Essays

"Revolutionary Sisters": Women's Solidarity and Collective Identification among Chicana Brown Berets in East Los Angeles, 1967–1970

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Abstract: *I examine women's participation in the East Los Angeles chapter of the Brown Berets in order to unpack the dynamics of women's inclusion and exclusion in an organization proclaiming a commitment to liberatory social change. I argue that the organization's structure and ideology, which originally appeared to support participatory democracy—albeit in tension with paramilitary procedures and self-representations—progressively devolved into the segregation and subordination of women participants. This structuring of gender inequality, and the self-representations and behaviors that supported it, created the conditions for women Berets to recognize each other as hermanas en la lucha who could organize on their own terms. Chicana Brown Berets' gender consciousness and woman-identified solidarity enabled them to break with the organization and develop a new political identity that implied a linked, but autonomous, relationship to the Chicano movement as well as a feminist reconstruction of la familia as based in women's community.*

In late February 1970 a letter was sent to "Aron Mangancilla, Minister of Education for the Brown Berets," explaining that the minister of correspondence and finance for the East Los Angeles chapter, Gloria Arellanes, had resigned. The letter stated, "There has been a great exclusion on behalf of the male segment and failure of the ministers to communicate with us, among many, many other things." It went on to declare that "ALL Brown Beret women" were leaving because they had been treated as "nothings, not as "Revolutionary

sisters."[1] Signing the letter "Con Che!", the authors implied that their leaving was a revolutionary act of self-determination.

But the most significant claim they made was that their resignation did not indicate the end of their activism. Rather, the authors declared that they would organize themselves. A few days before this letter was sent, a group of women had met at the Euclid Heights Center. They included former women Berets as well as others attracted by a flyer that proclaimed: "Chicanas, find yourself! Do you have a part in the Movement? Are you satisfied? Are your ideas suppressed? Come and CREATE your ideas! HELP CREATE Las Adelitas de Aztlán." After providing information about the time, place, and date of the meeting, the flyer ended, "Join Las Adelitas de Aztlán ... *porque somos una familia de hermanas*" (because we are a family of sisters).[2]

The organization they founded, Las Adelitas de Aztlán, was short-lived, no doubt a casualty of the disillusionment, persecution, and fragmentation that occurred in the Chicano movement after the 29 August 1970 march against the Vietnam War. But this move to organize by a group of grassroots Chicanas—lower middle-class, working-class, and poor—represented the culmination of their experiences as participants in the Brown Beret organization in East Los Angeles during its most intense period of mobilization, 1968–1970. In this essay, I examine women's participation in the East Los Angeles chapter of the Brown Berets in order to unpack the terms of women's inclusion and the dynamics of exclusion in an organization that proclaimed a commitment to social change. Among the guiding questions: What kinds of gendering practices took place in the East Los Angeles chapter of the Brown Berets? What activities did women participate in? How did women forge a collective identity as "revolutionary sisters"? How did they become conscious of sexism in the organization?

In the history and popular memory of the Chicano movement, the Brown Berets have a great deal of symbolic capital. With the founding of the East Los Angeles chapter, the Brown Beret as a symbol of Chicano Power spread throughout the Southwest, and even to places as seemingly remote from Chicano communities as Kansas City, Seattle, and Minnesota.[3] Composed primarily of working-class and poor young people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four (but in many areas multigenerational in membership),

the Brown Berets have often been compared to the widely known Black Panther Party for Self-Defense as well as to the Puerto Rican Young Lords Party, both of which espoused revolutionary nationalism. However, while the Brown Berets also promoted nationalism as a call for the "unity of our people," they vacillated between cultural and revolutionary nationalism—construed as a choice between local struggles that adhered to the maintenance of cultural tradition (and often modest goals of institutional reform) versus global struggles based on oppressed nationality (calling for a recapturing of the state).

The Brown Berets represented themselves as a self-defense unit for the Chicano community, a role they prepared for by staging drills, marches, and military poses, wearing "military" style clothing, and acting as observers, security monitors, community organizers, and participants at major events in the movement. The "original" East Los Angeles chapter sponsored political education and Chicano history classes; participated in the East Los Angeles high school walkouts and subsequent sit-ins during the Board of Education hearings to reinstate teacher Sal Castro; attended the Denver Youth Conference; sent delegates to the Poor People's March on Washington; protested police brutality and political repression; and organized marches against the Vietnam War. Additionally, the chapter successfully administered a free clinic, while other chapters organized free breakfasts and alternative Chicano schools.[4]

Coverage of Beret activities in both the mainstream Los Angeles and community-based media foregrounded the group's male leadership, its militant posture of self-defense, and the recruitment of gang members and *batos locos*. Arrests of male leaders were highly public, especially in the case of the "L.A. 13" (including David Sanchez, Cruz Olmeda, Ralph Ramirez, and Carlos Montes), who were indicted for conspiracy after the high school walkouts in March 1968, and the Biltmore Six (including Montes, Ramirez, and Chris Cebada), who were charged with setting fires during a presentation by Ronald Reagan at the Biltmore Hotel in April 1969. During these events, women Berets gave the organization stability by fundraising, answering phone calls, writing letters, pasting up and writing for the newspaper, and running the Free Clinic. They also became instrumental in organizing the marches against the Vietnam War.

Historian Juan Gómez-Quiñones mentions that the Brown Berets sought to "include both genders" and "had some excellent women members" (1990, 120). Other accounts refer to them as "strong women" or even as decisive feminists.[5] But despite such hints at the notable presence of women, these sources do not generally provide any details of their activities (beyond the statement that they were relegated to secretarial or other devalued work) or develop an analysis of the intersection of organizational practices and Chicana activism.[6] Still other accounts of the Brown Beret organization not only provide minimal information about women's activities in the East Los Angeles chapter, but also promote stereotypes of the women participants as passive or as locked within male-identified norms (E. Chávez 1998; Fields Fox 1970). Unmentioned in these accounts are the facts that a woman minister had been appointed (and that she had attended the Poor People's March); that women were also harassed and arrested for their participation in the organization (among those considered subversive by the Los Angeles Police Department was member Gloria Arellanes); that women provided crucial logistical support and organizing strategies for actions; and, most importantly, that they left the organization as a group rejecting male dominance.

Scholarship on women in the social movements of the 1960s has tended to focus on sexism in the organizations of New Left, where white women found themselves subordinated to male agendas and began to build a women's movement (Evans 1979; Echols 1989). As white women were challenging men in New Left organizations or leaving these organizations altogether, Chicanas were also challenging their subordination within the Chicano Power movement and making choices about whether or not they could transform the movement from within. But while there is a growing body of scholarship on women's activism in the Chicano movement as well as an extensive archive of materials relating to Chicana feminism, there are few case studies of how specific organizations managed gender.[7] That is, there are few comprehensive accounts that use "gender as a conceptual tool" in their analysis of organizations.[8] What is needed in discussions of gender inequality in the Chicano movement is an examination not only of attitudes and behaviors or of cultural nationalism as an oppressive ideology for women, but also of how gender inequality was *institutionalized*, part of

a complex of sexism that created an unsupportive and ultimately hostile environment for women activists.

Recent publications and documentary films on women in radical left organizations among people of color, especially the American Indian Movement, Young Lords Party, and Black Panther Party, illustrate the empowering and simultaneously painful experiences of women participants. Although there were varying approaches to ideologies of gender, mapping of specific gender identities for women and men, implementation of equality, and gendered practices, a common outcome was that gender inequality in these organizations hindered women's ability to see the struggle for revolutionary social change as adequately including them.[9] This study of Chicana participation in the Brown Berets in East Los Angeles seeks to augment the scholarship on women's activism in the Chicano movement, on Chicana feminist consciousness, and on women of color as political agents during the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

At the outset, I have to admit that it was difficult to construct this account. It relies on interviews—conducted with three female and three male members of the Berets, an affiliate member, and a participant observer—as well as print media, secondary sources, photographs, and items from the personal collections of participants.[10] Ex-participants I spoke with showed varying degrees of ambivalence and concern about sharing their experiences, including two who refused interviews. Therefore, this account does not derive its argument solely from interviews, but rather from a blending of interviews, other sources, and ongoing conversations with interviewees. So while I understand women's words as alternative readings of historical events, these words are situated in dialogue with the context both in the past and in the present, which counters some of the criticisms of presentism that are sometimes raised in reference to oral history projects.[11]

Alberto Melucci's notion of "collective identity," which calls for the researcher to examine the "processes through which a collective becomes a collective" (1995, 42), informs my methodological practice. Melucci's emphasis on processes asks us to examine conflicts and negotiations of identity by actors in social movement organizations. As he defines it, collective identity as an "analytical tool" allows us to examine the collaborative and conflictual ways that people come to

share political identities and interests. So we can look at the moments when certain definitions become limited because they restrict or do not account for certain identities, which explicitly or implicitly may serve to authorize inequality. When this happens, it calls for a renegotiation or rejection of those collective identities in favor of new ones that accommodate multiple interests.

