforming the Organic Labor Law carried over from *Puntofijismo* within the first year of its installation. The National Assembly failed to fulfill this duty, even in the five-year period from 2006 to 2011, when the *Chavistas* held a complete majority and later an overwhelming qualified majority (because the opposition had chosen to boycott the 2005 elections).

From 1999 on, many social, political, and workers’ organizations formulated and submitted proposals to the National Assembly for the reform of the Organic Labor Law. Women’s and feminist organizations counted amongst them, with *La Araña Feminista*

(The Feminist Spider) spearheading such initiatives during the second legislative term. *La Araña Feminista*, or the *Araña*, was a self-defined network “of revolutionary socialist feminist collectives and individuals” (La Araña Feminista, 2012)—which included organizations of popular women, peasant women, academic women, afro-Venezuelan, and LGBTQ activists—from different regions of Venezuela who identified with the Bolivarian project but who chose to “remain on the margins of the state apparatus” (Angeleri, 2012). In 2010, after several months of debate, the *Araña* organized a set of proposals for reform of the law with the *Frente Bicentenario de Mujeres* (the Bicentenary Women’s Front)—the national popular women’s front organized by the Bolivarian state and led by María León (the long-time feminist and communist activist and leader who was the Minister for Woman’s Popular Power and Gender Equality at the time). They formed a strategic alliance between women’s groups organized and not organized by the state yet all in support of the Bolivarian revolution in order to advance women’s labor rights, with the *Araña*—a network that defined itself as not controlled by the state—leading this initiative. The *Araña-Frente* proposals contained a stand-alone chapter on “housework,” which they defined as a range of paid and unpaid material and non-material activities “that are carried out in homes for the maintenance and reproduction of family life and health” (La Araña Feminista, 2010). This chapter reiterated the recognition of the socio-economic value of unpaid housework stipulated in Article 88 of the 1999 Constitution. Yet, it went further than the constitution in laying out that the social protection of unpaid homemakers would be financed with contributions from the state and would cover the contingencies of maternity, the nursing period, incapacity, disability, and old age (La Araña Feminista, 2010).

As Alba Carosio, former advisor to National Assembly Deputy Marelis Pérez Marcano and member of the *Araña Feminista*, stated, the *Araña’s* and the *Frente’s* intent with their 2010 labor law proposal was to incorporate some of the spirit of the Social Protection for Homemakers Bill, which the National Assembly had previously failed to pass into law (“Interview with Alba Carosio,” 9 March 2012) (as described in Chapter Three). This was part of the *Araña’s* and the *Frente’s* broader attempt to have all workers recognized as workers and protected by the social security system. The *Araña* and the *Frente* also put forth proposals for the recognition and sharing of care duties, which included paternity leave and paid leave for female and male workers to care for

sick, disabled, and elderly family members to be covered by the social security system (La Araña Feminista, 2010).

The *Araña* and the *Frente* secured an event at the National Assembly in October 2010 in which they publicly handed their proposals over to the National Assembly commission charged with the reform of the Organic Labor Law. However, the president of the commission informed them at the event that, even though the commission would take their proposals into account, the commission did not know how it was going to proceed with the labor law. He was certain, however, that the commission would not make any advances with reforming the law in that current legislative period, since elections for the National Assembly had just transpired ("Interview with Alba Carosio," 9 March 2012), and the assembly would soon contain a new set of political forces and dynamics in its third term because the opposition had contested those elections and won a sizeable minority of seats within the assembly.

After the 2010 National Assembly elections and the new legislative period began in 2011, pressure on the assembly to reform the Organic Labor Law from popular movements and organizations aligned with *Chavismo* did not disappear. In February 2011, nearly 10,000 workers from different sectors in support of the Bolivarian government marched to the National Assembly to demand it pass a new organic labor law (Reardon, 11 February 2011). Using the platform of International Working Women's Day in March 2011, *La Araña Feminista* once again held a public event in which it marched with the *Frente* and allied women's and feminist organizations to the National Assembly to submit the *Araña-Frente* proposals for reform of the Organic Labor Law to legislative authorities. In their communiqué for this Women's Day event, they drew particular attention to the lack of social protection for unpaid labor and demanded the implementation of Article 88 (La Araña Feminista y otros colectivos, 8 March 2011). Separately, at the end of March, the National Union of Workers marched to the National Assembly demanding the passage of a new organic labor law (Venezuelanalysis.com, 31 March 2011). And in July 2011, the National Union of Workers joined forces with the Communist Party of Venezuela to organize an event in which several thousand workers aligned with the Bolivarian project marched to the National Assembly, demanded an "immediate discussion of a 'new and revolutionary'" organic labor law in addition to the

passage of the Special Law for Socialist Worker Councils, and submitted a petition with 45,000 signatures to support their demands (Boothroyd, 27 July 2011). They insisted they would “maintain a state of ‘permanent mobilization’ until the National Assembly debated these two laws (Boothroyd, 27 July 2011). And social movement and union mobilizations for labor law reform continued until November 2011.

7.5. Chávez’s Populist Initiative to Enact a New Organic Labor Law by Executive Decree

President Chávez, not the National Assembly, responded to these demands from outside the state yet within *Chavismo* for the Bolivarian regime to advance labor legislation. In November 2011, less than a year before the 2012 presidential election, Chávez exercised his magnanimous sorcerer capacities when he announced at a nationally televised event that he would use the enabling powers granted to him by the National Assembly in December 2010 to decree a new organic labor law by May Day 2012, before his legislative powers expired. He stated that he would decree a new organic labor law, rather than reform the existing Organic Labor Law, in order to “pay the debt that the revolution has with Venezuelan workers” (Rodríguez, 10 November 2011). From the outset, President Chávez framed the new labor law that he would enact as a magical revolutionary rupture with past labor legislation, as he depicted it as redressing the needs of the working class.

Reaction amongst popular sector *Chavista* forces to President Chávez’s announcement of his sudden unfreezing of suspended claims for the legislative advancement of workers’ rights was mixed. Some workers’ organizations had pressed President Chávez to enact a new labor law by decree and therefore hailed his announcement as a “historic victory.” However, several prominent national workers’ organizations aligned with the Bolivarian project publicly critiqued the centralized process by which the new law would come into effect, as they saw widespread public debate, input, and decision-making as essential to the development of the law (Boothroyd, 13 November 2011). At the same time, the Bolivarian Socialist Workers Central collected over 600,000 workers’ signatures in support of the president’s initiative to enact a new labor law by decree, which it handed over to President Chávez.

In December 2011, Chávez announced the appointment of a presidential commission to draft the new labor law and gather ideas for it (Robertson, 12 December 2012). The presidential commission was comprised of the ministers of labor, finance, and foreign affairs, the attorney general, two Supreme Court magistrates, four members of the National Assembly, three legal experts, the president of the Bolivarian Socialist Workers Central, and the president of a pro-Chavista industrial federation. Only one of the members of the commission was a woman, and none of these commission members were directly involved in women's and feminist movement organizing. Neither President Chávez nor the presidential commission announced or published formal procedures for gathering proposals for the law and for popular sector consultation and decision-making on the content of the law. From its inception, then, the new labor law drafting process at once bypassed traditional modes of legislating and interest mediation and was opaque.

7.6. A Gendered Political Opening for Popular Women to Organize to Advance their Labor Rights

However, many social movements, unions, and workers' organizations aligned with *Chavismo* took President Chávez's populist initiative to enact the new labor law by executive decree as an opportunity to organize across the country at multiple levels to generate, debate, and revise popular proposals to submit to the presidential commission for inclusion in the law. They seized this legislative development as a political opening to advance working class interests within the *Chavista* populist framework, as they employed the term of "working people" ("*pueblo trabajador*") to articulate their subject positions, their organizing, and the assemblage of their demands.

The *Araña Feminista* in particular took Chávez's decision as an opportunity to organize, network, and develop its proposal further and gather consensus on a socialist feminist proposal with a broader range of organizations and movements across Venezuela. Both Alba Carosio and Gioconda Mota, who served on the national coordinating team of the *Araña*, saw Chávez's decision as a positive development for the advancement of the *Araña's* demands, because they viewed the National Assembly deputies as barriers to the passage of the law and to incorporation of the women's movement's demands within it ("Interview with Alba Carosio," 9 March 2012; Second

Interview with Gioconda Mota," 14 March 2012). They viewed the president's populist legislative initiative as a gendered political opening for the advancement of their proposal. As Carosio stated, "the president has shown much sensibility toward women's causes" ("Interview with Alba Carosio," 9 March 2012).

The *Araña* responded immediately to Chávez's announcement by holding meetings and debates both with member organizations within its network and with other women's and feminist organizations and allied workers', peasants', health and student organizations from different regions of Venezuela that were aligned with the Bolivarian project and saw the importance of demanding a gender focus in the new labor law. Separately, the Ana Soto Women's Movement, a self-defined anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist women's organization based in Lara state (Carajo, 2010), drafted its own set of proposals with the unions organizing in the state telecommunications (CANTV) and electricity sectors. The *Araña* met with these organizations and they agreed on the core ideas to be contained in a combined proposal. Representatives from the *Araña*, the Ana Soto Women's Movement, CANTV, the Socialist Movement for Quality of Life and Health, the peasant movement, and the *Frente Nacional de Mujeres Bicentenario* then drafted the "Proposal from Revolutionary Women for a New Labor Law with Gender Equity" ("Interview with Alba Carosio," 9 March 2012). Thirty-two organizations signed on to this proposal under the umbrella of *La Araña Feminista* and twenty-three allied organizations outside the *Araña*, including the National Union of Workers, signed on to it to form what Gioconda Mota called "a popular women's movement" proposal ("Second Interview with Gioconda Mota," 14 March 2012).

