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Project description

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Motherhood en *Acción*:
Gender, *Latinidad*, and Community Action in Pilsen, 1973-1987

By
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Abstract

This paper offers a history of Mujeres Latinas en Acción, a women's community organization in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood. This thesis begins by describing the gender norms and views of ethnic identity in the neighborhood in the early 1970s, before turning to the organization's founding and early programs serving young women. This paper argues that Mujeres used community activism to broaden practices associated with motherhood to include supporting the whole Latina/o community. Mujeres members used this framing of motherhood to express values which resonated with traditional ideas of gender and ethnicity, while also engaging in sometimes radical practices within Pilsen. In their work outside of Pilsen, the organization strove to project a unified view of the Latina/o community, which de-emphasized disagreements within Pilsen and the Latina/o community about gender and ethnic identity.

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Introduction

"We alienated people by our wildness. We were unconventional. Many of us were not married or divorced or even living with someone. We would hang out in bars, weren't in church associations. We were feminists. We didn't fit the mold of stable family life."[1] This is how María Mangual described the early days of Mujeres Latinas en Acción ("Mujeres" or MLEA),[2] a community organization in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood that she helped found in the early 1970s. From its beginning, Mujeres struggled to gain community acceptance because of their reputation for rejecting social norms in their quest for women's empowerment. Roughly twenty years after the founding of the organization, another Mujeres member remembered the obstacles facing the organization and what they accomplished:

> The first one [is the] …community accepts of us. Because of our name, we carry a lot of negative feelings. Women in Action, yeah, well, so we have problems communicating because they [community members] see us as crazy women, as macho women. Women that encourage divorce or that put ideas in the heads of our wives, our mothers, our sisters, basically the woman population. Two, if I am not mistaken, we are like 22 or 23 years old. We have come a long way. I mean, in the beginning, we had the burning of the agency, a lot of crimes and [threatening] phone calls [targeting Mujeres members]. I have been working here for ten years and I remember when we started…we had a benefit to get funding for the operations of the agency [and] on the reply card they [community members] said, 'I am not going to give you any money because you support abortion' or 'because you are evil.' You know, they said some awful things.[3]

Mujeres staff and volunteers recognized their own nonconformity and rejection of cultural norms as they created a new community organization focused on Latina women.

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[1] María Mangual quoted in Debra Westlake, "Mujeres Adelante: The Early History of 'Mujeres Latinas En Accion' 1973-1980," Box 1, Folder 5, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.

[2] Mujeres Latinas en Accíon translates to "Latin Women in Action."

[3] Unnamed youth and family coordinator quoted in Michelle Teresa García, "A Preliminary Ethnographic Study of a Latin Feminist Grassroots Organization in Chicago", Box 1, Folder 11, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.

Before the establishment of Mujeres, most community organizations in the area focused on issues affecting young men, including gang involvement and violence.[4] In establishing the organization, staff and volunteers at Mujeres strove to make obvious the need for a group that explicitly served Latina women and to prove their legitimacy. They faced a wide range of opposition, from conservative members of the Catholic Church who saw their work as undermining traditional family structures to participants in the Chicano movement who thought the creation of Mujeres was dividing the movement.[5] As a result, Mujeres staff and volunteers had to consider their identities as both Chicanas/Latinas and women when considering their needs and anticipating how their activism would be perceived. Eventually, Mujeres received more community acceptance because they were able to frame their work in ways which acknowledged traditional gender roles.

In this thesis, I argue that Mujeres broadened the practice of motherhood to involve supporting the entire Latina/o community. This conception of motherhood was culturally and historically specific; it allowed them to express values which resonated with traditional ideas of ethnic identity and gender while still engaging in new and sometimes radical practices within Pilsen. In their work outside of Pilsen, Mujeres projected a unified view of the Latina/o community, which de-emphasized disagreements within Pilsen and the Latina/o community about gender and ethnic identity. The intersection of gender and ethnic identity in Mujeres' work informs historiographical understandings of both women's history and Latina/o history.

[4] Lilia Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Post-War Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 243-244.
[5] Ibid, 241.