A key assumption in this approach is that social movement participants elaborate frameworks of interpretation to name their common interests. These frameworks communicate consciousness, which, following social movement theorists Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier, might be defined as "interpretive frameworks that emerge out of a challenging group's struggle to define and realize its common interests in opposition to the dominant order" (1992, 114). That is, in the process of mobilization, consciousness, represented by the construction of a particular collective identity, is the resolution of a conflict over how one interprets the goals of the struggle and what members have decided is the best way to advance their interests.[12] I argue that the organization's structure, which originally appeared to support participatory democracy—albeit in tension with paramilitary procedures and self-representations—progressively devolved into the segregation and subordination of women in the drive toward aggressive and violent masculinity. Ironically, this process of segregation and subordination created the conditions for women Berets to recognize each other as *hermanas en la lucha* (sisters in the struggle, or revolutionary sisters) who could organize on their own terms. Their gender consciousness and woman-identified solidarity represented a means of continuing to participate in the movement.[13] These new terms and the new collective identity they developed to authorize it implied a linked, but autonomous, relationship to the Chicano movement as well as a transformation of its by-then official ideology of the cultural nationalist family.

"Girls Too": Chicanas Join the Brown Berets

Before the group known as the Brown Berets became powerfully symbolic, it had a prehistory as Young Citizens for Community Action (YCCA), a group that pushed for educational reform under the leadership of Vickie Castro,

its president. By fall 1967 the group had opened up the Piranya Coffeehouse, a space where young people could enjoy art and entertainment and also participate in rap sessions. According to Rona Fields Fox (1970), a few women were active in the coffeehouse scene, but they did not maintain their participation into the next phase or transition period when the Young Citizens became Young Chicanos for Community Action and started organizing against police brutality.[14] It was during their actions against the police that participants in YCCA began to wear the berets and were increasingly referred to both by police and by community-based media as "brown berets."

In the transition period from late December 1967 to January 1968, during which the names "YCCA" and "Brown Berets" were both applied to the group, a significant number of women began to join.[15] Among them were the younger sister of one of the ministers and her friends who were still in high school. After she had visited the coffeehouse several times to learn more about the Brown Beret organization, Gloria Arellanes joined. Subsequently, Andrea Sanchez of Santa Fe Springs and her sister came on board, in addition to other women from East and South Central Los Angeles who constituted this core membership, including Yolanda Solis. According to Ralph Ramirez, gang girls were there, too, including "Cha Cha" and "Cookie" from White Fence (1995). But they, like many others, were drop-ins and dropouts, affiliate members like Elena Dominguez, who participated for a short time or who were connected to the organization through family ties or male partners who were members.

In order to understand the gender tendencies at work within the organization when women joined, it is important to consider male leaders' descriptions of the group's goals. Historian Ernesto Chávez has argued that the organization's masculinism derived from the implication that revolution would be achieved and organized by, as well as primarily beneficial to, men (1998). Ralph Ramirez (1995) and Carlos Montes (1997) both described the organization as ideally reaching out to young homeboys—*cholos* or batos locos—who embodied racialized, poor or working-class masculinity; these were typically young men who had been defeated by society or led astray by drugs, alcohol, and gang warfare.[16] Additionally, these men, as was apparent in the number of incidents reported in the movement newspapers, were often the object

of police brutality and abuse. In order to organize this group, the organization's recruitment messages represented the politicized Beret as either the evolutionary descendent of the *pachuco* or the antithesis of the bato loco, a contradiction that celebrated pachuco/bato loco identity as rebels, on the one hand, while asking them to leave behind "bad tendencies" like substance abuse because these practices undermined revolutionary action, on the other (Ramirez 1995).

A recruitment advertisement printed in *Chicano Student News* at this time mimicked (with a huge difference) the "Uncle Sam" army recruitment posters. In place of Uncle Sam, the ad featured a revolutionary male figure with crossed bandoleers on his chest and a bayonet in his right hand, accompanied by the slogan "Join the Brown Berets Now." Underneath, in "cholo" style block letters, the ad invited, "Girls, Too ..." (15 March 1968, 6). Whether or not the desired recruit was the bato loco as revolutionary, the organization attracted a core group of women who represented different kinds of working-class experiences, family compositions, and ages. Gloria Arellanes, who was slightly older than the other women, and the Sanchez sisters came from families that had moved into the newly developing suburbs of El Monte and Santa Fe Springs, respectively. They drove to the Beret meetings from their homes. But the majority of women recruits were residents of East Los Angeles, including Yolanda Solis.[17] Within this group from East Los Angeles, there were also varied experiences. Yolanda had grown up in a house her parents owned in Lincoln Heights. On the other hand, Yolanda recalled in an interview another member who was biracial (Mexican and Euro-American) and had grown up in the nearby Ramona Gardens housing projects. Several women were raised by single mothers; others were raised in families with a mother and father engaged in what were described as "traditional" relationships, in which, nevertheless, mothers showed strength and power. Additionally, the majority of the women had finished high school and were employed. The youngest of the group had not yet graduated from high school.

According to Yolanda Solis Sanchez, when she attended a recruitment meeting it was fundamentally a consciousness-raising session in which male leaders spoke about racism, inequality, and possible solutions as advocated by their group. A forum was then opened up for potential members to speak about their personal experiences and observations of

discrimination. It was at one of these meetings that Yolanda experienced a sense of collective agency as a member of a group actively seeking to change systems of domination. At the same time, she also sensed that something about this movement—and this group—would be a different kind of experience for Chicanas:

> I can't talk in front of people or anything, but I really felt I could do something, anything ... I remember at our first meeting Andrea Sanchez got up and talked and then I really liked her immediately because of the fact, number one, she was a large woman, like me, and she kind of stuttered, but that didn't affect her. She wasn't embarrassed or anything. Being a Chicana you kind of grow up thinking, "Oh how embarrassing." Everything is so embarrassing, right? You just don't do it. You kind of let the men lead you. And here were all these women, all these strong women talking, saying their opinions, their feelings. (1996)

Because of the visibility of vocal women at the outset, Yolanda understood that women would be included as active participants.

Yolanda's experience of the consciousness-raising session demonstrates that a structure of participatory democracy, the primary mode of organizing among the Left in the 1960s, was evident in the early organizational practice of the Brown Berets. Ethnographer Rona Fields Fox affirms this orientation toward consensus and participatory democracy in the early period of mobilization, noting that a shift took place within a year's time (1970, 134–36). This model existed in tension with the paramilitary practices and structure, a "pyramid" as Carlos Montes called it, which became more visible after the school walkouts as the organization experienced infiltration and police repression.[18] In essence, this tension illustrates the distinction feminist military historian Cynthia Enloe has made between "revolution" and "war." Where revolution seeks to "mobilise human and material resources so as to bring about fundamental alterations in the socio-political order," that is, to bring forth the potential of the human, war seeks to "mobilise human and material resources for the sake of optimising military effectiveness" (1983, 164).

Training to fulfill their mission as a self-defense group—that is, to "optimis[e] military effectiveness"—took place through target practice. Meeting at Lincoln Park on Saturday mornings, the group would practice the drills.[19] Women participated in both these activities (Arellanes 1997; Beamish 1995; D. Sanchez 1995). Andrea Sanchez Beamish explained the importance of drilling in particular: "We needed that in order to follow orders and maintain our composure. That was just the training we need. It worked out fine, because it did change you" (1995). Such training produced a qualitative change in one's understanding of the demands of collective, revolutionary action: "You weren't offended by taking orders. That helped you to see things in a more military manner. If you were gonna be in this type of group, you needed to think that way." It should be noted that members were highly conscious of their consent to disciplinary practices. That is, participants willingly engaged in activities that required them to obey the demands of a higher "officer" or drill leader. Additionally, despite the fact that drilling was derived from the historically male institution of the military, the terms of inclusion appeared gender neutral.

Participating as a soldier, or rank-and-file member, was not only a matter of formally fitting in (by being the same as everyone else in a drill formation) and deferring to hierarchy, but also of perceiving common interests. When Yolanda Solis Sanchez distinguished her membership in the Berets from membership in a family, she said that the Berets were a group of men and women who "thought like I thought." In other words, the group was based neither on an unthinking conformity to group activities nor on ties of blood and kinship as a natural basis for affiliation, but on a recognition of common interests in social change. That they were Chicanas and Chicanos—young people of Mexican descent in the United States—no doubt fortified this sense of commonality, but it was not the sole reason for their coming together.