The final "Proposal from Revolutionary Women for a New Labor Law with Gender Equity" built on the 2010 *Araña-Frente* proposal yet reflected an ontological shift toward a socialist feminist conceptualization of the way work, workers, and workplaces should be understood within Venezuela. The framework the "revolutionary women" used in this proposal placed care work at the center of their vision of a socialist society. Alba Carosio, one of the drafters of the proposal, explained their reasoning for making care central to it: "Understanding a more human society as socialist, it has to be a society that takes care more into account, because care is like the basis of life. Then it is necessary that it be recognized, that it be included as work, but that it is also made visible"

("Interview with Alba Carosio," 9 March 2012). They aimed to render multiple forms of unpaid and paid care work and the workers who carried out such socially necessary work visible. In their drafting of a socialist feminist proposal that focused on the intersection of gender and class issues, the "revolutionary women" asserted that patriarchy was a bedrock of capitalism (Mujeres Revolucionarias, 8 March 2012, p. 2). They argued that mechanisms to eradicate gender subordination in addition to exploitation therefore were necessary for the construction of socialist work and society (Mujeres Revolucionarias, 8 March 2012, p. 2). Further, they contended that legislating a socialist labor law with a gender perspective meant focusing on the intersection of ethnicity with gender and class, in order to "defend the interests of the working majorities who are those people who contribute their labor power and time to produce wealth for our society" (Mujeres Revolucionarias, 8 March 2012, p. 2).

The "revolutionary women's" proposal began by conceptualizing work as going beyond human activity just for the production of exchange value. The proposal defined work as "human activity that produces values in the form of things, services and care of persons, to satisfy social, material and non-material needs, with the goal of exchange and/ or family/ community consumption that gives rise to the strengthening of social relations and the maintenance of life" (Mujeres Revolucionarias, 8 March 2012, p. 3). Gioconda Mota explained that their intention in conceptualizing work in this way was to extract the definition of work "from the logic of employment"—from the logic of a dependent relationship between employer and employee as conceptualized in the existing labor legislation ("Second Interview with Gioconda Mota," 14 March 2012). Instead, they aimed to infuse it with a much broader meaning that would enable the laboring conditions of independence,¹⁸⁵ precarity, insecurity, and lack of protection of the majority of women workers to be made visible and protected through legislation ("Second Interview with Gioconda Mota," 14 March 2012). The "revolutionary women" included a range of employed, dependent, independent, autonomous, self-employed, cooperative, family, paid, unpaid, residential, home-based, peasant, fishing, artisan, and indigenous workers in their definition of workers with full rights (Mujeres Revolucionarias,

¹⁸⁵ Independence, in this sense, signifies workers who do not have employers, or own-account workers. In the context of Venezuela, many independent workers labor in the informal sector.

8 March 2012, p. 3). For Sandra Angeleri, a member of the *Araña*, these underlying conceptualizations of “work” and “workers” grounded the proposal in a shift “from a law of work to a law of workers,” wherein the focus changed from work for profit-making to the people who labored (“Interview with Sandra Angeleri,” 6 August 2012).

As Nora Castañeda—a long time socialist feminist activist and leader and the then president of the Woman’s Development Bank—pointed out, with this shift of the definition of work and workers that rendered visible work and workers that had previously been excluded from labor-based protection, there arose a concurrent need to create a new institutional framework to protect such work and workers (“Foro Público por una Nueva Ley de Trabajo con Igualdad de Género,” 23 March 2012). The “revolutionary women” proposed the creation of a work fund for the social protection of non-dependent workers— including people who carried out unpaid reproductive and care work— to cover the contingencies of pregnancy, nursing, illness, disability, and old age and to be financed with contributions from the state, public and private sector employers, and workers themselves (Mujeres Revolucionarias, 8 March 2012, pp. 4-5). They also proposed an article outlawing employment discrimination of people who carried out unpaid care work of infants, toddlers, the sick, the disabled, and the elderly (Mujeres Revolucionarias, 8 March 2012, p. 5). In addition, for paid workers who were employees, they proposed a number of articles recognizing and protecting their unpaid care work: the extension of paid postnatal maternity leave to six months; paid paternity leave of one month; the reduction of the working day by two hours for parents of children younger than three years who did not receive day care at their parents’ workplace; and a maximum of six months paid leave for workers who needed to care for sick or temporarily disabled children and the elderly (Mujeres Revolucionarias, 8 March 2012, pp. 5-6).

Activists who participated in the generation of the “revolutionary women’s” proposal noted the historic significance of the process by which they generated their proposal in addition to the demands contained within their proposal. They articulated it as a process that engendered both a sense that they had a right to and could shape legislation—a process in which they were a “legislating people” (*pueblo legislador*). At a public forum in which this alliance of “revolutionary women” presented and discussed

their proposal, one activist spoke of the participating organizations seizing their right to participate politically as a people who legislate with an eye to women's realities ("Foro Público por una Nueva Ley de Trabajo con Igualdad de Género," 23 March 2012). Alba Carosio saw the "revolutionary women's" organizing for the new labor law as part of the larger "explosion of participation" taking place in Venezuela under *Chavismo*, wherein different subjects from different geographical places and organizations and movements previously excluded under *Puntofijismo* were now included in legislative debates ("Interview with Alba Carosio," 9 March 2012). Thus, they saw their organization for the advancement of women's rights within the organic labor law as located within a longer, ongoing process of struggle for popular sector social and political visibility and inclusion and the recognition, advancement, and enforcement of their rights.

The "revolutionary women" also expressed that, through their collective use of their participatory democratic rights, they accomplished a sense of unity across left organizations throughout Venezuela committed to women's labor rights. Gioconda Mota spoke of a "great political achievement" having been achieved with the union reached between different participating organizations in the process of debating and formulating a single proposal for gender equity in the 2012 organic labor law ("Second Interview with Gioconda Mota," 14 March 2012). She described this not as the mark of a "unified women's movement" (because that had yet to be achieved), but as a conjunctural unity in diversity amongst women's and allied organizations on the left ("Second Interview with Gioconda Mota," 14 March 2012). The incorporation of women's and feminist organizations committed to socialism and popular organizations whose primary focus was not gender issues into this conjunctural coalition signaled both a popularization of women's movement demands and the mainstreaming of gender issues within allied popular organizations' demands.

Part of the *Araña Feminista* and allied organizations' strategy to build unity and pressure for the "revolutionary women's" proposal consisted of finding and using alliances with leaders within the Bolivarian government to lobby for their proposal to be considered by the presidential commission drafting the new labor law. This included drawing on articulations with old feminist allies within the state, such as Nora Castañeda and María León, and it included the cultivation of new alliances. For example, the *Araña*

found an ally in the national Minister of Commerce, who committed herself to distributing the *Araña's* regular media publications on the 2012 labor law to the other national ministers at the weekly meetings of the Council of Ministers ("Second Interview with Gioconda Mota," 14 March 2012). In addition, the *Araña* formed a working alliance with Jesús Rivero Workers' University, whose coordinator, Jesús Martínez, served on the presidential commission drafting the new labor law, and with National Assembly Deputy Braulio Álvarez, who was a spokesperson for the peasant movement and also served on the presidential commission. With the Workers' University, the *Araña* and allied organizations found that both groups shared a deeper conceptualization and vision of work and agreed to engage in a process of mutual articulation of their proposals.

The *Araña Feminista* also used the institutional footholds it had previously gained within state media spaces to publicize and discuss the "revolutionary women's" proposal for the new organic labor law during the four months preceding its enactment at the end of April 2012. This included regularly publishing articles in the weekly spaces the *Araña* had secured in the national state newspaper, *Correo del Orinoco*, and the Caracas state newspaper, *Ciudad CCS*. These articles focused on how the proposal was formulated, why it was formulated the way it was, and what it contained especially in regard to recognition of unpaid and caring labor performed by women and the socialization of domestic work. *Entrompe de Falopio*, a feminist television program that aired daily during the week on a Caracas state television channel and once a week on a national state television channel and was a member organization of the *Araña*, produced several weeks of programming addressing women and work, including a program on unpaid housework, in the two months preceding the enactment of the new organic labor law.

The constant use of available media spaces was part of the "revolutionary women's" larger strategy of disseminating their proposal, creating popular awareness of and support for their proposal in as many spaces as possible, and publicly persisting with their demands. This proposal dissemination process included multiple meetings and forums with public sector workers and students and professors in which they discussed its content.