Historiography

Women's History

Women's history includes the study of both the contributions of women to historical developments and the impact of those developments on women. This thesis will primarily focus on the women's movement and the experiences of Chicanas and Latinas in the United States. However, Mexican women's history is also relevant, since many of the clients Mujeres served were recent migrants from Mexico and Mexican culture had a strong influence on many of the volunteers and staff members. Much of the work in the field of women's history involves addressing gaps in the historiography where women's experiences have been neglected.

For instance, the participation of Chicana women in political activism has been understudied by historians writing about Chicano history and U.S. women's history. Historian Vicki L. Ruiz wrote that women's participation in the Chicano movement "has been reduced to a cursory discussion of sexism within the movimiento by the authors of the leading monographs on the Chicano movement."[6] Her work on Mexican-American women's history began to address this gap. She outlined the limited roles available for Chicanas—both in terms of symbolic/ideological imagery and practical tasks in the Chicano student movement of the 1960s. For instance, the Chicano movement drew heavily on Aztec motifs, but women were normally only depicted as sexual symbols, conquered virgins, or La Malinche (a slave given to Hernán Cortés).[7] Women were also limited in their roles in the movement and were often relegated to typing and cooking.[8]

[6] Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 100.
[7] Ibid., 106.
[8] Ibid., 108.

To address their concerns as both women and Latinas, some Chicanas decided to form their own organizations. For instance, historian Virginia Espino has detailed the emergence of the Comisión Femenil and other groups opposed to sterilization abuse in Los Angeles in the early 1970s. Chicano organizations run by men did not see sterilization abuse as a priority, while white women saw sterilization as a right to be obtained.[9] She wrote, "At the same time that Mexican women fell victim to eugenic sterilization, the cultural nationalism of the Chicano movement and the universalist ideology of the women's rights movement subsumed Chicanas into nonpersons."[10] As a result, Chicana women began participating in grassroots activism and a class action suit against the doctors who had performed sterilization procedures without the patients' consent.[11]

Chicana activism should be contextualized within the United States women's movement of the 1970s. Historian Ruth Rosen studied changes in the American women's movement between the 1950s and 1980s. She argued that much of women's activism emerged from women's experiences in the Civil Rights movement, the anti-war movement, and the New Left.[12] Women involved in activism felt that their needs and contributions were being underappreciated. Historian Benita Roth came to similar conclusions about the origins of Chicana feminist organizing. As Roth argued:

> Chicana feminism needs to be understood as not a mere variation on white or Black feminism but as a consequence of Chicanas' participation in the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s…Chicana feminists organized an interstitial politics, in opposition to… antifeminist forces in their parent movement.[13]

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[9] Virginia Espino, "'Women Sterilized As Gives Birth': Forced Sterilization and Chicana Resistance in the 1970s," in *Las Obreras: Chicana Politics of Work and Family,* ed. Vicki L. Ruiz (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Publication, 2000), 71-72.
[10] Ibid., 69.
[11] Ibid., 67.
[12] See Chapter 4, "Leaving the Left" in Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America.* (New York City: Penguin Random House, 2006).
[13] Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 21.

According to Roth, women involved in Chicana feminist organizing saw their work as supporting the Chicano cause and as part of a tradition of social activism among Mexican women.

Nikki Craske, a scholar of comparative government, highlighted how women's activism and gender roles in Mexico had shifting meanings throughout the 20th century.[14] For instance, during the regime of Porfirio Díaz (1876 to 1910), women organized in order to gain increased access to education. Many women claimed their right to access education based on their roles as mothers and educators of the next generation.[15] By the 1970s and 1980s, the Mexican state acknowledged the power of women's political participation which had been demonstrated through social protest.[16] By the late 20th century, women had equal political rights but were not able to fully utilize these rights because of their responsibilities for reproductive labor.[17] Women's domestic and maternal roles were idealized in 20th-century Mexico. As a result, women responded to social and political changes by taking more active roles in public life, while still acknowledging traditional gender roles and values.