As young people engaged in a Brown Power movement, they inevitably celebrated intra-racial relationships and rites of passage, such as marriage. But while it could be viewed as an affirmation of *familia* in cultural nationalist terms, the Brown Beret wedding (as numerous members referred to it) took place in November 1968, before cultural nationalism was officially adopted as Chicano movement ideology.[20] The wedding of two members affirmed and celebrated the Brown

Beret organization, the enjoyment of Chicanas and Chicanos coming together to do collective work in the movement, and the ties between men and women in Chicana/o communities. But, as has been observed of women's roles in African cultural nationalist organizations like United Slaves, women bore a particular relation to the representation of cultural continuity (and tradition) in a Brown Power context—foreshadowing the rigid definition of these roles in a cultural nationalism that sought to preserve "tradition."[21]

Many Chicanas had come to the organization as independent women who embraced the agenda of the Brown Berets, and they affirmed—and creatively developed—their commitment to recovering the indigenous, which was a strong current in the revaluing of racial-ethnic identity. All of the core members were bridesmaids or bridegrooms in the wedding. While the men wore the uniform of bush jacket and khaki pants, the bridesmaids—all Beret women—designed a modified version of the *huipil*, the traditional garment sewn and embroidered by indigenous Mexican women. These they wore in conjunction with the stylish stacked hairstyles and heavy mascara that clearly situated them in the late 1960s. While the desire to claim their connection to indigenous Mexican women was motivated by antiracism and had the potential to tap into an argument for egalitarianism as a feature of precolonial society (an argument that became prevalent during the Chicana feminist movement despite its equivocal aspects), the women did not yet have access to the information that would have enabled such a reading.

In sum, the institutionalization of gender in the Brown Berets during the first year of women's participation reflected an intersection of the attitudes and gender organization of the larger society, the exigencies of a paramilitary group, and youth experiences. There were enough different kinds of spaces, both democratic and undemocratic (like drilling, rapping, and planning group events), in which women could be included. Nevertheless, Fields Fox claimed that the group was "confused" about how women could contribute to its mission: "It has been a long hard struggle for everyone to define and develop a role for women within the organization" (1970, 203). Chicanas saw themselves as revolutionaries, but because the organization was implicitly and explicitly based in notions of male militancy, Chicana participants were left to construct identities themselves in relation to either

male-defined practices or male constructions of women. In my interview with her, Gloria Arellanes remembers thinking to herself at the time: "We've got some wild women here ... who believe in a revolutionary way!" It would not be too long before they would construct those beliefs around their own definitions of revolutionary womanhood.

Identification as Revolutionary Women

One example of the external ways women were being "gendered" in the movement was the circulation of a photograph of an East Los Angeles woman Beret taken by movement photographer Raul Ruiz. The photo shows a *mestiza revolucionaria* with crossed bandoleers and long-flowing hair. Simply put, while the woman in the photo represents a type of beauty that the movement would celebrate in opposition to the dominant culture—that is, mestiza beauty in opposition to blond hair and blue eyes—it also features a femininity appealing to men and offers an ideal for Chicanas to consider as they pursued social change. Such an image—not unlike the frozen but powerful moments that Gustavo Casasola captured of Mexican revolutionary women—fits within the tradition of portraying women as representatives of nation and embodiments of revolution, their bodies standing for what is at stake—a way of life, biological and cultural reproduction—as well as a reminder that there was a role for everyone to play in the collective effort to claim the notion.

But despite the existence of a *soldadera* frame that could co-opt them into a masculinist imaginary (an imaginary that was also taken up by Chicanas in variously reductive, complex, and/or woman-identified ways, which I have been exploring elsewhere), Chicana Berets constructed a revolutionary identity while negotiating the constellation of already existing cultural representations and societal positioning of Chicanas, the demands of a paramilitary organization and its specific gendering practices (explicit and implicit), *and* their own self-conception as shaped by personal experience and a growing knowledge of mestiza history. Out of this intersection of forces, they opted, at various times, to work within—and eventually to rework and reject—the terms mapped out for them.

According to Gloria Arellanes, "We stayed very feminine—and wanted to." Their choice after several months of not

having a uniform was to develop a specifically women's uniform (as opposed to other Beret women who, after 1970, wore what the men wore). Yolanda Solis Sanchez recalls visiting the seamstress who was going to make tailored jackets for them:

> The women were all there to get fitted and the seamstress thought it was strange that there were so many large women getting the same uniform. ... We all decided to get black skirts. We didn't wear pants. We wore skirts, which I think is something. I don't know, maybe nowadays we'd wear pants. Maybe just back then women didn't wear pants. ... It was rare to see anybody in pants as a matter of fact. (1996)

Communicating self-consciousness about their choice to wear skirts, but also locating that choice within the historical context, Yolanda's recollections also point to another source of identification: the majority of women in the core group were large and tall women. The self-identification and mutual identification of several women as large women may also have deepened the terms of their burgeoning sisterhood as an articulate solidarity with the power to speak for itself.

An organizational basis for women's collective identity was also made possible by the appointment of Gloria Arellanes as minister of finance and correspondence sometime in spring 1968. Although the male ministers may have considered that only a female spokesperson could develop a place and role for women in the organization, they also could not ignore Gloria's leadership skills. Additionally, such a person would be able to "manage" women participants. A writer for *La Raza* magazine explains that the motivation of male leaders who appointed women to leadership in movement organizations was suspect. "When women were given leadership roles, it was mainly out of tokenism to a silent, yet potentially powerful group" ("El Movimiento and the Chicana," 1971, 40). In fact, Andrea observed that Gloria was in a mediating position with respect to the male leadership: "She basically represented us and anything that needed to get done was either directed to her by David or Carlos" (Beamish 1996).

Whether or not they intended Arellanes to be a token who would "manage" the women by playing a mediating role, she,

a veteran of clashes with her father over politics and ideals of womanhood, was primed to work with men on the premise of equality.[22] As a result, she was not simply acquiescent or silent. Other members spoke of her as a vocal person whose education and slightly older age added to her leadership authority. According to Carlos Montes, "I respected her and I would listen to her. Also, though, she was vocal and aggressive—so probably if we weren't listening to her or shining her on, she would make herself heard" (1997). Of course, Montes's statement highlights another aspect of masculinist modes of leadership and organizing: to be heard in movement organizing, one must be aggressive. As observed by writer Linda Aquilar, "The Mexican American female has taken on some characteristics of what has been described as a *Macho.* She may be very vocal, aggressive, and an effective community organizer" (1997, 137). Such candid commentary on the ways racialized masculinity had come to stand for access to power in organizing reveals the predominance of male organizing styles as well as the naturalization of gender roles based on these styles.[23]

As minister of finance and correspondence, Arellanes had as her main tasks recruiting new members, reviewing applications from potential members, writing letters to groups and individuals in other areas who wanted to start new chapters, handling logistics of the organization's travel, responding to letters from Chicano servicemen who were interested in the Berets, and traveling to set up new chapters. Her title may have indicated a glorified secretary-treasurer position, but given the hierarchical paramilitary structure, holding a position as minister allowed for an integrated position as an administrative officer with the capacity to supervise others and make policy decisions, as evident in her later work as director of the Free Clinic. Nevertheless, the gap between her particular combination of high competence, follow-through, and leadership skills, and the male ministers' recognition of those skills was painfully clear. Only photos of the three male ministers were printed in *La Causa*'s promotional layout of the Brown Beret's mission and pledge. In effect, Arellanes was rendered invisible in the organization's public self-representation.

By early 1969, the organization had become a solid working unit. Beret members often spent time at their headquarters (which changed three times as a result of

eviction and a bombing) as well as planning marches, meeting, providing information, or just hanging out. When the organization decided it was time to produce a Brown Beret newspaper, women pasted up the paper, provided the artwork, and contributed articles, composing at one point the majority of the editorial board.[24] Because of the Berets' limited means, publishing the newspaper represented a major effort. Several women, whose names appear as members of the editorial staff, stayed after hours at the Free Clinic along with men to paste up the paper and prepare it for publication (Arellanes 1997).

In the few issues of *La Causa* that they edited before leaving the organization, the Chicanas show in their writings how they were negotiating externally imposed gender roles and their own sense of themselves as revolutionary women. Reflecting the contradictions of movement ideology as lived and interpreted by *activistas*, Beret women developed a rhetoric of self-empowerment around their labors, justifications of the double and triple time they were putting in as "movement women." A page in *La Causa* entitled "*Palabras para la Chicana*" claimed that "Chicanas are breaking out of traditional roles" and taking "the front lines" (July 1969, 6). The writer argues that Chicanas have to strike out on their own, even if "not all our men have enough courage to speak or 'be involved.'" She further explains the rationale behind this assertion: "We must, in a sense, prove ourselves, understanding that you may have to work three times harder than the men in the Movement, therefore, taking your full-time sincerity and dedication."

If the newspaper accurately reflects the level of consciousness among Chicana Berets, one finds—coexisting with an uncritical attitude toward the extra labor they had to complete in order to "prove themselves"—claims of independence. A companion piece, titled "Chicanas de Aztlán," begins:

> The women in the Brown Beret Organization have left behind the traditional role that the Chicana has held for the past hundreds of years. This being the passive housewife, the woman who gives her opinion only when asked.