The *Araña*'s and allies' organizing strategy for gender equity within the 2012 organic labor law appears very much like the "conjunctural coalition building" organizing strategy used by women's movement activists to mobilize and defend their interests in the *Puntofijista* years and for the 1990 reform of the Organic Labor Law in particular. As discussed in Chapter Two, this model of organizing rejected clientelist forms of interest mediation and incorporated women within and outside the state who worked "in concert in particular times around particular issues without demanding organizational or ideological coherence" (Friedman, 2000b, p. 284).

Yet political divisions within Venezuela shaped the "revolutionary women's" conjunctural coalition building for the inclusion of women's gender interests in the 2012 organic labor law. The "revolutionary women's" organizing was contained to organizations and activists within *Chavismo*. Thus, women's movement organizing around the new labor law in 2011 and 2012 was marked by the broader political polarization within the country. Women's movement activists not aligned with the Bolivarian project did not participate in this coalition building for the new law. Nor did women's movement activists and organizations not aligned with *Chavismo* draft and/or submit any proposals of their own to the presidential commission.

7.7. Conflicting Modes of Women's Organizing within *Chavismo* and their Convergence in Defense of Chávez and the Revolution

While "revolutionary women" activists noted a broadening of popular sector women's participation in the organic labor law proposal generation and dissemination process, women's organizing around the labor law in 2011 and 2012 was also marked by political tensions and disarticulations within *Chavismo*. These internal fault lines ran between women who were derogatorily termed *gobierneras* (women who were perceived as servile and obedient to the government) and women who claimed they were not *gobierneras* (women who supported the Bolivarian government and simultaneously defended their space to critique and be independent of it) ("Interview with Sandra Angeleri," 6 August 2012). Even as both types of groupings of organized women were contained within *Chavismo*, what differentiated them were how they participated in

the revolutionary process and degrees of autonomy and control of their organizations in relation to the Bolivarian state. The first type of grouping—the “*gobierneras*”—tended to follow a top-down linkage with the state, wherein the state directed them and exercised its power over them. In contrast, the second type of grouping tended to use more horizontal and bottom-up methods. This second form of women’s organization identified “as part of the state in order to highlight the new forms of access and inclusion” but exercised power by “maintain[ing] a sense of their autonomy to be able to put pressure on the state where necessary” (Fernandes, 2010, p. 28) and exercise their power over it.

I witnessed such division between organized women within *Chavismo* as I traveled back and forth between the urban centers of Venezuela and the rural state of Falcón to attend *Chavista* women’s events in the months running up to the enactment of the organic labor law in April 2012. The *Araña* and allied organizations taking part in the “revolutionary women’s” proposal generation and dissemination process consistently invoked their participatory democratic rights and discussed the specific content of their proposal, why their demands emerged, and what their implications would be for the transformation of Venezuelan toward a caring and socialist society. While in Falcón state, I asked several women working there within municipal, regional, and national levels of the state gender institutions how they were participating in the organizing process for the insertion of women’s rights within the new labor law. Three of them responded that they had not participated in this process nor had they heard of any forum in which they could participate, while two noted that they had participated in the drafting of the proposal a few years prior when women were organizing for reform of the law within the National Assembly. Four Falcón state gender institution workers whom I asked had never seen the 2012 *Araña-Frente* proposal, while one worker said she saw it when it arrived by fax to the central office of the Falcón Collective Authority for Women’s Issues and Gender Equality a few days before it was to be submitted to the organic labor law presidential commission at the International Working Women’s Day event in Caracas. This worker said that the proposals were formulated at the national level and not from a process of scaling up participation and input from local to regional to national levels of state women’s organizations. The management of the regional state gender

institutions in Falcón¹⁸⁶ seemed to have never heard of *La Araña Feminista*, though they understood that some groups were working with María León (the head of the *Frente Nacional de Mujeres Bicentenario*) on the drafting of proposals. Yet the management of these regional state gender institutions were responsible for organizing the Falcón regional front of the *Frente*—the *Frente de Mujeres Josefa Camejo*. These workers and managers formed part of the state-based national women’s front that was organizing with the *Araña*. Yet their accounts show that the *Frente* did not incorporate them and *Frente* members in Falcón in general in a bottom-up participatory manner in the process of generating, organizing, disseminating, and lobbying for the labor law proposal, if it incorporated them at all in this process.

Rather, much of the work of the Falcón state women’s and gender equality institutions in the months while the *Araña* and allied organizations were debating, drafting and disseminating their proposal appeared to be focused on organizing women from across the state for the International Women’s Day parade in Coro, the capital of Falcón, in March 2012. This parade featured floats and groups of women organized territorially, politically or by work sector within *Chavismo*— including *Madres del Barrio*— and from throughout the state, symbolically displaying *Falconiana* women’s broad range of participation in society. Yet popular women’s participation in this parade was limited to organizing their floats and the ways they marched in it, chanting slogans about Chávez and the revolution while marching in military step, listening to state officials speak, and dancing and celebrating at the end of the event. The keynote speaker, Lizeta Hernandez—the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) governor of the state of Delta Amacuro—spoke about the history of women’s struggles internationally, regionally in Latin America, and nationally in Venezuela. She spoke of how the women in the crowd were part of those epic struggles for independence, rights, and inclusion. However, she did not link those historic struggles to Venezuelan’s women’s current struggles to have their demands included in the 2012 organic labor law. Rather,

¹⁸⁶ This includes the management of the Falcón regional offices of the National Ministry of Women’s Popular Power and Gender Equality, the Regional Woman’s Institute, and the Secretariat for Development and Gender Equality. All of these regional institutions fell under the management of the Falcón Collective Authority for Women’s Issues and Gender Equality and were located in the same office compound in Coro.

Hernandez linked the “protagonistic participation” of the women in the crowd to their struggle and historic mission to re-elect Chávez as president later in the year (“Desfile para el Día Internacional de la Mujer,” 17 March 2012). Thus, the mass educational and organizational opportunity for the hundreds of popular women present from across Falcón state within the crowd that day to become aware of, strategize, and build the movement around the specific current organizing being conducted to advance women’s labor rights was lost.

I did not visit the Falcón central offices of the regional women’s and gender equality institutions every day, nor did I participate in all these institutions’ activities with popular women throughout the state in the months prior to the enactment of the 2012 organic labor law. Yet, women working within and organized by the state women’s and gender equality organs in Falcón expressed—and I witnessed—an absence of the participatory democratic rights discourse used by the *Araña* and allied organizations to generate a socialist feminist vision of work and to advance women’s gender interests in the new organic labor law and public consciousness more generally.

The tensions between the non-*gobierneras* and the Bolivarian government came to the national fore with the organization of the 2012 International Working Women’s Day march and event in Caracas. Less than a week before International Working Women’s Day, the *Araña Feminista* published an article calling on popular movements to join the march that it was organizing to submit its proposal for the new organic labor law to the government (Mota Gutiérrez, 2 March 2012). The *Araña* and allied organizations were planning to march separately from the state- and PSUV-led (*oficialista*, or official) women’s march, but meet up with it in the same plaza at the end of the different marches in order to hand over their proposal to state officials in attendance. However, a few weeks before International Working Women’s Day, President Chávez announced the reappearance of a tumor—after his treatment in Cuba for a cancerous tumor the year before—and he returned to Cuba to have it removed. Just a day or two before the International Working Women’s Day march, representatives from MinMujer and the PSUV asked the *Araña* and allied organizations to march with the official march as a demonstration of unity in support of Chávez while he was out of the country. Alba Carosio explained that this was in order to counter the idea circulating that “internal

fighters existed” within *Chavismo* “and only Chávez could unite” different social groups contained within it (“Interview with Alba Carosio,” 9 March 2012). The *Araña* and allied movements agreed to the *oficialista* request, and decided to march as a block of social movements within the official march. As Sandra Angeleri, a member of the national coordinating team of the *Araña*, explained, this decision was also guided by the *Araña*’s understanding that if one were critical of the government, the opposition would “appropriate your critiques” and use them for its own ends (“Interview with Sandra Angeleri,” 6 August 2012). Thus, this national political conjuncture of the president’s illness and absence and the approaching presidential election placed the *Araña*, as a network of organizations that defined itself as identifying with the Bolivarian state but not servile to it, in a position that Ciccariello-Maher (2013b, p. 254) and Martinez, Fox, and Farrell (2010, p. 7) have described before as being forced to walk a tight-rope between defending the government from potential threats from the opposition at the same time it was pressing the government to accede to its demands.

Yet, in this show of popular women’s unity with the Bolivarian government on the national stage in this particular political conjuncture in which International Working Women’s Day 2012 transpired, women’s campaigning for Chávez’s re-election overshadowed women’s campaigning for the advancement of their own rights as workers. This conclusion is not to deny the legitimacy of popular women’s organizing for Chávez’s re-election, given the social, political, and economic inclusion popular women experienced during Chávez’s presidency. Rather, it is to draw attention to the Bolivarian state’s instrumentalization of popular women’s organization. Thousands of women and their male allies from across the country were bused in to Caracas (many, if not most, at state expense), marched, and came together in the center of the capital on the eighth of March. On this day sanctioned to honor working women, little of the official discourse emanating out from the stage mentioned women’s specific rights especially in regard to labor, how they had specifically advanced under *Chavismo*, and where the struggles for their further advancement still lay. The *oficialista*-directed event in Plaza Caracas was dominated by praise for Chávez and the improvements in women’s welfare and participation that his presidency had engendered and chanting, singing, dancing, stomping, and praying for Chávez’s health and his victory in the upcoming election. From atop the main stage, the MCs of the event interpellated the women present as

“Chávez’s women”¹⁸⁷—the women who “loved,” supported, and prayed for their “commander,” and who would bring him to “triumph” through their political campaigning for him. And Nancy Pérez, the Minister of Women’s Popular Power and Gender Equality, insisted that as, *Chavista* women, those present should “follow Chávez’s lines.” Pérez asserted that their most important mission then was “Mission 7 October”—the mission to re-elect Chávez on that date. From the crowd, many women responded jubilantly to such gendered interpellations and official lines.