Traditional gender roles also influenced how female activists in the U.S. framed their public involvement during the 19th and 20th centuries. For instance, historian Barbara Welter explored how idealized gender roles counter-intuitively promoted women's participation in public life. Welter referred to the attributes ideal women were supposed to have as True Womanhood: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.[18] Though these traits were encouraged in popular culture, social and economic changes such as westward migration and the

[14] Nikki Craske, "Ambiguities and Ambivalences in Making the Nation: Women and Politics in 20th-Century Mexico," *Feminist Review*, no. 79 (2005).
[15] Ibid., 119-122.
[16] Ibid., 126.
[17] Ibid., 130.
[18] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966), 152.

Civil War drove women's increased participation in public life. Welter argued, "The very perfection of True Womanhood, moreover, carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction. For if woman was so very little less than the angels, she should surely take a more active part in running the world, especially since men were making such a hash of things."[19] Sociologist Nancy Naples made similar claims about the community involvement of low-income mothers of color in the late-20th-century urban United States. She used the term "activist mothering" to describe these mothers' work, which blurred the boundaries between mothering, political activism, and community work.[20] Like the women Welter studied, these women saw their public participation as an expansion of their traditional maternal and feminine roles. This paper builds on the work of Welter and Naples by offering Mujeres as a further example of women framing their activism as an expansion of motherhood, a task which was complicated by the role of ethnic identity.

Latina/o History

Scholars have also explored how Latina/o identity has been constructed and used by external forces, including the U.S. government and the media. In his article "Pigments of Our Imagination: On the Racialization and Racial Identities of 'Hispanics' and 'Latinos,'" sociologist Rubén G. Rumbaut focused on the role of the U.S. government in creating these labels and how ethnic descriptors of populations which would today be considered *Latina/o* or *Hispanic* have changed over time. For instance, he described how the census utilized *Hispanic* as an ethnic category separate from race.[21] Additionally, he emphasized the importance of understanding how these imposed labels affected people's self-perceptions and self-identification. He argued that

[19] Ibid., 174.
[20] Nancy A. Naples, "Activist Mothering: Cross-Generational Continuity in the Community Work of Women from Low-Income Urban Neighborhoods," *Gender and Society* 6, no. 3 (September 1992), 448.
[21] Rubén G. Rumbaut, "Pigments of Our Imagination: On the Racialization and Racial Identity of 'Hispanics' and 'Latinos,'" in *How the U.S. Racializes Latinos: White Hegemony and Its Consequences,* ed. José A. Cobas, Jorge Duany and Joe R. Feagin (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 9.

race is socially, historically, and spatially constructed because there are variations in how 'Hispanic' and 'Latina/o' people identify based on where they live, their immigration status, their age, and other factors.[22] Sociologist Cristina G. Mora argued that in order to fully understand the emergence of pan-ethnic labels like *Hispanic* and *Latino* in the 1970s, one must appreciate the interactions between the government, the media, and advocacy groups.[23] Like Rumbaut, she highlighted the importance of the Census Bureau and other government agencies.[24] However, she emphasized the role of organizations like the National Council of La Raza and Univision in translating *Latino* and *Hispanic* from primarily government categories to personally and culturally relevant categories of identification.[25]

Historian David A. Badillo posited that the development of Latina/o identity within Chicago was a result of the historical changes experienced by the city's Spanish-speaking community.[26] He outlined how Chicago's Mexican and Puerto Rican populations increased in size between the 1920s and 1970s, leading to the establishment of organizations serving those communities. He identified the 1970s as a turning point, because community action activities took place under the 'umbrella ethnicity' of Latina/o, instead of under the aegis of nationality-based community organizations.[27] Historian Lilia Fernández also considered the 1970s a turning point in the history of Latinas/os in Chicago, because of an increase in social activism. She argued that the rapid increase in the city's Spanish-speaking population and rising awareness of

[22] Ibid., 14.
[23] Cristina G. Mora, *Making Hispanics: How Activists, Bureaucrats, and Media Constructed a New American (*Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 3 – 10.
[24] Ibid. See Chapter 3: "'The Toughest Question': The US Census Bureau and the Making of Hispanic Data" and Chapter 1: "Civil Rights, Brown Power, and the 'Spanish-Speaking' Vote."
[25] Ibid. See Chapter 2: "The Rise of a Hispanic Lobby: The National Council of La Raza" and Chapter 4: "Broadcasting Panethnicity: Univision and the Rise of Hispanic Television."
[26] David A. Badillo, "From La Lucha to Latino: Ethnic Diversity and Political Identity in Chicago," in *La Causa: Civil Rights, Social Justice and the Struggle for Equality in the Midwest,* ed. Gilberto Cárdenas, Gilberto, (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2004).
[27] Ibid., 52.