Within the pages of *La Causa*, women situated themselves within the array of available images for invoking revolutionary identity and ideology through their drawings of pre-Columbian

iconography and male role models like Che Guevara and Emiliano Zapata, along with the Chicana Brown Beret.[25] Although they were allocated a specific role or set of activities that seemed consistent with their identification as women in a gender-stratified society (and as Chicanas in Chicano culture), they began to interpret that position in a way that, on the one hand, incorporated the expected identity role—which at times made them appear to have accepted a subordinate position—and on the other hand, also began to revise those expectations to support their identities as Chicana revolutionaries.[26]

Segregated Spheres of Labor

Although they faced a range of possible tasks and saw themselves as flexible enough to complete both those tasks that were traditionally "female" and those that went beyond the traditional, Chicanas, like women in the New Left, were nevertheless expected to do domestic work. Cooking and cleaning was also their job when the organization hosted conferences with other Beret chapters. A member reported that when they stayed at the home of Corky Gonzalez during the Denver Youth Conference, "We ended up doing all the cooking and cleaning" (quoted in Marin 1991, 164). This member also described an incident in which she and her sister were asked to dance for Reies Lopez Tijerina. She state that she "got mad and left."

These objectifications of women and their relegation to domestic work stand in contrast to the reality that many of them were in the workforce, where they maneuvered independently in lower-end white-collar jobs. For those women I interviewed, their sense of independence and self-esteem did not derive exclusively from their identities as Brown Berets, but also from their identities as working women.[27] During their membership, those women who were not still in high school worked in occupations such as insurance company agent, occupational trainer, filing clerk, and nurse.[28] Working for wages and working for the community made for a busy life. Their Beret activities often took place after work or on weekends (Arellanes 1997; Y. Sanchez 1996). In fact, their work identity seemed to inform the other activities they engaged in because their economic independence depended on continued employment, which also positioned them to be

tapped as resources for the organization. Andrea noted that Gloria, Yolanda, and at least three other women members not only had jobs, but also owned cars (Beamish 1995). Additionally, when there were not enough cars to go around, Gloria recalls renting cars for high school students attending the Denver Youth Conference.

When asked about the division of labor in the organization, Ralph Ramirez echoed most assessments of women in the social movement organizations of this era. "They had a lot of the skills that a lot of the other members didn't have. They could type, they could communicate on the telephone better, and other clerical skills, which you know, are a major part of organizing" (1997; also see Del Castillo 1980, 8). Whether or not the men actually lacked the skills or whether they were merely justifying the division of labor by gender, the fact was that typing classes were in the curriculum for Chicana high school students. They were ostensibly trained to be secretaries, but the gender, race, and class regimes of the state promised to keep most of them in the positions of domestic or factory workers.[29] Therefore, the reproduction of this division of labor within the organization replicated gendered political economy, recoded these skills as useful in "good organizing," and also described the limits of its subversion within movement organizations, where men legislated their tasks.

As workers in the political economy and in the Brown Berets, Chicanas experienced what Sylvia Walby has referred to as "public patriarchy" (1990, 178–79). According to Walby, in contrast to "private patriarchy" that individualizes women, excludes them from the public sphere, and locates them in the household, public patriarchy does not formally exclude women from the public sphere but segregates and subordinates them in a "collective form of appropriation of women."[30] As a result, Chicanas were caught in a paradox. On one hand, they were slotted into an urban political economy in which they were subject to unequal pay because they were Chicanas. On the other hand, the process of entering the job market enabled them to leave the domestic sphere. They therefore enjoyed a measure of personal autonomy insofar as they were already leaving the domestic sphere and directing this process toward the service of social change. By taking their skills into an organization that strived to build institutional power, Chicanas were in a position to decide

how their skills were going to be used. But the reinforcement of public patriarchy finally undermined their autonomy—a fact that became a crucial point of contention in the struggle over the administration and goals of the Barrio Free Clinic.

A progressive segregation of men and women had taken place, as indicated, in the spatial dynamics of recruitment and participation. A note about joining the Brown Berets in *La Causa* announced that men would meet in the headquarters at 2641 East Fourth Street while women would meet in the Free Clinic at 5016 East Whittier Boulevard (16 December 1969, 7). While it is unclear how the decision to meet separately was made, Gloria Arellanes recalls asking men not to visit the clinic until after it was closed because their presence was disruptive. They did not contribute to the work that needed to be done and, in one example, they brought their trouble with a local car club to the location (Arellanes 2000). Marking the formal segregation of women and men in what seemed to be a negotiated process, the designation of separate meetings—and separate space—underscored the conditions for women to play a decisive role in the success of the Free Clinic, a major Brown Beret accomplishment, and to come to a deeper sense of mutual recognition and solidarity.

The Struggle over the Free Clinic

Among the first free clinics to be established in a low-income, Spanish-speaking community, the Barrio Free Clinic became a model for the development of alternative institutions in lower-income communities (Fields 1970, 58).[31] One of the key justifications for the clinic was the Berets' recognition of the life situations of young people "who are frequently the victims of narcotics abuse, overdose, venereal disease, hepatitis, glandular disorders, gun and knife wounds and attempted suicide"—a situation that was exacerbated by the lack of health care in a low-income urban area (Fields Fox 1970, 303).[32] According to a schedule printed in *La Causa*, services were offered based on the expertise of the volunteer staff; these were fairly comprehensive and extended beyond medical treatments, tests, and emergency care to include psychological services of various kinds (marriage, family, child, personal therapy, group therapy) and parent education (10 July 1969, 4). The clinic put into practice the Berets' goal

of control of institutions, and was a labor of love for the Berets as well as for the professionals and community members who supported it. Adorned with posters promoting cultural pride, self-determination, and *la familia de la raza,* it was a comfortable and inviting space for its bilingual and Spanish-speaking patients.

Prime Minister David Sanchez assigned Minister Gloria Arellanes the task of organizing the Free Clinic, which meant that it would also be the "girls'" task. Despite initial concerns about working with the white professionals from whom they received assistance, Arellanes eventually found herself thoroughly committed to the Free Clinic. After the Beret's cosponsorship with Los Angeles Psychologists for Social Action was terminated in July 1969, she became clinic director, with Andrea Sanchez as her co-director. Both of them expressed great pride in the work they did at the clinic, where their efforts to serve the community yielded concrete and visible results. They organized volunteers, scheduled the hours of the professional staff who donated their time, and requisitioned supplies and other materials. Gloria eventually developed and wrote grant proposals on the condition that no grants would be accepted that violated client privacy.[33]

Among the areas in which Chicana Brown Berets became particularly attuned to the needs of the population they served were reproductive rights, sexuality, and women's health. When it became clear that women in the community had little access to pap smear examinations, these were incorporated into available services. At a time when women's health was just becoming a women's movement issue, the Free Clinic already offered testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases along with pap smears, birth control, and sex education (Beamish 1995; Arellanes 1997). It was not too long before Gloria was a recognized health educator who spoke on radio programs about issues of drug abuse in the Chicana/o community. In later work, she visited high schools to hand out flyers to young people informing them about sexually transmitted diseases (*La Raza* 1, no. 7, 1970, 56).

Women's administration of the clinic transformed the dynamics of the rank-and-file male participation. Among the male volunteers were younger Beret men as well as young Chicanos utilizing the rehabilitation services of the clinic—all of whom worked collaboratively with its women workers in relationships of *confianza* (trust and mutual regard).

Women Berets felt an increasing sense of ownership and pride in the clinic, where they worked, shared stories, and laughed. They even began to initiate actions on their own as self-proclaimed "Brown Beret women," including a hunger strike held in solidarity with twenty-six hunger-striking male prisoners who were protesting conditions in the Los Angeles County Jail (*La Causa*, 16 September 1969, 2).

In September 1969, as the Free Clinic continued to attract a sizeable clientele, Prime Minister David Sanchez initiated a collaboration with Rosalio Muñoz, a student at the University of California at Los Angeles who was a draft resister. Through this collaboration, women Berets became the administrative backbone of the National Chicano Moratorium Committee (NCMC), carrying out tasks in the organization of protests against the Vietnam War.[34] In fact, the marches became the occasion for heightened visibility of women Berets, whose organizing skills contributed to the success of the first Moratorium march and rally at the war memorial in Obregon Park on 20 December 1969.[35] As journalist Della Rossa noted in the *Los Angeles Free Press*, "Organization of the Brown Beret defense and monitoring for the rally and march was one of the most impressive aspects of the rally. A unit of about 20 young women Brown Berets marched with the Brown Berets ..." (Rossa 1969, 22). The march was the last time this group of core women would appear as Brown Berets, but it was not the last time they would be active in the growing opposition among Chicanos to the war.