Only several hours after the start of the event were women’s proposals for the 2012 organic labor law mentioned, but this occurred as many women were already filtering out of the plaza. However, after representatives from the *Araña Feminista* struggled with state authorities to ascend the stage, *Araña* representatives and allies were able to hand over the proposal to three women in influential positions of national power—one of whom was the only woman serving on the presidential commission drafting the labor law.

While the differing forces of organized women within *Chavismo* agreed not to publicly show their fault lines on International Working Women’s Day 2012, it appears that what was lost in the effort to show unity for President Chávez and the broader Bolivarian project on the day specifically dedicated to women’s labor and struggles was a unique opportunity for mass, broad-based articulation between popular women and women in power within the state to build consciousness and the movement to press for women’s demands to be included within the 2012 labor law. The 2012 Venezuelan national march and event commemorating International Working Women’s Day illustrates what Motta (2009, p. 81) has described as a “debilitated inclusion” of popular sector women, in which the state acted to undercut their autonomy and an exceptional chance for a scaling-up and across of their labor demands by limiting their participation mostly to support of Chávez and the Bolivarian government.

¹⁸⁷ As Chapter Five explains, the term “Chávez’s women (*mujeres de Chávez*)” functioned as a common call and response between the Bolivarian state and popular sector women at mass rallies and events. This hailing served to interpellate popular women’s political identity as not just tied to Chávez but also belonging to him.

7.8. Lack of Transparency and Questions of Popular Sector Inclusion in the Labor Law Drafting Process

In the last several months before President Chávez decreed the new organic labor law, as the *Araña* and its allied organizations continued publicly disseminating and discussing their proposal and the Falcón state gender institutions and state-led popular women's organizations did not participate in this process, uncertainties and tensions mounted within *Chavismo* more broadly around how the law was being drafted and how popular sector demands would be included within it. Such concerns arose because of the compressed amount of time in which the law was being drafted and the lack of transparency in the drafting process. In the middle of March 2012, a month and a half before the new law was to be decreed, the presidential commission held an “enabling street parliament” in the center of Caracas, where it received proposals for the new law. The commission said it would review them and then draft the bill, which it would open for public consultation in several weeks (Martínez Rodríguez, 17 March 2012). Approximately a week later, Chancellor Nicolás Maduro, a member of the presidential commission, indicated that the commission had reviewed all the proposals it had received (M. Martínez, 22 March 2012). Yet, given that the presidential commission received around 19,000 proposals, questions and concerns arose both within *Chavismo* and amongst the opposition as to how the commission could possibly systematize and consider all those proposals and incorporate the salient proposals amongst them into a draft bill within a few weeks. And as the weeks progressed toward May Day, even though President Chávez “ordered” that “national debate and discussion” around the new labor law “increase” (Morales Escuela, 19 March 2012), the presidential commission did not release the draft law for public comment and debate. Members of the presidential commission did attend forums with organizations drafting and submitting proposals, yet they only made general statements about taking into account such proposals and what content they would include in the law. Thus, in withholding the draft law from the public sphere, Chávez and the presidential commission held the nation waiting in suspense.

The National Union of Workers, *Marea Socialista* (the Socialist Tide), and the Communist Party of Venezuela—all organizations aligned with *Chavismo*—called on

Chávez and the presidential commission to release the draft law to the public for public comment and consultation (Aretuo, 16 April 2012; Últimas Noticias, 12 April 2012). For example, *Marea Socialista* noted that releasing the draft so that workers could debate it and be consulted on it would help to refine and improve it, because it argued that “the presenting of proposals—which is what has been done up until now—doesn’t guarantee real working class participation in the outlining of the law. According to our point of view, what’s important for the revolutionary process is the law, but also the real active participation of the workers” (Marea Socialista Press, 27 March 2012). Thus, as the days neared toward the enactment of the new organic labor law and the drafting process remained opaque and uncertain to the public, critique grew not just from the opposition but also amongst organizations within *Chavismo* regarding the extent to which the executive was actually including the working class in determining the content of the law. Such a critique pointed toward broader questions of the Bolivarian government’s respect of popular protagonism and participatory democratic rights and the extent to which *el pueblo trabajador* (the working people) had control over crafting the legislation that would govern their working conditions.

The government appears to have heard this critique from within *Chavismo*, as the presidential commission announced at the end of April that it would “intensify the debate” about the law “in all corners of the country,” which would continue until the day before the law would be promulgated (Últimas Noticias & Agencia Venezolana de Noticias, 20 April 2012). And President Chávez insisted that the law had “been made by the workers, not by the bourgeoisie” and in “consultation with the grassroots” (Hernández Toledo, 24 April 2012). Yet, the draft law did not emerge for public debate amongst workers, their organizations, and the grassroots more broadly. Instead, a week later, as rumors circulated within Venezuela about the draft labor law and President Chávez’s health and absence, Chávez suddenly returned to Venezuela from cancer treatment in Cuba to sign into law the Organic Law of Work and Workers—a spectacular move that broke the national suspense—just before May Day and less than six months before the 2012 presidential election.

7.9. Inclusion of Women's Gender Interests in the 2012 Organic Law of Work and Workers

The 2012 organic labor law did specifically recognize workers who worked outside of an employment relationship both as workers and as subjects of social security rights and responsibilities. Yet the new law merely repeated Article 88 of the Constitution and it did not mark a substantive advance toward guaranteeing that homemakers and all workers who were not employees would enjoy social security benefits. At the same time, the new law specifically advanced women's labor rights and the struggle to spread out responsibility for care work. It did so by outlawing workplace discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and pregnancy, and sexual harassment. In addition, the new law extended the period of protection for mothers from being fired without due cause during and after childbirth (*inamovilidad*); it now applies from the initiation of pregnancy to two years (rather than one year) after birth. Provision for pre/postnatal leave was also enhanced: previously maternity leave was available for a total of eighteen weeks; this was increased to a total of 26 weeks, consisting of a maximum prenatal leave of six weeks before birth and postnatal leave of 20 weeks after birth. It also granted fathers two-week paternity leave and *inamovilidad* for two years after the birth of their children. In addition, the new law granted permanent *inamovilidad* to both mothers and fathers of children with disabilities. Further, the new law expanded the concept of work to a "social process" that had the objective of producing goods and services that "satisfy human needs through the just distribution of wealth" and that "create the material, social and spiritual conditions that allow the family to be the fundamental space for the integral development of persons" (Chávez Frías, 30 April 2012, Art.25). It rhetorically placed workers at the center of the legal instrument through its title of the *Organic Law of Work and Workers*. Like the 1999 Constitution, it employed gender-sensitive language both in the title and throughout the text, discursively making women workers visible and central within the document.

The presidential commission appears then to have taken some of the "revolutionary women's" demands into account when it drafted the 2012 organic labor law, though it did not publicize its deliberations and debates around their proposal. In keeping the drafting process from the public sphere, the state kept its considerations of

women's demands within this process from the public sphere as well. To paraphrase Coronil (No Date, p. 5), the real power of decision-making forces in the legislative process thus remained unseen. Questions about the degree of influence of the *Araña's* and allied organizations' organizing on Chávez and the presidential commission and Chávez's and their discussions around the legislation and implementation of Article 88 therefore cannot be definitively answered.

7.10. State Promotion of the 2012 Organic Law of Work and Workers and Women's Rights within It

While the drafting process of the Organic Law of Work and Workers raised concerns within *Chavismo* about non-transparency and top-down articulations between state and society in the realm of legislative decision-making, state officials quickly moved to publicize and educate the public about the content of the new labor law. On a national scale, the presidential commission that drafted the law held a nationally televised conference in which it explained what it saw as the most salient provisions and advances in it. In Falcón state, the governor invited National Assembly Deputy Gladys Requena (who did not serve in the presidential commission drafting the law) to speak in Coro on the new labor law and its benefits for women.