the Chicano movement fueled this change.[28] Mexican residents of Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood were also motivated to participate in social activism because of municipal neglect and a lack of assistance from Anglo-run social service agencies. She linked this shared experience of marginalization to the emergence of community organizing and a unified Mexican/Chicano identity, because "Mexicans saw themselves racialized in similar ways regardless of their citizenship status, tenure in Chicago, or how far back their immigrant roots originated."[29] This thesis explores the relationship between activism and the construction of pan-ethnic identity, highlighting how ethnic or national identity was mobilized differently depending on context, and how the use of pan-ethnic identifiers did not remove divisions within the Latina/o community.

Early Scholarship on Mujeres Latinas en Acción

Scholarship on Mujeres from the 1990s focused on assessing the extent to which Mujeres challenged gender and family norms. For example, Debra Westlake submitted a paper about Mujeres for a US Women's History course at the University of Chicago in 1992. She argued that many of the women involved in the founding of Mujeres challenged cultural and social norms around gender in their personal behaviors and organizational focuses, which were closely related to their feminist mission.[30] For instance, Westlake emphasized how controversial it was for Mujeres members to visit local bars after their meetings. She wrote that this "invasion of male space in a highly traditional and Catholic environment was one of the many factors which led the group to being seen as the 'bad women' of Pilsen."[31] Westlake also described how various

[28] Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City,* 208-210.
[29] Ibid, 225.
[30] Debra Westlake, "Mujeres Adelante: The Early History of 'Mujeres Latinas en Acción' 1973-1980," Box 1, Folder 5, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[31] Ibid.

members of the organization understood the term *feminist* and came to use it to describe themselves.

In contrast, another student paper argued almost the opposite, claiming that Mujeres members conformed to many gender roles. In 1996, Diana Salazar argued that Mujeres did not identify as a feminist organization, because the term had negative connotations and described the needs of middle-class white women, not Latina women. She wrote, "I agree with the concerns that Latinas have in regards to the Women's movement [such] as [it] not taking into account those women who do not want to be career women or do not want to give up their roles as wives."[32] Instead, she argued that Mujeres emphasized how being a wife and mother could be empowering.[33] This early scholarship underscored tension surrounding how Mujeres navigated gender-based expectations in Pilsen in their quest to find an understanding of womanhood which was both culturally meaningful and empowering.

My Intervention

My thesis will contribute to the fields of women's history and Latina/o history by offering Mujeres as an example of a Latina women's organization in the urban north. Much of Latina/o history has focused on the Southwest and the male-dominated Chicano movement. This thesis addresses the gap in scholarship on Latina women's community involvement in Chicago. I investigate how traditional gender roles, such as motherhood, complicated the construction of ethnic identities and how those identities were mobilized during activism.

[32] Diana Salazar, "Mujeres Latinas en Acción: In Action," Box 1, Folder 10, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[33] Ibid.

Gender Norms in Pilsen in the 1970s

Typical expectations for women in Pilsen in the 1970s must be reconstructed and understood in order to assess the extent to which the women of Mujeres diverged or conformed to social norms related to gender in their cultural context. Some of the most vivid depictions of the strength of patriarchal traditionalism in Pilsen come from ethnographies conducted in the 1970s, especially those of Ruth Horowitz and Gwen Stern.[34] Both demonstrated that the most culturally acceptable role for women was to be a mother and that strict, traditional gender roles regulated women's social, sexual, and economic activities.