There were various reasons for the women's decision to leave the organization by late February. Yolanda and Gloria noted that they had become tired of the men's devaluation of them and their work, which became even more apparent when the Brown Beret headquarters was relocated to the clinic site. Those men who had previously spent little time in the clinic made few attempts to contribute to its day-to-day work. Chicanas were also contributing to the labor of the NCMC, where disagreements were brewing between Muñoz and Sanchez. Additionally, the pro-violence stand of the Brown Berets became more salient in an environment of in-fighting, police repression, and government-sponsored infiltration that had escalated in the Chicano movement. Images of guns proliferate in *La Causa* by late 1969—a decisive move toward aggressive masculinity as the predominant self-representation

of the Brown Berets.[36] It was in this context of heightened violence and blatant sexism that Gloria, concerned that the clinic might be lost in the confusion of police repression and the neglect by male Berets, began to think about leaving the Berets and calling for the autonomy of the Free Clinic.

When she went to the board of the Free Clinic to announce that she was having problems securing cooperation from male Berets and that she was leaving, Gloria, with support from Andrea, asserted the need for the Free Clinic's autonomy—which was also an argument about the autonomy and control of women's labor. After she elucidated her concerns, one of the board members, a white male doctor, commented, "You're not indispensable." Given this response, and lacking the support to pursue the issue, she and the core women Berets left. Such moments in *movimiento* gender politics have been appropriately described as "labor disputes," acknowledging how deeply women's labor was at the heart of the organizational effectiveness of Chicano movement organizations. In this dispute, Prime Minister David Sanchez had perceived the women as "taking the clinic away" from the Berets (D. Sanchez 1995). But they, in fact, had officially resigned in a letter dated 25 February 1970—three days before the second Chicano Moratorium.[37]

The "Break" and Revolutionary Sisterhood

As members of the NCMC and as participants in a new women's organization, Las Adelitas de Aztlán, the women who had left the Berets prepared for the 28 February 1970 moratorium march by strategizing about how they could communicate the urgency of the struggle against the war in Vietnam. After a group brainstorming session, they chose to dress themselves as revolutionary women in mourning, wearing black as the informational flyer had suggested, and carrying crosses, which they made available to other march participants as well. The crosses bore the names of *carnales*—cousins, brothers, and friends (Chicana veterans were not discussed)—who had fallen in Vietnam. On that day, as they marched under the banner of Las Adelitas de Aztlán, they symbolically invited the community to mourn with them. Drawing upon cultural archetypes in a political context, their group demonstration was an effective and triumphant display of Chicana collective opposition to the war.

Establishing Las Adelitas de Aztlán as a new collective identity for these Chicana activists was an achievement in the male-dominated social movement culture. Autobiographies by women of color who participated in radical social movements mobilized by racial-ethnic group nationalism recount the tensions women of color experience in negotiating both racial-ethnic group identity and gender identity. They often face challenges on two fronts: on the one hand, from white feminists who accuse them of "selling out" women's interests, and on the other hand, from racial-ethnic men of their group who set the terms of the immediate racial-ethnic movement—terms that leave out women or only include them as subordinates. In her autobiography (1990), Mary Crow Dog, a participant in the American Indian Movement, observes that friendship and solidarity among women converged in the immediacy of a struggle that focused on American Indian treaty rights, ongoing poverty, and racism but that also prioritized the empowerment of American Indian men.[39] In the Black Panther Party, friendship enabled women to resist unequal treatment, but according to Elaine Brown (1993), the support network, which became known as "the clique," was broken up by a male leadership that felt threatened.[40] Adelaida R. Del Castillo, analyzing the male homosocial power relations that permeated Chicano movement organizations, has observed, "The influence men had on each other and on other women in their peer group facilitated the alienation of female friendship" (1980, 9). Clearly, to build solidarity based on friendship, reciprocity, and mutual identification in this context could only be a thoroughly subversive project.

For Chicana Berets, friendships had developed through their collective work. The activity of sitting around a table putting together the newspaper, making posters, or preparing for conferences or other group events was always accompanied by conversation. Conversations, gatherings, celebrations, and friendship were the elements of Chicana community. They gave each other affectionate nicknames, traveled together, and witnessed together. Carlos Montes observed the process: "They would have their meetings and they coalesced and worked together. They had like their own unit and [would] have get-togethers and talk things over and do things and plan. Sometimes they'd be doing things and they'd say they just decided, 'We're doing this'" (1997).

The community they created around talking and working was that of friends, with elements of *comadrazgo,* the cultural network based on "ties of blood and fictive kin."[41] It was in the spirit of comadrazgo and friendship, Gloria Arellanes remembers, that she cared for the child of a member who was a single mother. But it must be pointed out that the relationships among women in a political organization are not obligatory in the same way as comadrazgo; rather, they are based on voluntary friendship. Anthropologist Patricia Zavella has argued that an over-reliance on kin models obscures the constructed sphere of friendship and the making of "fictive kin" (1985, 542). It also obscures the ways in which, as Marilyn Friedman has suggested, "friendship has socially disruptive possibilities" (1995, 200). This is because the threatening power of women's groupings outside of the family derives from their status as "chosen" communities, which in the case of women's movements provide the space to challenge subordination within the family, a naturalized kin unit. Nevertheless it could be said that "women's networks, or comadrazgo served as one of the undergirdings for general patterns of reciprocity as women cared for one another as family members" (Ruiz 1998, 16). As Andrea Sanchez Beamish pointed out, "There was a strong bond because we all basically liked each other and basically cared about each other and that's what made us strong. And we found out that we had to protect each other and unite with each other because we sure weren't getting any support from anywhere else" (1996).

It was in recognition of this bond that a flyer inviting women to join Las Adelitas de Aztlán invoked the phrase "porque somos una familia de hermanas" (because we are a family of sisters). This phrase, which was also printed on the banner they carried, gathered several resonant cultural concepts and mobilized them for a women's organization. First, the phrasing appropriated the Chicano movement's then-official equation of the family with the nation as a basis for organized cultural resistance. But it redefined the family—framed in the movement as the pairing of a man and woman in a relationship that subordinated women—as a "family of sisters." Second, the phrase implicitly translated *carnalismo,* or "brotherhood," which referred to the kinship of men in cultural terms, into a kinship of women—that is, sisterhood. It is no surprise that the invocation of sisterhood resonates

with the slogan of women's liberation movements in the United States and was part of the widespread national surge of women's movements.[42]

Notwithstanding the resonance, Las Adelitas de Aztlán as a "familia de hermanas" evolved out of the internal dynamics of a social movement based on racial-ethnic identity. This movement was rooted in what sociologist Maxine Baca Zinn has termed "political familism," a unique "fusing of cultural and political resistance" in an anticolonial response to racism—in other words, cultural nationalism (1975). It is here that Friedman's distinction between the "found community" and the "chosen community," as it applies to the assumptions of the communitarian self, collapses due to the framing of nationalism and familia by Las Adelitas de Aztlán. In the communitarian thought evaluated by Friedman, family and nation as the foundation of selfhood and subjectivity are not necessarily questioned, "not a relationship they choose, but an attachment they discover" (1995, 196). Although the Brown Berets might be identified as a chosen community in the sense defined by Friedman—as the urban communities that emerge under modernity—nationalism and familia framed the Chicano community as a "found community" in communitarian terms. Subsequently, the Chicana Berets appropriated "familia" as a term of political kinship that did not require male dominance or even male presence, but did require communitarian ethics.[43] By writing in their status as hermanas as a "given" identity, they authorized themselves to move beyond the Berets, who offered only subordinate femininity within a family and military context. Instead, the women recast the concept of "familia" in constitutively egalitarian and woman-identified terms.[44]

Conclusion

A year after the departure of the women Berets, an article appeared in *La Causa* entitled "The Adelitas Role en el Movimiento." Attributed to "Orange County Brown Berets," it refers to the events surrounding the dramatic resignation:

> But one thing that should be *enforced* this time so that another incident does not take place such as the one that occurred with the girl Berets in the Los Angeles chapter and the Free Clinic is *discipline*. Discipline applies to every Beret in the

> organization, regardless of whether you're a man or a woman. If a rule is broken the person responsible for breaking that rule should be disciplined. (February 1971, 10)

These statements suggest that women Berets in the Orange County chapter were seeking ways to call for the transformation of male-dominated social movement culture and the inclusion of their specific needs as women, but were still articulating themselves within male-defined "rules" for membership. While implying that the women who resigned were out of line (although the article is slightly cryptic on this point), the article also demands accountability of Beret men, adding, "Another thing that should be impressed or if possible stamped in the minds of every guy Beret is RESPECT. The guys are expected to respect the women as Berets and as women. As mentioned in the Brown Berets 8 Points of Attention, #7, 'do not take liberties with women,' this includes Beret women." In the process of affirming their loyalty to the organization, the authors demand respect, but within the terms dictated by the Brown Beret code.