Less than a month after the new law was enacted, Deputy Requena spoke in Coro to a crowded room of mostly women, many of whom came from regions of the state outside of the capital and who were transported to and from the event by state expense. While her talk focused on the articles of the new law that were of particular relevance to women workers as part of the deconstruction of capitalist conception of work and the construction of a conception of work for a Bolivarian, socialist society, she prefaced her talk with a discussion of the process by which the law was drafted. She did this to counter "the opposition's disqualification" of the law. Requena argued that President Chávez addressed the "workers' request" by enacting the Organic Law of Work and Workers (but she did not note how the reform of the Organic Labor Law was mandated by the 1999 Constitution). She asserted that there had been "a broad debate with the presidential commission," and this commission, the National Assembly, and workers accompanied Chávez in drafting the law, such that the drafting was a "collective

effort.” Requena spoke to audience members as “subjects” who were constructing this new society, and she encouraged them to discuss the new law, continue the conversation with state institutions that she was initiating that night, and ensure that the institutions responsible for fulfilling the new law “really functioned” (“Charla de Diputada Requena sobre la Nueva Ley Orgánica de Trabajo y los Beneficios de la Mujer,” 25 May 2012).

Deputy Requena then moved into addressing the new law’s implications for women workers. She also discussed women’s continuing responsibility to carry out unpaid housework, women’s double shift, and how unpaid care duties hindered their abilities to participate socially and politically outside the home on levels equal to men. While highlighting the need to democratize participation in unpaid housework, Requena did not mention the role of the state in sharing the burden of unpaid reproductive labor in a socialist society. She specifically did not mention the article in the 2012 Organic Law of Work and Workers that repeated Article 88 of the Bolivarian Constitution, nor did she touch the issue of informal sector workers (who were disproportionately women) and how the new law protected them (“Charla de Diputada Requena sobre la Nueva Ley Orgánica de Trabajo y los Beneficios de la Mujer,” 25 May 2012). In promoting the benefits of the new labor law to women workers as a representative of the Bolivarian state, Requena neglected questions of state protection of the most vulnerable women workers that popular women’s organizations within *Chavismo* had raised in the labor law drafting process. She also neglected the long demand by women’s rights activists to fulfill the constitutional promise of Article 88. That demand, which stemmed from the actions of organized women across the political spectrum, seems to have been disappeared by state authorities seeking to have President Chávez receive the credit for granting “his women” what they needed in the new organic labor law. The neglect of this demand therefore served to uphold the magical revolutionary state.

7.11. Conclusion

In the context of a presidential election year and the Bolivarian state’s lack of transparency, President Chávez’s populist style of legislating combined with his illness and absence from Venezuela to pervade the compressed organic labor law drafting

process with uncertainty. This opaque process raised questions of not only what content would be included in the law, but also how the popular sectors were included in shaping it and ultimately about their power and control in the legislative process. By using his magical enabling powers, Chávez responded to and suddenly unfroze suspended claims by popular organizations, including women's organizations, for labor law reform. Chávez's populist initiative galvanized popular movements and organizations to draft, network, and mobilize for their proposals to be included in the new labor law. Yet, in the end, the labor law drafting process was controlled from above, as decision-making about the law remained outside the public sphere, and the president and his commission kept popular organizations and the nation more broadly in suspense. In addition, the demand for popular unity during Chávez's absence from the country and in the run-up to the presidential election undermined autonomous popular mobilization and pressure on the state to include them and their demands in the drafting process, and popular women's organizations and demands in particular.

The experience of women's organizing around the 2012 organic labor law sheds light on the dialectic between the Bolivarian state and conflicting forms of popular women's organization within the Bolivarian process—between state-directed populist participation and a radical democratic participation—and the implications of these state-society relations on the struggle to advance women's labor rights. Even though these forms of organization diverged in how they incorporated popular women and how they envisioned popular power, both were contained within *Chavismo* and constitutive of *Chavismo*. They both acceded to state requests to converge in defense of Chávez and the Bolivarian government in the midst of the labor law drafting process and on the day sanctioned to honor their specific labor struggles.

Where these two forms of organization converged, the Bolivarian state interpellated them as "Chávez's women," thus revealing how the state imagined their political participation within this national political conjuncture. Like the *Madres del Barrio*, the state expected them to be both mobilized and contained for what it saw as the broader interests of the Bolivarian revolution. Ultimately, their containment within this populist dynamic limited the autonomy of both these forms of popular women's organizations and opportunities to build a movement together and put pressure on the

state to advance their labor rights and gender interests. In the tensions between the struggle to build women's power and advance women's rights from below and the Bolivarian state's efforts to control inclusion from above, women's rights activists' efforts to advance the promise of Article 88 were quieted down once again.

Chapter 8. Conclusion. Imagining a More Dignified Map for Popular Women's Power and Unpaid Labor

*I wish to have a map that would ask us to proceed with caution...
but that would recognize the marks of human daring,
a map that would dare our imagination, that would show new vistas
and make us desire to mold the existing order into
a different, dignified landscape for humankind.
- Fernando Coronil (2001, p. 129)*

As I conclude *They Want Our Work, But Not Our Power*, I turn back now to the Venezuelan anthropologist Fernando Coronil, whose cultural materialist perspective presented in the opening chapter highlights the role of the magical revolutionary narrative in shaping the Bolivarian process during Hugo Chávez's presidency. He argues that Chávez's epic narrative of collective integration of the popular sectors conjured a magical state that merged words "with world, confusing the boundaries between representations and the real" (Coronil, No Date, p. 22). Following Coronil, I have aimed to render visible facets of the artifice of the Bolivarian state's production of its extraordinary and radical inversion of history by illuminating the boundaries between representations of gender justice and real gender justice. In the preceding chapters, I have used extended case study methods to go behind representations of this national popular revolution as having a "woman's face" to reveal the ordinary, lived realities of multiple popular sector women and contestations over their unpaid labor during Chávez's presidency. This analysis has shown that popular women, their unpaid labor, and discourses about them were central to building and sustaining the Bolivarian state, yet many popular women remained socially, economically, and politically vulnerable. It has therefore shown that the Bolivarian revolution cannot be understood without understanding the gendered nature of state-society relations contained and fostered within it. This dissertation has gendered the revolution, 21st century socialism, and the concept of popular power. In so doing, it has troubled notions of the Bolivarian state's promotion of popular power in the revolutionary process.

This critique of the Bolivarian state's narrative is not an argument against popular power and state promotion of popular power. Nor is it an argument against the crucial role of the imaginary in the necessary transformation of the state and state-society relations away from neoliberalism toward the construction of socially equitable alternatives. Rather, as Ann Oakley (1984, p. 191) asserts: "All writing is an invitation to the imagination." My critique is an invitation and an argument *for* a much fuller and more nuanced conception of popular power and women's positioning within it than the one the Bolivarian state was promoting and fostering.

I am arguing for a conception of popular power based on an awareness of the social contexts in which it is imagined, practiced, and reconfigured—a conception informed by the everyday realities of popular women's labor, organization, and interactions with the state such as those I have brought to light. What this dissertation shows is that these are social contexts very much marked by structural and symbolic gender and class inequalities and the intersections between them, which the state can reproduce and reconfigure through its actions and inactions. Popular power should be understood as mediated by gender and class divisions, and as in turn re-shaping such divisions. Thus, imaginations of an alternative social order in which popular power is meaningful to all members of the popular classes need to proceed with caution and be grounded in a recognition of how the gender order profoundly conditions actually existing practices of popular power and who benefits and does not benefit from them.

Such imaginations also need to entail envisioning the role of the state in relation to popular power. As a gendered and gendering institution that intervenes in the gender order, the state enables and/or constrains people's public participation and exercise of power based on their positioning in the gender order. If such imaginations are to include state support of meaningful popular power and gender justice, they would need to involve envisioning how the state can promote self-governing organization from below, led by women, rather than control popular women's organization from above and overburden them.

Applying this feminist cultural materialist perspective to examine the foundations of the Bolivarian Republic has shown that women's organizing for state recognition of

the socio-economic value of unpaid housework, homemakers' social security, and the enshrinement of these claims as rights within a constitution though necessary measures, are not sufficient for transforming the gender order and achieving gender justice. Rather, these rights need to be enforced and enforced universally for their target population in order for their transformatory potential to be realized. The implementation of Article 88 failed because no mass movement demanding these rights existed and popular women lacked substantive representation in governance to compel the enforcement of these rights. The legislative contestations for the implementation of these rights detailed in this dissertation point to the need for an enabling political opportunity structure in order for these rights to be meaningful to popular sector women. This would include ongoing substantive representation and political will to advance women's gender interests within government, sustained pressure from society on the state, accessible political education for popular women about their rights, and strong state institutions, in addition to substantial economic resources.

In the context of Bolivarian Venezuela during Chávez's presidency, Article 88 meant everything and nothing. It meant everything, as it was testament to the revolutionary potential of the Bolivarian process and what women's organizing could achieve within it, and it provided a platform to legitimate ongoing claims for recognition of homemakers and redistribution of wealth to them. For women's rights activists, Article 88 signified the culmination of decades of feminist demands for state recognition of the socio-economic value of unpaid labor and homemakers' entitlement to social security. For state actors, this article was testament to the revolutionary character of the Bolivarian process, as they were often quick to hail it publicly as a representation of the country's radical transcendence, especially in relation to popular women's gender interests. At the same time, Article 88 meant nothing in many poor homemakers' everyday lives, work, and interactions with the state. Many popular sector homemakers were unaware of the very existence of this article that specifically interpellated them as bearers of social rights. This lack of awareness occurred within a national context in which the 1999 Constitution was written because of and ratified by the exercise of popular vote, available for sale on street corners, and incessantly cited by state authorities. Rather than a legal tool to achieve gender equity, Article 88 often served as a rhetorical device that confused the boundaries between representations of gender

justice and real gender justice. Bolivarian state agents invoked it constantly, while its effect on the lives of homemakers whom it was meant to reach was unclear and patchy at best. Article 88 thus meant everything and nothing because it was a foundational promise by a state that was everywhere and nowhere at once for popular women.