In Pilsen, during the 1970s, young Chicanas[35] were socialized to conform to traditional gender roles. For example, girls often cared for their younger siblings, which allowed them to vicariously perform a maternal role. This role was often seen positively. For instance, Celia, age 15, said:

> Man, I want my mother to have a kid so I can take care of it. I love babies. I like to baby-sit for the little kid next door, she's so smart. Now my mother's *comadre*[36] is having a kid so maybe I'll be able to help.[37]

These gender roles were maintained through an emphasis on same-gender, family-based social activities, such as cooking together or Tupperware parties. One woman said of these same-gender activities, "They're lots of fun. We girls get together and play lots of games, talk, laugh a

[34] Horowitz wrote an ethnography of Pilsen based on research conducted between 1971 and 1977. She primarily studied violence, conceptions of personal and family honor, and the American Dream. Horowitz's work was conducted through the Institute for Juvenile Research and the National Institute of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
Gwen Stern wrote her ethnography, "Ethnic Identity and Community Action in El Barrio," based on participant-observation and interviews conducted between 1970 through 1972. She completed her research while a PhD student in anthropology at Northwestern University. Stern also worked at community organizations in Pilsen, including Mujeres.
[35] Horowitz referred to all people of Mexican heritage in the United States as Chicanas/os. She wrote, "While not all those of Mexican ancestry prefer this term, it seems best to embody the varying mixtures of United States and Mexican cultures today in the United States" (237).
[36] This term describes fictive kinship, specifically the relationship between a child's mother and godmother. The term often had a religious connotation.
[37] Ruth Horowitz, *Honor and the American Dream: Culture and Identity in a Chicano Community* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 72.

lot, and buy too many things."[38] Stern similarly observed that most women socialized primarily with their female relatives.[39] If not with these relatives, they went out with their husbands, or, less commonly, socialized with female friends.[40] These all-female activities were often inter-generational and transmitted by example the expected behavior for girls and women. In general, women were expected to be demure, submissive, and motherly. These gender norms also limited what was seen as an appropriate expression of women's sexuality. For instance, one woman named Ramona behaved carefully to ensure she maintained a public perception of virginity and loyalty to her boyfriend. As a result, she did not express physical affection in public, she primarily spent time with her boyfriend where others could see them, and she did not talk to other men.[41]

Women who violated traditional gender norms were treated harshly in attempts to force them to conform. For instance, one woman behaved in a manner perceived as unfeminine because she insulted a man and pulled a knife on him. The man she insulted responded by taking her knife and punching her until she fell down, even though she was no longer a threat once he took the knife. He justified his actions by saying, "I don't like it when girls try to act like men. If they do, you got to treat them like men."[42] In essence, women were expected to behave in a feminine manner in order to "deserve" positive treatment. According to this perspective, violence was a legitimate response when women transgressed gender norms. This perspective also informed how representations in popular culture were perceived. For instance, a group of gang

[38] Ibid., 58.
[39] Gwen Louise Stern, "Ethnic Identity and Community Action in El Barrio" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1976), 40.
[40] Ibid., 47.
[41] Horowitz, *Honor and the American Dream*, 127.
[42] Ibid., 134.

members reacted positively to a movie's depiction of violence against a woman who violated sexual norms. As Horowitz narrated in her ethnography:

> In one movie, a married woman overtly flirted with another man...The man with whom the wife had been flirting raped her, which the Lions [a gang] thought was a legitimate action to maintain his honor because she was tempting him and acting as though she controlled his life. Raping her was domination of her by dishonoring her husband. Even youths who do not generally subscribe to the code of personal dominance through violence saw the rape as virtuous and honorable.[43]

The young men's approval of the rape demonstrated that among this peer group, gender norms were intimately tied with conceptions of personal honor and power. Media depictions reinforced gender traditionalism and male dominance. Such cultural values created an environment where violence against women was seen as legitimate when women transgressed social norms. For men who ascribed to such beliefs, individuals or organizations challenging violence against women would be seen as undermining traditional notions of honor associated with gender norms.

Even when men did not respond to women's violation of gender norms with violence, there was an assumption that a man's treatment of a woman should depend upon her adherence to social expectations. This view extended into marriage, as illustrated by a comparison between two couples who had children before marriage. Lena was faithful to her husband and an attentive mother. As a result, her husband often spent time with her at home and took her out to dinner.[44] In contrast, Rita had relationships with men other than her husband and did not take good care of their baby. Her husband responded by seeing other women, which allowed him to re-assert his dominance in the relationship. Lena and Rita were both judged by their (in)ability to adhere to ideals related to marriage and motherhood. Lena was able to use motherhood to transform how her identity was perceived by being publicly devoted to her child. However, Rita becoming a

[43] Ibid., 83.
[44] Ibid., 120.

mother did not change her reputation, since she was seen as not being devoted enough.[45] In this way, motherhood could positively change one's identity despite past violations of social norms, but only if one fulfilled the ideals associated with motherhood.