Given the inclusive nature of Chicana feminism during the movement and the reprinting of the above statement in a feminist newspaper, *Hijas de Cuauhtemoc*, such an articulation by "anonymous" Chicana Brown Berets might be understood as "feminism-in-nationalism," a concept theorized by historian Emma Pérez in her excavation of women's activism in El Partido Liberal Mexicano during the Mexican Revolution (1999). But such an articulation speaks from a place where women remain (perhaps strategically) within the terms offered to them. Because Chicanas exist at the intersection of multiple allegiances and meaning-systems, their interests and self-concept are often tied up in a doubling—or even tripling or quadrupling—process. Deniz Kandiyoti observes that nationalist movements "reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within the terms of reference set by nationalist discourse" (1994, 380). As a result, Kandiyoti continues, "Feminism is not autonomous, but bound to the signifying context which produces it."

The self-determining act of the Chicanas in the East Los Angeles chapter signifies autonomous feminist consciousness.

However, while their "break" from the Brown Berets marks the production of autonomous feminist agency, it still holds on to the meaning system of Chicano cultural nationalism as a form of resistance. Additionally, these women would not call themselves feminists, although they voiced basic alignment with some of the goals of feminism, such as a challenge to unequal treatment because of gender. I would argue that Las Adelitas de Aztlán names a kind of "feminist nationalism"—a potential contradiction in terms, if one does not carefully qualify and unpack the ways these activists reformulate the family—that is to be distinguished from the "feminism-in-nationalism" of the Orange County group.[45] What distinguishes these concepts is the difference between the reconstruction of nationalism in feminist terms (which appropriates the family for women's communities) and the extension of nationalism's rules of behavior to the terrain of women's rights. Additionally, women establish their autonomy when, by recounting their experiences of unequal treatment within the organization, they speak outside of male-defined nationalism and place themselves into a new narrative that reconstructs nationalism as both that which silences women and that which enables them to recognize themselves as *women*—a group whose identities have been created in opposition to men as a result of their unequal treatment within the organization—but also as Chicanas whose interests and identities connect them to men of their racial-ethnic group.

Chicanas were, at the outset, incorporated into the general activities of the entire membership and they collaborated with men under the presumption of a collective project in the East Los Angeles chapter of the Brown Berets. The organization seemed initially to deploy a unique conjunction of consensus and paramilitary procedures; but when conjoined with cultural nationalism,sexist behavior, segregated practices, and external repression, the organization's project moved toward a single-minded militarism based on aggressive and violent masculinity. According to feminist historian Cynthia Enloe, militarism sustains gender identities and inequality by mapping out gender identities for men and women in struggle and containing women within terms that enable the functioning of a masculinist military complex; namely, through the use of their labor, whether as wives and camp followers or as soldiers (1983, 166–72). In the

Berets, this meant progressively separating "women's activities" and "men's activities," which in turn created a space for women's collective identity. As they developed woman-identified discourses around their labors, the women perceived differential treatment and voiced the potential of self-recognition: "I just believe we started to see our own strength. We had not recognized it. We were so involved in Chicano Power and projected ourselves as a united people—and how disunited we were" (Arellanes 1997).

The case of Chicana Brown Berets is only one of the many yet-to-be documented self-determining acts by women that began to resound throughout Aztlán in the 1960s and 1970s. Chicanas in MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) and La Raza Unida Party also found themselves confronting these organizations' inability to imagine women as partners in struggle. Many Chicanas formed autonomous women's organizations, while others chose to develop women's caucuses that would function to keep organizations accountable to Chicana interests. However they chose to respond, a Chicana feminist movement, capable of encompassing various levels of consciousness while incisively critical of women's subordination, carried women forward in organizations such as Comision Femenil Mexicana, Hijas de Cuauhtemoc, Mujeres por la Raza Unida, and Las Chicanas.

While there have been recent accounts of women's participation in the Chicano movement, there is still a need to chart the various ways that Chicanas created spaces and identities for their multiple interests. In outlining some of the goals of Chicana history, anthropologist Jorge Klor de Alva suggests that one area for examination is "how [women] have fought consciously and unconsciously, to assert their autonomy and maintain their integrity as women" (1990, 72). Chicana historians have been charting this journey, which, to quote the title of a recent book, means bringing women "from out of the shadows" to uncover the activities that are too easily forgotten and foreclosed in masculinist historiography, with its particular rules of evidence and modes of narrative (Pérez 1999). I would argue that a cross-hatching of historical method and social movement theory promises to uncover the specificity of women's participation in the Chicano movement and struggles to organize for racial justice and gender justice. This requires listening to the silences, reading between the

lines, and interpreting photographs to grasp the buried narrative that emerges when we ask, of women's experience, the question of critical witness: "What happened here?"

Notes

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1. This letter, dated 25 February 1970, is in the personal collection of Gloria Arellanes. Arellanes's personal collection was crucial to building this narrative, especially because none of my interviewees recalled the precise ways that they left the organization or even mentioned the formation of Las Adelitas de Aztlán. However, Arellanes found a flyer she apparently had made, as well as the letter of resignation written on behalf of all women Berets. The fact that my interviewees did not recount this event in particular, while definitely claiming their "break" from the Brown Berets as a group, raises many issues of selective memory and trauma. These issues will be discussed in my forthcoming monograph *Revolutionary Subjects: Chicana Brown Berets and the Cultural Politics of Chicano Power* (under contract, University of Texas Press.)

2. The meeting was announced for 22 February. The flyer is in the personal collection of Gloria Arellanes.

3. Different estimates have been given for the total number of chapters, which could be anywhere from thirty to fifty-five. Because of the flux in membership, it is difficult to estimate the total number of participants, or even the approximate number of women participants. Additionally, my research shows that the Brown Beret organization founded in East Los Angeles specifically espoused

the slogan "La Causa," while other Beret chapters, such as the San Antonio and Austin, Texas chapters, used the slogan "Carnalismo." Therefore, the organization was not one homogenous and unified entity, but rather had regional specificities that were interconnected through affiliation with the beret symbol. The Black Berets were another organization that used the symbol of the beret, in this case adapted directly from Che Guevara (the Argentinian guerrilla who fought in the Cuban Revolution). For information about the Black Berets, see Villareal 1991.

4. References to many of these activities are found in *La Raza*, a community-based newspaper, and *La Causa*, the official newspaper of the Brown Beret organization in East Los Angeles. Considerable coverage of Brown Beret activities, from the organization's beginnings at the Piranya Coffeehouse to its involvement in key events of the *movimiento* in Los Angeles, can be found in *La Raza;* see especially 7 June 1968, 10–14; 10 July 1968, 6-B; 15 October 1968, 9; 7 February 1969, 8; July 1969, 12. Mention of women's involvement in the organization first appears in *La Raza* in October 1968: "I am a girl Brown Beret. For those of you who don't know there are girl Brown Berets. Our purpose is about the same as the men (boy's)? As our motto states, 'The purpose of the Brown Berets its to serve, observe, and protect ... P.S. I too love my country and my school that is why I'm fighting to make it better'" 15 October 1968, 9). For general accounts of the Brown Berets, see E. Chávez 1998; Navarro 1995, 60–66; Marin 1991, 143–69. Rona M. Fields Fox's 1970 ethnographic study, written during the movement, provides a great deal of information, but one must also wade through the stereotypes perpetuated in the work, a reflection of the times in social science research. The researcher situated herself as upper-middle-class, but was sympathetic to issues of discrimination as a left Jewish-American woman who grew up during World War II (222).

5. Yet another account is ambivalent, suggesting that they are passive, silent objects described in ethnographic terms as victims of cultural determination and "machismo." See chapter 8 of Fields Fox, "Boys and Girls Together," which addresses gender relations in the Berets (1970, 202–19). The chapter depicts women Berets as uninvolved and auxiliary to men. In the introduction to the study, Fields Fox states that it was difficult to make contacts with women: "Although numerous efforts were made to engage in involvement with girls who either became Brown Berets or who were sisters, wives, mothers, and girlfriends of members, few of these efforts came to fruition" (21). In a later interview (Fields 1997), the author confirmed her focus on male leaders rather than on the women (although her ethnography pays some attention to "Maria," the pseudonym for Gloria Arellanes). Alternatively, Marin's account approaches the topic of feminism, but offers a too-brief

mention of women's consciousness of unequal treatment that she labels "feminist" without qualification or extended analysis; nor does she discuss their leaving as a group (1991, 163). Nevertheless, her work offers an important opening to further discussions of how women mobilized against gender inequality. Also, on "machismo" as a construct used to explain Chicanas' presumed "lack" of participation, see Orozco 1995, 6.

6. Women's support is woven throughout the organization's early history, beginning, perhaps, with the mother of Prime Minister David Sanchez, who often prepared food for the organization and was supportive of her son's and daughter's activities. Alicia Escalante, head of the Chicana Welfare Rights Organization, appeared at rallies sponsored by the Berets, and they served as security for one of her appearances. One of her daughters was a "core" participant in the organization and a son was also a member.