Because this magical revolutionary state was everywhere and nowhere at once, including some popular women and claims for justice while simultaneously excluding and/ or suspending others, it held popular sector women and its recognition of their labor in an uncertain state. From: the relation of *Madres del Barrio* Mission to Article 88; to the times women waited to be reached by *Madres del Barrio*, *Hijos de Venezuela*, and *Amor Mayor* Missions; to the suspension that former *Madres del Barrio* were held in waiting for state support of their micro-enterprises; to the unclear conditions and duration of economic benefits for the remaining *Madres del Barrio*; to the backstage deliberations on women's rights in the 2012 organic labor law, the Bolivarian process was pervaded by uncertainty with regard to state recognition of popular women's labor. These "zones of uncertainty" in which the state made popular women wait for substantive recognition and redistribution show, as Auyero (2012) has stated, that popular women did not control state actions. In other words, they could not be certain that the state would recognize their labor and redistribute wealth to them because they did not enjoy substantive representation: they did not have the power to control the state and its actions.

Woven together, the multiple stories detailed within these chapters illustrate the uniquely gendered nature of Venezuela's construction of 21st century socialism. Unlike the Cuban revolution before the Special Period, which prioritized the development and expansion of production, the development, diversification, and expansion of the forces of production were central to the ideals but not the practices of the Bolivarian revolution during Chávez's presidency. Bolivarian Venezuela remained a petro-state heavily dependent on non-labor intensive oil extraction and importation of essential goods, such as food, medicine, and clothing. Rather, "sowing the nation's oil" to expand social provisioning in the popular sectors was central to the development and continuation of the revolution. The legitimacy of the Bolivarian revolution rested in large part on the reconfiguration of what Ruth Pearson (1997) has termed in relation to the Cuban revolution as "a reproductive bargain, a bargain which ensured the continuity of social as

well as aspects of human reproduction in the county” (p. 680). As Pearson explains, such a reproductive bargain is political, in that the population offers political support to the regime as long as the government continues to offer and/ or improve upon a basic standard of living (p. 680). The legitimacy of the Bolivarian revolution also rested on the reconfiguration of representation in terms of state acceptance and promotion of active popular sector social and political participation. Restructuring the relations of reproduction rather than the relations of production in tandem with fomenting popular participation in the public sphere were key to the construction of a new social contract between state and society within Bolivarian Venezuela.

In this new social contract that privileged popular participation in community service delivery and political mobilization, popular women, their labor, and their organization became crucial to the development of the Bolivarian process because of women’s primary responsibility for reproduction. This gendered responsibility was reconfigured and resignified in support of the revolution. Popular women became the backbone of the revolutionary process because of their maternal gender role, their positioning within the gendered division of labor, and their ties to their households and communities. Their labor was fundamental to the formation of the revolutionary Bolivarian state, which hinged on the expansion of public social provisioning and relied on popular organization for both decentralized service provision and political legitimacy. A feminization of social and political participation occurred and was promoted by the Bolivarian regime. As Molyneux (1985, p. 245) asserts, revolutionary governments often incorporate women into social and political organization in order to expand their power bases. In the case of the Bolivarian regime, the government incorporated popular women socially and politically not only to expand its power base, but also as *its central power base*. The opening quote to this dissertation by the male regional state coordinator of *Madres del Barrio* Mission illustrates this point, as he recognized that women participated more politically and “sustain[ed] the revolution.”

The Bolivarian government also intervened in the economy to promote popular women’s roles in production by providing interest-free and low-interest micro-credit to them. Yet, unlike the revolutionary Cuban government, it did not pursue policies of full employment for women and expansion of formal sector employment for women. Rather,

the Bolivarian government supported the intensification and flexibilization of popular women's labor through homework and simultaneity, similar to neoliberalism. Yet, unlike neoliberalism, the Bolivarian state did not retreat, but intervened directly with economic and social resources for popular women to provide backing and incentives for the intensification and flexibilization of their labor. The flexibility of popular women's labor and their continued ties to their households and communities enabled them to be more readily available to organize socially and politically in support of the revolution.

At the same time, the stories detailed within this dissertation show that rendering popular women and their unpaid labor visible in a process of revolutionary state transformation does not necessarily entail granting them power. To socially and politically include popular sector women and interpellate them as protagonists in state-building processes does not necessarily mean that they have power in these same processes. In the Bolivarian revolution, the utilization and discursive invocation of popular women's unpaid labor did not necessarily serve to transform gender power relations.

Rather, the Bolivarian revolution depended on unequal gender power relations and unequal divisions of labor. Popular sector women performed for little or no pay much of the everyday socially and politically necessary labor to build and sustain the revolution. In this way, the conclusion that the Bolivarian revolution had "a woman's face" was both fitting and illusory. Popular women carried out the grinding, repetitive, necessary work that undergirded much of the magic of the revolutionary state. Their unpaid labor rolled out many new Bolivarian social programs and filled in the gaps when these programs did not reach portions of the popular sectors. Popular sector women also constituted the bulk of the community-based political foot soldiers who did much of the unpaid organizing work in the elections for Chávez and *Chavista* candidates and mobilized in mass in defense of the revolution. As the *Red Popular de los Altos Mirandinos* stated in the opening quote to this dissertation: they, the "women homemakers home-workers... are those that are carrying out the actual work that carries this revolution forward." Just as President Chávez asserted that there was no socialism without feminism, this dissertation shows that there was no Bolivarian state without popular sector women and their unpaid labor.

To be made visible in the Bolivarian revolution, then, meant that state and party authorities recognized that popular women were central actors and their labor was vital for the development and maintenance of the revolutionary Bolivarian state, yet these authorities often did not view their specific gender interests as central to this process. Once again, the former national Minister of Woman's Popular Power and Gender Equality and leader of the national state-led popular women's front, María León's own words speak precisely to this point in reference to the 2012 presidential campaign year: "... I'm not saying that women renounce their struggles, however we can't place them as a central theme of politics." Resembling the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua (Molyneux, 1985), Bolivarian authorities required the subordination of women's specific gender interests to the broader goals of the revolution. Popular sector women, their unpaid labor, and their social and political participation were needed, promoted, and celebrated in some instances, but many of them remained vulnerable.

The type of popular power that much of the Bolivarian state apparatus was promoting and fostering amongst popular women was one in which they were socially and politically mobilized yet contained in line with state and party directives—they were "*gobierneras*," governed and obedient, their power controlled from above. For instance, Sandra Angeleri, an activist within *La Araña Feminista*, made the example and statement from which this dissertation draws its title: "In all the community councils, the women are the majority, but they (... the political [institutional] sphere) want our work, but they don't want our power" ("Interview with Sandra Angeleri," 6 August 2012). When state and party authorities reached down to popular women to control their social and political participation, this created tensions with some popular women and their organizations, as shown by the *Araña Feminista's* self-defined stance in defense of its autonomy in relation to the state. Yet these tensions within *Chavismo* were often glossed over and not substantively addressed when conflicting actors and forces acted or felt they must act in unity in defense of President Chávez, his government, and the revolution in a broader context of profound and ongoing political polarization. The *Araña Feminista's* decision to cede to state and party authority requests to march with women organized by the state, whom they saw as *gobierneras*, on International Working Women's Day illuminates this dynamic.

While popular women's organizations' alliances with the Bolivarian state and support for the broader Bolivarian project created opportunities for their organizing for substantive recognition of their unpaid labor and the legitimation of such organizing, it also closed down such opportunities. Similar to state promotion of mass women's organizations in the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions (Friedman, 2009, pp. 416-417; Molyneux, 1985; L. M. Smith & Padula, 1996), state-promoted women's organizations in Bolivarian Venezuela achieved important gains for popular women, but the state's primary goal with such organizations was to mobilize popular women in support and defense of the revolution. The strategic positioning of popular women's organizations in alliance with the Bolivarian state—their linkage in the *Chavista* populist chain—could be productive for their struggles, but it could also be dangerous to them. It could serve as a means for popular women's organizations to act in power with the state; but it could also serve as a means for the state to exercise its power over them. This potential for endangerment was heightened by the fact that popular women did not control the state, which rendered their organization vulnerable to appropriation by the state and/ or to silencing by the state.¹⁸⁸

Moreover, this dissertation also points to the danger to women's mobilization posed by the blurring of state and party lines in a national context in which the state was actively promoting popular sector social and political organization and popular women's organization in particular. It is precisely because popular women did not control the Bolivarian state that their organization and mobilization then became vulnerable to appropriation by the state for partisan ends. For example, in the May 2012 *Chavista* regional presidential campaign event in Falcón state mentioned in the introductory chapter, state-party propaganda on the centrality of popular sector women's role in the revolution formed the backdrop of the stage. This was an event that state gender institution workers advertised to popular women community leaders throughout the state as a "meeting with the governor." Many of the approximately 300 women arrived to the auditorium in the capital of Falcón ready to share problem cases from their communities in need of state assistance, only to find that the female governor and several other

¹⁸⁸ This assertion is not made to discount many popular women's reasons for supporting the Bolivarian revolution.

female state and party leaders brought them there to dictate to them, from atop the stage, how to organize in their communities for Chávez's re-election. These state and party authorities convened these popular women community leaders to the capital of the state because of their vital roles in household and community organization, thus bringing them in physical proximity to power. Yet these same authorities facilitated the event in such a way to contain the popular women below in the crowd and their particular voices and concerns so that they could be mobilized in support of the revolution according to state-party directives.