Male dominance extended beyond social and sexual spheres of life into economic domains. Men were expected to be the primary – or only – breadwinner for their families in order to maintain a dominant position.[46] One man described this view by saying: "I would never let my wife work while I got this good job, but a lot of guys are getting laid off now and my wife didn't get bad money before we got married."[47] In general, women were expected to prioritize their family roles over their employment. Women's spheres were further limited to the home in cases where a woman did not know how to drive or have the opportunity to learn English.[48] In other cases, women did work outside the home but patriarchal traditionalism frowned on women who used employment as a route to financial independence. Women's income-generating work outside the home was sometimes an economic necessity for families in Pilsen and was considered socially acceptable only as long as it did not challenge cultural norms and male dominance. This demonstrates how social norms around gender required women to limit their social, sexual, and economic behavior in order to maintain male dominance and how violence was seen as an idealized way to respond to women's transgression of these social norms.

A public perception linking Mexicans and machismo spread beyond Pilsen. On April 12, 1970, the *Chicago Tribune* announced "Machismo Comes to Chicago."[49] Author Mary Daniels described male dominance in Chicago's Spanish-American communities, with a focus on Mexican communities. She highlighted a sense of conflict between traditional gender norms and

[45] Ibid., 120.
[46] Ibid., 60.
[47] Ibid., 63.
[48] Stern, "Ethnic Identity and Community Action in El Barrio," 23 and 38.
[49] Mary Daniels, "Machismo Comes to Chicago," *Chicago Tribune,* April 12 1970.

the economic realities of Chicago, where many Latina/o families were lower-income and relied on women's wages. She wrote, "What happens when a family from a Latin culture, where the man is the undisputed king, comes to live in the United States, where women have more power by the hour?"[50] According to Daniels, men were ashamed to have their wives working outside the home, refused welfare assistance out of pride, and engaged in domestic violence. Her description of gender roles was influenced by racialized perceptions of Latinas/os. For instance, Daniels quoted a priest who said that Mexican women in Chicago were not interested in "liberation," because of their submissive nature, which was "an inborn thing, perhaps because of her Indian racial background." Though today's scholars would reject Daniels' reference to biological essentialism, the *Chicago Tribune*'s coverage of patriarchal traditionalism in Pilsen attested to the reputation Mexicans were gaining as exponents of machismo.

Historian Lilia Fernández highlighted how gender traditionalism in Pilsen like that described by Horowitz, Stern, and Daniels prevented women from participating in the public life of their community or receiving assistance during family crises. For instance, she noted how gendered divisions of labor within families prevented women from participating in activities outside of the home like community activism.[51] For Latina women facing domestic violence, finding help was especially difficult as organizations that would aid abused women were criticized for undermining male authority and encouraging divorce, despite the Catholic Church's prohibition.[52] These gender-based difficulties often combined with challenges related to the English language, finances, or immigration status, making it even more difficult for women to receive help.[53] As historian Benita Roth demonstrated, Chicanos sometimes presented

[50] Ibid.
[51] Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy* City, 242.
[52] Ibid., 257-259.
[53] Ibid., 259.

adherence to gender traditionalism as a form of "cultural preservation" that was necessary in the struggle against Anglo domination.[54] Women who opposed patriarchal traditionalism in Pilsen were entering larger conversations about culture and ethnic identity in their community.

Social Activism and Ethnic Identity in Pilsen

What was the social context of other community organizations into which Mujeres entered? How did these organizations mobilize ideas about ethnic identity in their activism? Stern's ethnography offers a vivid picture of how community activists in the early 1970s manipulated ideas about ethnic identity in order to achieve their goals.[55] Community activists in Pilsen used ethnic indicators, such as labels and stereotypes to signal that they were different from outside professionals and government employees who wanted to intervene in Pilsen. Inside of Pilsen, activists tended to use terms which recognized the diversity of identities and experiences in the neighborhood.