7. Chicana feminist print media from various sites throughout the Southwest provide analysis of how sexism, patriarchy, and gender inequality were embedded in the Chicano movement's ideologies and practices, but few writers identify the specific organizations in which they participated, perhaps because of concerns that those involved would be sanctioned personally or in group situations. It is the analytical force, political brilliance, and passionate engagement of this work that continues to inspire my own investigations into gender and sexism in the movement. Examples of this work can be found in A. García 1997. Among the many archival documents, see for example Nieto-Gómez 1974; Del Castillo 1980; Hernandez 1980; and López 1977. Recent work on specific groupings of women within organizations or actions includes Delgado Bernal 1998 and M. Chávez 2000.

8. In her overview of the historiography of Chicana/o organizations and women's activism within them, historian Cynthia Orozco critiques the failure "to use gender as a conceptual tool" in these studies (1995, 2). She further notes, as have others, that Chicanas have been absent both from the scholarship on the Chicano Power movement (*el movimiento*) and from the scholarship on the women's movement. Major texts neglecting to mention women are Muñoz 1989, Navarro 1995, and Gómez-Quiñones 1990. While this account of Chicana Brown Berets in the East Los Angeles chapter centers on "gender as a conceptual tool," I also discuss the ways in which race and class shaped the conception and praxis of the organization's political project.

9. On women and gender in the above-mentioned organizations, see, for the Young Lords Party, Morales 1998; for the Black Panthers, Brown 1992, Knapper 1996, and "Black Panther Sisters ..." 1973; and for the American Indian Movement, Crow Dog 1990.

10. These interviewees include three women who were "core" members: Gloria Arellanes, Yolanda Solis Sanchez, and Andrea

Sanchez Beamish. Core members were defined as those women whose names appeared in the group's print media and who were named by other members as consistent participants. According to these criteria, there were approximately ten core women active in the chapter from late 1967 or early 1968 to February 1970, although there were certainly many more who participated in the chapters that had been established nationwide. Additionally, I interviewed an affiliate member, Elena Dominguez; three of the male ministers, Carlos Montes, Ralph Ramirez, and David Sanchez; and Dr. Rona Fields, who in 1970 was a progressive doctoral student in social psychology conducting an extensive ethnographic study of the organization (she was then known as Rona Fields Fox). Represented here are four ministers, including the only woman minister (Arellanes).

11. See Gluck and Patai 1991 and Delgado Bernal 1998 for discussions of how women's narratives challenge the way that masculinist history is taken for the definitive account. When women activists are interviewed thirty years after the events, they have the benefit of hindsight. At the same time, the suggstion that women's critical views of men's past behavior derive *only* from hindsight and do not accurately reflect their consciousness in the past of sexism and gender inequality assumes that women were victims of false consciousness. The task for the researcher is to analyze this tension and to draw it out through the dialogue with print media and other kinds of evidence.

12. This view of consciousness is not unlike that proposed by Chicana feminist theorist Norma Alarcón (1990). She has argued for a notion of consciousness as a site of interpretive conflict at the level of individuals and groups in her critique of the presumed subject of Anglo American feminism. She claims that Anglo American feminism's method of "consciousness raising" either remains at the level of the pretheoretical or proposes a developmental trajectory that is not applicable to the experiences of women of color. This is because it centralizes only gender in a society that is organized around multiple systems of privilege and domination based on race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, and nationality. In her view, a "reconfiguration of the subject of feminist theory" implies a notion of consciousness as a terrain of conflicts in the face of oppressive systems of domination (359). These systems are vying to fix an interpretation of reality and the subject is in the position to interpret and decide which version(s) of reality she would like to act upon.

13. To make visible the activism of Chicana Brown Berets, I draw from the intersection of Chicana feminist theories of subjectivity and new social movement theory. Implicit in Chicana feminist theorizing since the movement are questions of agency and consciousness. The most recent scholarship develops this

work on Chicana subjectivity in relation to gender and sexuality (see, for example, Alarcón 1990 and Pérez 1999). At the same time, social movement theory, following trends in the humanities and cultural studies, has become increasingly concerned with the cultural aspects of social movements, inviting studies of subjectivity, as opposed to the resource mobilization model that is heavily based on structural analysis to the neglect of agency.

14. Rona Fields Fox (1970, 203–5) describes three vocal women at the coffeehouse. During the YCCA's move to a different agenda, Vickie Castro parted ways with the organization (Vickie Castro, telephone conversation, May 1995). But she continued to be involved with organizing around educational issues and was instrumental in the Blowouts.

15. For newspaper coverage of a police brutality case and harassment of the Berets at the coffeehouse, see *La Raza*, 25 December 1967, 7, and 15 January 1968, 1–2. In the 15 January 1968 issue of the newspaper, "YCCA" and "Brown Beret" are used interchangeably.

16. But it should be remarked here that David Sanchez and Carlos Montes, two of the main leaders, were already community organizers. Nevertheless, as working-class men, they felt a responsibility and connection to the young men in their barrio whom they sought to organize.

17. For those women who have married and changed their names, I refer to them by their maiden names only when speaking of their role in past events. When citing recent interview material, I use the maiden and married name together. Out of respect for women who refused interviews, I have chosen to leave them anonymous even if they were named by those I did interview.

18. Here I must acknowledge a debt to Rona Fields Fox's dissertation chapter on the Brown Berets as an organization (1970, 133–63) for its decriptions of the fluctuation in ideology from 1968 to mid-1969. My desire is not to repeat her work, but to show how it informs a reading of women's experiences of the organization, which is my project.

19. At times they were observed by the mother of one of the young women Berets, a fact that reminds us of the youth of the participants and also shows parental support for Beret membership.

20. Cultural nationalism was "officially" declared movement ideology at the Denver Youth Conference in March 1969, although references to the idea of *la familia de la raza* and other inchoate cultural nationalist concepts can be found in late 1968 and certainly form part of a general sense of nationalism among people of Mexican descent. Before this official declaration, the notion of Brown Power was often voiced. The Brown Power concept was a way of translating Black Power in Chicano terms. Activists were

also thinking about Stokely Carmichael's political philosophy of Black Power, designating the goal of reclaiming the state and building alternative institutions to meet the needs and interests of a specific oppressed racial-ethnic group. A review of *Black Power* can be found in *Inside Eastside*, 24 March–6 April 1969, 7.

21. My sense of the symbolic importance and novelty of this event comes not only from the place of weddings in Chicana/o culture, but also from specific evidence. The wedding was mentioned in several interviews (Beamish 1995; Arellanes 1997; D. Sanchez 1995). A printed wedding invitation found in the personal collection of Gloria Arellanes bears the Brown Beret insignia. Other such weddings have been described by, for example, Vigil (1999, 97), who describes the wedding between Corky Gonzalez's daughter and a member of the Crusade as the "center" of the Denver Youth Conference in 1969. And a clipping on a Brown Beret wedding celebrated by the Ontario, California chapter was given to me by colleague Jorge Mariscal (from the newspaper *El Chicano*, 16 April 1971). The value of celebrating these ties can be understood in the context where group history is interpreted as the sundering of intra-racial relationships after European conquest. Although this restoration now took place in an industrialized postcolonial nation where marriage had been institutionalized primarily as a convenient economic arrangement that subordinated women, it was also an institution denied racial-ethnic groups or regulated through anti-miscegenation laws. A far-reaching discussion of these issues would also take into account the relationship between marriage and the institution of compulsory heterosexuality.

22. She also had considerable experience working on race issues. Indeed, her personal leadership trajectory was not unlike that of the ministers. Before he became radicalized, David Sanchez had been a "model youth" whose leadership qualities won him a position on a youth advisory council under Mayor Sam Yorty (D. Sanchez 1978, 1–2). Similarly, Arellanes had been an officer of the Human Relations Club at her high school, which sought to facilitate relations between white and Mexican youth after a series of clashes between them had rocked the school. This information comes from two newspaper clippings in Arellanes's personal collection (neither of which bears the title of the newspaper, page number, or date). Predictably, two young men were president and vice president of this organization, while women held the offices of secretary (Gloria's office) and treasurer. Matt Garcia has written about the formation of youth clubs to ameliorate race relations in the Citrus Belt, which includes El Monte (1997). Additionally, Arellanes had been an employee of the Neighborhood Adult Participation Project, a Johnson-era antipoverty program, in which Minister Ralph Ramirez had also worked.

23. Fields and Fox used the problematic concept of machismo to describe the institutionalization of individualist masculinity that communicated self-reliance, an aversion to criticism, and a need to gain respect (1973, 200–201).

Setting aside the ahistorical and stereotypical connotations of machismo that suggest inherent Chicano male cultural traits, it is useful to talk about male-identified ways of organizing and leading. These modes of leadership have been the object of feminist analysis, where they have been discussed as ways of enforcing patriarchy and sexism.

24. See *La Causa* 23 May 1969, 10 July 1969, and 16 September 1969.

25. Other stories written by Chicana Berets in *La Causa* include two pieces on police harassment, "Yorty's Pigs on the Job" by Gilda Reyes (10 July 1969, 7) and "Establishment Tactics" by Lorraine Escalante (16 September 1969, 2), as well as Gloria Arellanes's "Review of the Movie 'Che'" (16 September 1969, 6).