Popular women were uniquely vulnerable to state direction, appropriation, and manipulation of their organization because of their gender roles and their positioning in the gendered division of labor. Because they were the ones who cared—materially and discursively—because they were more often tied to the household performing flexible labor, their labor and organization could more easily be extended to caring for and serving their communities, Chávez, and the revolution. This dissertation also suggests that popular women were more vulnerable to political manipulation when they depended on the state for resources, like cash transfers, because the state could more easily control them, their organization, and their mobilization, as with the state's positioning of the *Madres del Barrio* as uncertain clients and expectations of them to mobilize as "Chávez's women."

Although the Bolivarian state appropriated popular sector women's unpaid labor and organizing, this does not mean that it incorporated all popular sector women in the same way nor without resistance. Indeed, this dissertation has shown that popular sector women's relation to the Bolivarian state was not uniform, as the Bolivarian state under Chávez's tenure was contradictory and uneven. Further, many popular women did exercise their agency individually and collectively and use their counter-hegemonic critical and imaginative capacities within the social, political, and economic constraints they faced in the Bolivarian process. For example, the opening quote from the *Red Popular de los Altos Mirandinos* is testimony to the agency of organized popular sector women, who directed their scathing critique of the state bureaucracy's exploitation of their labor to the very head of the Bolivarian state. This quote is also testimony to their imaginative capacities, as it reflects their desire for an alternative revolutionary order in

which their work would be recognized and they would have power. Some state actors also shared this desire and promoted popular women's self-governing organization and leadership and substantive recognition of their labor. Yet these state agents' convictions and actions did not become hegemonic within the state apparatus. However, this counter-hegemonic resistance did mean that the deployment of popular sector women's unpaid labor and organization created tensions between popular women and the state and contradictions between the radical magical narrative of (feminist) socialist revolution and the lived daily realities of many popular women.

This disjunctiveness between a state and a society conjoined in a popular revolutionary process also entailed a dynamic in which new state presences to support the popular sectors generated new state absences for the subjects promised these new pro-poor policies, goods, and services. From its failed regulation and implementation of the promulgated 2005 Law of Social Services, to its exclusion of many poor homemakers from *Madres del Barrio*, to making popular women wait in uncertainty for their dependents to be incorporated into *Hijos de Venezuela* and *Amor Mayor* Missions, the Bolivarian state during Chávez's presidency was a state that raised many popular women's expectations of social inclusion only to leave them unfulfilled. Woven together, these stories of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of popular sector women and their dependents in Bolivarian Venezuela tell the story of largely fragmented and incomplete social policy, unlike the general policy thrust of universal social protection in revolutionary Cuba. They tell of a state that was contradictory and uneven—a state, once again, that was everywhere and nowhere at once for popular women.

This disjunctiveness in social provisioning in the revolutionary process not only occurred in the Bolivarian state's penetration of its territory and popular sector communities within it, but it also occurred in the state's handling of time in the revolutionary process. For here was a state that was ever-changing, a state that often acted suddenly, surprisingly, without notice and transparency—magically, as it seemed to possess powers that came from itself—a state that operated at a dizzyingly fast pace in its institutional expansion and its decisive incorporation of popular sectors subjects, organizations, needs, and claims for justice. At the same time, this was a state that, in its everyday practices of public administration, operated frustratingly slow and opaquely,

holding so many popular sector subjects and claims in suspension, making them wait—often without regard for *their* time—for these revolutionary transformations and promises to reach them. As Secor (2007) writes in relation to the Turkish state, the Bolivarian state was at once coherent in the circulations of justice that it set in motion and fractured spatially and temporally in its treatment of these same circulations.

My examination of the Bolivarian process during Chávez's presidency from the standpoints of popular sector women illuminates that this was very much a revolution about time and its disjunctures. As Auyero (2012, p. 155) has stated, the ways poor people experience time are "political artifacts." Their temporal experiences are historically produced marks of political processes, actions, and inactions. Combining this insight with that of feminist economics, which has placed emphasis on time as a resource that is mediated by gender in terms of its use and availability, I contend that the Bolivarian revolution was also about the time popular women spent performing unpaid labor and how such time use constrained their social, political, and economic participation and their ability to benefit from the revolution. If we return to Veronica's home in the Falcón *barrio* and we take note of the time she spent cleaning up after her demented and incontinent elderly mother, while she was also caring for two pre-school age children, trying to take in piecework laundry to make ends meet, and waiting for the state to intervene on her elderly and minor dependents' behalf, we see a political artifact of the Bolivarian revolution. The unreliability of the Bolivarian state—the magical, revolutionary state that was everywhere and nowhere at once—to substantively recognize popular women's unpaid labor reproduced many popular women's vulnerability and time poverty. This uncertain, unreliable state reinforced gender differences and the gendered division of labor in the time that it made popular women wait for its social assistance.

This revolution that penetrated space and time with its presences and absences, its actions and inactions, also penetrated the moral orders, and in particular gendered moral orders, of the subjects whom it interpellated. Linked with its institutional restructuring, the Bolivarian revolution during Chávez's presidency was also a normative process that resignified conceptions of workers, labor, popular participation, and popular women's gender role and unpaid labor in particular. As William Carroll (2011, p. 152)

states: "Often the new reworks the old, with radical effects. Viewed dialectically, the new preserves yet transforms extant reality." This dissertation has shown that the Bolivarian state drew on the extant hegemonic gender role of women as mothers, and transformed it in service of the revolution to ordain the extension of their unpaid labor from their households to their communities and political organizing. Similar to the Nicaraguan revolution in which the meaning of the socially conventional role of motherhood was appropriated and politicized in support of the revolution (Molyneux, 1985, p. 228), popular sector mothers in Bolivarian Venezuela were resignified as revolutionary subjects. The moral order conditioning their care work was also resignified as a revolutionary maternalism. Yet what was preserved in this process of radical transformation was the normative underpinning of maternal altruism that popular women, as mothers, should sacrifice themselves to care for others. This normative underpinning was also resignified such that popular women were expected to sacrifice themselves for their communities, the revolution, and its commander, in addition to sacrificing themselves for their families. Such revolutionary maternalism is seen in the *Madres del Barrio* who were expected by the state and expected of themselves as "socialists" to not only use their monthly cash transfers (of less than minimum wage) to meet their families' social provisioning needs, but also to contribute a portion of their cash transfers to organize for the social provisioning needs of vulnerable members of their communities that were not met by the Bolivarian state. Further, this emergent moral order supported the gendered division of labor, the deepening of this division, and popular sector women's double and triple shifts.

This dissertation has shown that such gendered normative resignification within the revolution was also a regulatory device that served to refashion popular understandings of good and bad motherhood, with the effect of exacerbating existing social divisions between popular sector women and generating new forms of social divisions between them. As in the Cuban (L. M. Smith & Padula, 1996, p. 158) and Nicaraguan revolutions (Molyneux, 1985, p. 244), Bolivarian revolutionary moral discourse on gender issues contained expectations of women to change their role and behavior, with few expectations of men to change their behavior and role in reproduction. What remained the same in Bolivarian Venezuela was the blaming of popular sector women as individuals for their and their children's socio-economic

conditions and the moral—and practical—exoneration of fathers and the state from sharing responsibility in care work. In the revolutionary process, a structural and discursive paternalism toward popular sector mothers that overlooked and undervalued their unpaid labor was preserved.

While pressing forward for the deepening of a conception of popular power, I close by turning back to Article 88—to this foundational promise that triggered my imagination and study of Bolivarian Venezuela. This press forward means turning back to the struggle for recognition of unpaid labor that women’s rights activists in Venezuela and beyond have been fighting over many decades. This article can serve as a starting point for a fuller and more nuanced envisioning of popular power—for a more dignified map, that asks us to proceed with caution while daring our imaginations, as Coronil writes. For if popular power is to be meaningful to popular women who carry out the bulk of reproductive labor, the value of their labor for their households, their communities, and broader society must be substantively recognized and affirmative action measures must be taken to protect them and provide them with a universal minimum social floor. Recognition of unpaid reproductive labor and redistribution of resources to the poor and working class women who carry it out are necessary but not sufficient measures for the achievement of gender justice. Substantive representation and meaningful, bottom-up democratic participation of the women who perform such work are also necessary for gender justice. A more dignified map of popular power, then, should point to the importance of popular women’s control of the terms under which they and their labor are recognized. Such a map should also point to the need for both state support for and autonomy from the state in the movements, organizations, and demands that popular women form. As Alba Carosio (2010, p. 11) concludes: “To emphasize women’s presence and their contribution to the wellbeing... without a parallel search for the transformation of unequal structures of work organization, recognition, valuation and protection leads to an instrumentalization of women and perpetuates the inherent exploitation in the sexual division of labor.” Thus, I suggest Article 88 serve merely as a starting point for a fuller envisioning of popular power and gender justice. Such a vision would entail imagining a redistribution with men and the state of the socially necessary reproductive labor popular women perform so that they can participate equally in instances of popular power.