When interacting with government officials and professionals, activists emphasized the differences between those who lived in Pilsen and those who did not as well as the size of the potential constituency in Pilsen. Activists often described themselves as "community people" in meetings to create a dichotomy between themselves and outside experts.[56] The term "community people" was used to highlight their close connection and knowledge of Pilsen based on life experience. Activists also used Spanish strategically during meetings with people from outside of the neighborhood in order to reaffirm differences. This use of Spanish was often intended to allude to a perception of community unity or to the symbolism of the Chicano movement. Activists would also rely on negative stereotypes to differentiate between themselves and experts, especially during adversarial meetings. For instance, one activist said, "We don't need

[54] Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*, 139.
[55] Stern, "Ethnic Identity and Community Action in El Barrio," 80-111.
[56] Ibid., 143.

professionals to tell us what the problems are…We're tired of being guinea pigs for graduate students…We've been 'social-worked' to death…"[57] Another activist said, "White people are so stuck-up…You can't trust White people."[58] In these instances, activists used negative stereotypes about 'experts' and white people to express their distrust of their intentions and ability to understand the nuances of life in Pilsen.

Activists also used specific terminology to refer to their community when interacting with non-profit employees and government officials in order to emphasize the size of their potential constituency and certain aspects of their community, while minimizing others. For instance, activists referred to themselves as *Latinos* almost exclusively when interacting with representatives of outside institutions.[59] By using the term *Latino*, activists were able to broaden their potential constituency beyond just Mexicans, the primary population in Pilsen. *Latino* was also a more neutral term, compared to terms like *Mexican*, which could have negative connotations, or *Chicano*, which would imply political leanings. Activists would also use the term 'Spanish-speaking' during meetings with outsiders.[60] Similar to *Latino*, this term communicated neutral connotations and expanded the population being described, though it was more commonly used by outside officials than activists. Community activists also sometimes used the term "bilingual-bicultural" to describe Chicanos in a neutral manner when interacting with outsiders. Community activists used pan-ethnic terms in meetings with outsiders strategically to emphasize the potential size of their constituency—and hence importance—which acknowledged ethnic and cultural differences in a neutral or positive way.

[57] Ibid., 143.
[58] Ibid., 150.
[59] Ibid., 159.
[60] Ibid., 161.

Among themselves in Pilsen, community activists would use different terms which emphasized intra-ethnic differences, instead of community unity and shared values. For instance, when interacting with outsiders, activists would refer to themselves and their community as *Latino*. Among themselves, they would use the term *Mexican*.[61] Some terms—like *brazer* (from bracero) or *recién venido*—defined people by their length of residence in the United States and were often associated with stereotypes.[62] According to stereotype, brazers only spoke Spanish and drank a lot.[63] Activists used other terms to categorize people based on their beliefs and behaviors. For example, the word 'traditional' described a person who was religious, superstitious, and adhered to strict gender roles.[64] The term *Tejano* was associated with stereotypes, like a lack of sophistication, in addition to being a descriptor of a person's place of origin.[65]

Other terms emphasized explicitly political divisions among Pilsen's residents. For instance, both the terms *Chicano* and *Mexican-American* were used to describe people of Mexican heritage who were born and raised in the United States. However, the two terms implied very different political leanings. The term *Chicano* was linked to the Chicano movement and opposition to Anglo domination. In contrast, activists used the term *Mexican-American* in a derogatory manner to describe people who were politically conservative, successful in the Anglo 'world,' and overly sympathetic to the interests of Anglos.[66] Activists also used other offensive terms for Latina/o Pilsen residents who were seen as disloyal to the neighborhood or the Latina/o

[61] Ibid., 162.
[62] *Recién venido* is Spanish for "recently arrived [person]"
[63] Stern, "Ethnic Identity and Community Action in El Barrio," 163-164.
[64] Ibid., 165.
[65] Ibid., 167.
[66] Ibid., 167.

cause, such as Tico Taco, *vendido*, or coconut.[67] According to Stern, the meaning of Tico Taco in Pilsen is equivalent to the term 'Uncle Tom.'[68] *Vendido* is Spanish for sell-out and indicated the person has sided with Anglos for personal gain, betraying his or her presumed ethnic community in the process. The term 'coconut' was used to describe people who are "Brown on the outside but White on the inside"—implying that the person's appearance was Mexican, but their values and behavior aligned with Anglos.[69] In general, the use of these terms reflected the tensions and divisions inside Pilsen. Specific to community activism, these terms implied disagreements over who had the right to represent Pilsen in interactions with the outside community. Questions about representation necessarily included debates about authenticity and identity.