26. The "revolutionary" status of the organization was a constant topic of debate. Prime Minister David Sanchez was not pleased with the use of communist symbolics in the newspaper and argued with members over the political direction of the organization (Ramirez 1995; Y. Sanchez 1996; Beamish 1995). With the influx of new ideas about nationalism and internationalism, members sought to clarify their political positions with respect to these concepts. Indeed, the increase in arguments over ideology sent many members—most notably Cruz Olmeda, who had been the group's chairman—to other organizations, especially socialist and communist organizations like La Junta, August Twenty-Ninth Movement, and Centro de Acción Social Autonómo–Hermandad General de Trabajadores (CASA-HGT) (M. Chávez 1994, 75; Fields and Fox 1973, 207).

27. The fact that male members did not have transportation or did not seem to have as many resources could be attributed to several possible causes, including the difficulty that young Chicano males had finding employment and/or their desire to be full-time activists and not work (while being supported by wives or mothers). Among the jobs held by Beret men: Carlos Montes was a janitor in South Central Los Angeles, David Sanchez worked at an after-school youth program, and Ralph Ramirez had worked in the Neighborhood Adult Participation Project. Living with their parents or in collective living situations eased the financial burden of being a community activist. Most of the women lived with their parents, but often for gender reasons rather than financial ones.

28. One of my interviewees was unemployed during that time.

29. One woman remembered thinking that she "did not want to work in a factory" like her mother. She saw her education as one way to secure a position as a white-collar office worker. In the

documentary series *Chicano! A History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (1994), artist Patssi Valdez reported that her home economics teachers told the class that they were being prepared for domestic work in the homes of affluent whites.

30. This schema is necessarily complicated by the different kinds of relations that take place in the households of women of color and working-class white women. Their situation is often differs significantly from that of the middle-class white women, whose lives are generally the basis upon which paradigms like the public/private sphere are constructed.

31. For example, a similar clinic was developed in San Diego's Barrio Logan. According to Enriqueta Chávez, the East Los Angeles Berets assisted in this process (personal communication). My information about the Free Clinic—which is not meant to be comprehensive—comes from interviews with former members (all of whom mentioned it as a significant achievement of the organization), from my 1997 interview with Rona Fields, and from the details provided in Marin 1991, 154–56, and Fields Fox 1970, 241–47. Fields was a member of Los Angeles Psychologists for Social Action (LAPSA), the group that initially assisted with the founding of the clinic. She left to finish writing her dissertation at the same time that the co-sponsorship was terminated at the request of the Berets prime minister on 31 July 1969. The article mentioned above also suggests that co-optation was a concern, requiring her to step back from the organization.

32. See Appendix E, "Report and Proposal on the Organization of the East Los Angeles Free Clinic," in Fields Fox 1970. As a community-based and self-funded project, the clinic appeared a threatening entity, particularly in the eyes of those poised to announce a "communist threat." Before it opened on 26 May 1969, a series of raids on the Beret headquarters and clinic sought to impede the opening. According to Fields, the Los Angeles Police Department's tactics included detaining Berets who were responsible for administering the clinic and appropriating the lists of volunteeer professionals and contributors (Fields 1970, 58).

33. For details about how the clinic secured funds and resources, see Fields Fox 1970, 154–59, and Marin 1991, 155. These sources indicate that the clinic received funding from Mexican American Community Programs, the Ford Foundation, United Way, and the Catholic Church's Campaign for Human Development.

34. According to the in-depth interviews conducted by oral historian Jaime Pelayo with key members of the NCMC, women Berets helped plan the parade route, arranged lodging for visiting chapters and organizations, notified merchants along the march route, and acquired the permit, in addition to designing, printing, and distributing fliers (1997, 31).

35. An important anthology of writings on the Chicano antiwar movement is Mariscal 1999. Jaime Pelayo's compilation of oral histories provides a richly detailed narrative of the events leading up to the 29 August 1970 Chicano Moratorium against the Vietnam War. I came across Pelayo's work through colleague Jorge Mariscal. Thanks to both of them I was able to find Gloria Arellanes, who had not been heard from in several years.

36. On government and police repression of the Chicano movement, see Vigil 1999 for a rather exhaustive and revealing narrative of surveillance.

37. This information comes from interviews with David Sánchez (1995) and Gloria Arellanes (1997). According to Arellanes, women Berets had been offered another venue in which to operate a clinic, one that was more solidly funded and that would not be subject to the instability that seemed inevitable in the face of movement events. Fields and Fox's account of the "struggle for autonomy" is cast in terms of the Berets versus the Anglo institutions that provided them with the money. Women are not at all part of this picture (1973, 213–16).

38. Critic and folklorist Norma Cantú has suggested that the persistent subordination of women's experience in the field is part of an imposed "Adelita complex," which romanticizes the role of Mexican revolutionary women as followers "when in fact women were active in the role which our foremothers also played, that of political and social thinkers, of leaders in various areas throughout our communities" (1990, 10). Invocations of Adelita referenced the popular song of the Mexican Revolution, of which there are two versions; in one, a soldier asks the object of his affections to wait for him so he can be the first to have sex with her. But these invocations also inaugurate a contestation over the meaning of Chicana womanhood, especially when Adelita is appropriated for a women's organization that has started as a response to sexism. Although images of them appeared in movement media, their contingent was virtually erased from the documentary film *Chicano Moratorium* directed by Victor Millan.

39. She identifies as role models activist Anna Mae Aquash and the Lakota women who first voiced the need to take a stand at Wounded Knee. When American Indian women were confronted by a white feminist, she reports, they told the white feminist that they could not focus on women's liberation until their men "get their balls back." This should not be understood as the lack of feminist consciousness, but as a question of strategy and priority that is, nonetheless, caught up with a binary construction of American Indian manhood and womanhood. Crow Dog discusses American Indian women's issues such as the forced sterilization of American Indian women, but overall the autobiography grapples with the use of traditionalism as a form of resistance. Crow Dog

relates, for example, the unequal distribution of household labor that eventually makes her sick with depression and what appears to be an eating disorder (1990, 131, 137–38, 186–98).

40. See *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (Brown 1993, 190–201), for a description of how "the clique" developed after Brown attended a meeting in Oakland where she observed Black Panther women preparing meals and cleaning up after the male Panthers. Eventually four of the women, including Brown, shared an apartment and also looked after each other's children. The "clique" was broken up when two women were "assigned to the Northern chapter" and Brown was sent to New Haven to organize around the trial of Ericka and John Huggins. For another take on feminism and the Black Panthers, see "Black Panther Sisters Talk about Women's Liberation," reprinted in Moreno 1973, 61–66. Commentary on Brown and other women is also provided in Knapper 1996, 33–67.

41. Indeed, being a Brown Beret was a family affair. Several participants were actually brother-sister or sister-sister pairs, which at times brought less-helpful aspects of family relationships into the organization. In other instances, relationships were solidified by the marriage of, for example, a brother to a woman friend.

42. For a critique of "sisterhood" in an Anglo American context, see Lugones in collaboration with Pat Alake Rosezelle (1995). Lugones is critical of the claim to egalitarianism implied by sisterhood in an Anglo American context because it is not fulfilled in relation to women of color. She claims that "hermana" is only used in a Latina context to signify deep trust and sympathy. For this reason, the use of "familia de hermanas" hints at the cultural conception of women's bonding that enables one to use the term "hermana." See also hooks 1984 for a view that maintains the potential power of "sisterhood" as an ideal that can be realized in struggle and conflict between women. Hooks also argues that the notion of "sister"as a term of affiliation and intimacy comes from black civil rights movements. "The Philosophy of Hermanidad" was referred to and presented at a Raza Unida statewide conference in 1972: "Be it resolved that we as Chicanas will promote 'la Hermanidad' concept in organizing Chicanas. As Hermanas, we have a responsibility to help each other in problems that are common among all of us. We recognize that the oldest example of divide and conquer has been to promote competition and envy among our men and especially our women" (Moreno 1973, 263).

43. For a groundbreaking discussion of la familia, masculinity, and heterosexism in Chicana/o cultural discourse, see Rodriguez 2000.

44. Alma García has asserted that Chicana feminist consciousness "emerged from a struggle for equality with Chicano men and from a reassessment of the role of the family as a means of resistance to oppressive social conditions" (1989, 219) In this

case, women Berets reassessed the family, but did not reject it as a potent language for organizing. Instead, they posed a challenge to a communitarian self that views family and nation as "given" formations in which women have subordinate roles.

45. Lois West's framing of feminist nationalism is problematic because her argument that nationalisms are feminist if they focus on women's rights does not distinguish between anticolonial nationalisms and those that might be imperialist or racist nationalisms. Moreover, I think it is necessary to identify distinct kinds of feminism, which does not negate the possibility of their coexistence (1997, xi-xxxvi).

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