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Appendix.

Research Methodology

I. Archives Consulted

1999 National Constituent Assembly

CONG de Mujeres

Gioconda Espina's Personal Archives

INaMujer

National Assembly

Permanent Commission on Family, Woman, and Youth of the National Assembly

II. Interviews

A. Interviews: National Level State Gender Institution Workers, Women's Rights Activists, Women's Rights Analysts, and Actors Involved in Pre-ANC, ANC, and Post-ANC Processes Related to Article 88

Aguirre, Virginia (former Director of the Bolivarian Gender Observatory). 6 September 2012. Caracas.

Angeleri, Sandra (Women's Studies Professor; national coordinating team member of the *Araña Feminista*). 6 August 2012. Caracas.

Beatriz (national level state gender institution worker). 2 August 2012.

Carolina (feminist public official working at national level). 28 January 2012.

Carosio, Alba (Women's Studies Professor; former legislative adviser to Marelis Pérez; national coordinating team member of the *Araña Feminista*). Marcano. 9 March 2012. Caracas.

Castañeda, Nora (former CONG member; former Women's Studies and Economics Professor; President of the Woman's Development Bank). 2 August 2011. Caracas.

Castillo, Adicea (former CONG member; Women's Studies and Economics Professor). 22 July 2011; 5 October 2011. Caracas.

Delgado, Juana. (former CONG member; leader of the *Círculos Femeninos Populares*). 19 August 2011. Caracas.

Espina, Gioconda. (former CONG member; member of the Style Commission of the ANC; former legislative adviser to Marelis Pérez Marcano; and Women's Studies Professor). 21 July 2011; 29 September 2011. Caracas.

Jiménez, Morelba (United Nations Gender Thematic Group member; member of the women's rights technical assistance team to the Women's, Children, Youth, and Elderly Sub-commission of the ANC). 14 July 2011. Caracas.

Laura (national level state gender institution worker). 10 July 2012.

López Maya, Margarita (Political History Professor). 28 September 2012. Caracas.

MA Student in Women's Studies. 10 August 2012.

Méndez, Absalón (adviser to the ANC and the National Assembly on social security). 12 March 2012. Caracas.

Mota, Gioconda (member of presidential commission designing *Madres del Barrio* Mission; first president of *Madres del Barrio*; national coordinating team member for the *Araña Feminista*). 3 October 2011; 14 March 2012. Caracas.

Orellana, Inocencia (former CONG member; co-founder of *Red Todas Juntas*). 8 September 2011. Caracas.

Pérez Marcano, Marelis (former CONG member; ANC delegate; former National Assembly Deputy). 23 August 2011; 14 September 2011; 5 September 2012; 6 September 2012. Caracas.

Red Todas Juntas Co-Founder. 19 July 2012.

Salcedo González, Ana (technical adviser to the National Assembly on the Law of Social Services). 13 March 2012. Caracas.

Torrealba, María Auxiliadora (former *Círculos Femeninos Populares* leader). 28 September 2011. Caracas.

Yolimar (national level state gender institution worker). 24 July 2012.

B. Interviews: Falcón State Gender Institution Workers

Ana María. 30 March 2012.

Carla. 5 June 2012.

Claudia. 29 May 2012.

Gloria. 11 November 2011; March 2012; 4 July 2012.

Luisa (Director of Falcón EFOSIG). October 2011; 17 October 2012.

Berrios, Mónica (Collective Authority for Women's Issues and Gender Equality in Falcón). 31 May 2012. Coro.

C. Interviews: Former *Madres del Barrio*

Marilyn. 21 June 2012.

Miriam. 20 June 2012; 28 June 2012; 4 September 2012.

Soraya. 23 June 2012; 28 June 2012; 30 June 2012; 28 September 2012.

D. Interviews: Former *Madres del Barrio* Municipal Coordinators

Adriana. 20 April 2012; 23 April 2012. Falcón.

Paula. 6 September 2012. Caracas.

E. Interviews: *Falconiana Barrio* Women

Carol. 10 June 2012; 12 October 2012.

Daniela. 4 May 2012.

Diana. 3 May 2012; 2 July 2012.

Hilda. 12 June 2012; October 2012.

Inés. 23 May 2012.

Irene. 26 June 2012.

Jenny. 12 June 2012; October 2012.

Joana. 5 May 2012; 2 September 2012.

Sara. 4 May 2012; October 2012.

Veronica. 17 May 2012; 2 July 2012.

III. Events Observed

A. Events for State Gender Institution Workers in Falcón State

Management Meeting of Collective Authority for Women's Issues and Gender Equality, *Madres del Barrio*, Woman's Development Bank, and EFOSIG. 19 October 2011. Coro.

First Meeting for Regional Coordinators for the Secretariat for Development and Gender Equality. 25 January 2012. Coro.

The Governor's Presentation of her Annual Report and Accounting for 2011. 6 February 2012. Coro.

INaMujer Training and Strengthening Workshop for Functionaries of Falcón State Women's Institutions. 23 February 2012. Coro.

INaMujer Gender and Public Policies and Statistics with a Gender Perspective for Functionaries. 3 July 2012. Coro.

B. Events between State Institutions and Popular Sector Women and Organizations in Falcón State

(The names of these events were those provided by state institutions.)

Regional Meeting with Women from Communal Councils. 14 October 2011. Paraguaná Peninsula.

Meeting with Women from Communal Councils. 17 October 2011. Chichiriviche.

BanMujer Accounting Workshop. 17 November 2011. Coro.

Cinema Forum for the Day of No Violence Against Women. November 2011. Coro.

Cinema Forum for the Day of No Violence Against Women. November 2011. Coro.

Cinema Forum for the Day of No Violence Against Women. November 2011. Coro.

Three Years of Achievements: Stella Lugo. 26 November 2011. Coro.

Community Day. 1 December 2011. Los Taques Municipality.

Regional Meeting with Women from Communal Councils. 6 December 2011. Miranda Municipality.

Meeting About Gender Equality Committees. 7 February 2012. Democracia Municipality.

International Women's Day Parade. 17 March 2012. Coro.

Sixth Anniversary Celebration of *Madres del Barrio* Mission. 31 March 2012. Coro.

Meeting of Knowledge. 11 April 2012. Mauroa Municipality.

Meeting about the Great Missions. 23 April 2012. Mauroa Municipality.
Initiation of Josefa Camejo Month. 3 May 2012. Pueblo Nuevo.
Josefa Camejo Birthday Celebration. 18 May 2012. Pueblo Nuevo.
Meeting with the Governor/ Josefa Camejo Women's Front Carabobo Campaign. 20 May 2012. Coro.
National Assembly Deputy Gladys Requena's Visit to Las Ventosas. 25 May 2012. Las Ventosas.
National Assembly Deputy Gladys Requena's Talk on the New Organic Labor Law and its Benefits to Women. 25 May 2012. Coro.
EFOSIG Workshop on Leadership for *Madres del Barrio*. 29 May 2012. Coro.
EFOSIG Workshop on Violence against Women for *Madres del Barrio*. 1 June 2012. Miranda Municipality.
Evaluation of EFOSIG Workshops by *Madres del Barrio*. 6 July 2012. Miranda Municipality.
Falcón *Frente de Mujeres* Presidential Campaign Closure. 1 October 2012. Coro.

C. National Events between State Institutions and Popular Sector Women and Organizations

International Working Women's Day March and Celebration. 8 March 2012. Caracas.
Video Conference on "Lies in the Venezuelan Media" given by Michel Collon and hosted by MinMujer. 7 June 2012.

D. National Events on Women's and Gender Issues

Gender Equity and Social Change in Latin America and the Caribbean International Seminar. 21 July 2011. Caracas.
Women, Work, and Health National Meeting. 22 March 2013. Maracay.
Public Forum for a New Labor Law with Gender Equality. 23 March 2012. Maracay.
Central University of Venezuela's Women's Studies Center's Meeting of Research in Feminisms and Women's and Gender Studies. 13-14 June 2012. Caracas.

E. Caracas Events on Women's and Gender Issues

Homage to Gladys Parentelli and Forum on Teachings from the Women from the 80s for the Present Feminist Struggle. 12 July 2011. Caracas.

Day of Collective Construction of the Thematic Chronogram of *Entrompe de Falopio*. 28 June 2012. Caracas.

F. Other Events

May Day March. 1 May 2011. Caracas.

March of the Red Carnations: Homage to Alí Primera. 18 February 2012. Los Taques Municipality, Falcón.

Canceled Public Venue Inauguration by President Chávez/ Presidential Campaign Event. July 2014.

Community Meeting. August 2012. La Vega, Caracas.

Four Voting Centers during the Presidential Election. 7 October 2012. Coro.