However, these debates about adequate representation centered around ethnic identity, not gender. An estimated 50 to 70 people were involved in community activism in leadership positions in Pilsen in the early 1970s.[70] However, only 10 to 20 women were frequently involved in activism at this same level.[71] Most female activists were involved in activism related to education, because of their children's experiences in school. Most female activists were in their 30s, had children in elementary or high schools and were active in parents' organizations.[72] As Stern once again observed, "All heads of agencies in the community are males, and the majority of all staffs are male."[73] As a result, men often represented Pilsen when interacting with outside institutions. This calls into question if issues which affected women in Pilsen were priorities in these meetings and activism.

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[67] Ibid., 168.
[68] Ibid., 168.
[69] Ibid., 169.
[70] Ibid., 115.
[71] Ibid., 123-124.
[72] Ibid., 124.
[73] Ibid., 124.

Activists in Pilsen mobilized ethnic labels to create distinctions between Pilsen's residents and outside 'experts' when interacting with institutional representatives. They frequently used terms like *Latino* to emphasize the size and importance of their constituency. Within Pilsen, community activists would use a variety of terms to describe different segments of Pilsen's population, emphasizing their length of residence in Chicago and their political leanings. Despite this emphasis on identity, gender equity did not play a large role in determining who would represent the community or how the community would be described.

Founding of Mujeres and Their Pseudo-Maternal Role

Inspiration for the founding of Mujeres Latinas en Acción came during a conference called "La Mujer Despierta: Latina Women's Education Awareness Conference," which was hosted on June 9, 1973 at El Centro de La Causa, an established community organization in Pilsen.[74] Even though Pilsen was a primarily Mexican neighborhood, the conference organizers consciously used the term *Latina* to indicate their pan-ethnic focus. Conference organizers and attendants had both Mexican and Puerto Rican backgrounds.[75] This pan-ethnic focus would be maintained when the organization was founded. According to an internal Mujeres document, women in Pilsen interested in forming a Latina women's organization started meeting in the summer of 1973.[76] These women justified the creation of Mujeres by highlighting the lack of adequate services for Latina women. In a document from 1976 reflecting on their founding, organizational representatives wrote:

> Even community-based organizations have not delivered programs for women that take into consideration the needs and problems of women emerging in non-traditional roles, which are a reality in Chicago. Women seem to participate mainly in crisis-oriented services such as counseling, crisis intervention, but there

[74] Fernández, *Brown in the Windy* City, 248.
[75] Ibid., 248.
[76] "Mujeres Latinas en Accion, Inc.: Plans for FY 1976-77 and Tentative Plans for FY 1977-78," Box 7, Folder 8, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.

> are few services providing alternatives to life styles, such as manpower training, educational and recreational programs, and advocacy. Moreover, the staffing of non-counseling services tends even in community organizations to be predominantly male.[77]

In response to this perceived need, a small group of women in Pilsen, many of whom had attended "La Mujer Despierta" Conference, founded Mujeres. By the fall of the 1973, the organization was hosting twelve educational workshops for women in the community.[78]

Their goal in organizing these educational workshops, and later other social services, was to expand the participation of Latina women in community leadership. Their mission was to

> effect the necessary changes in the social and organization structures within the community in such a way as to guarantee greater and more significant participation of the Latino female leadership in the decision making [sic] processes that affect the community.[79]

This goal explicitly called for changes in social and organizational structures in the community, which would have posed a challenge to existing power structures, such as other organizations steeped in the culture of male dominance. However, the radical nature of this goal was somewhat tempered by how the organization contextualized this aim. Later in the same document, they wrote:

> We believe that working toward the fulfillment of our mission and main purpose is one of the greatest and lasting contributions M.L.E.A. can make to the welfare of the Latino Community in Chicago.[80]

This way of framing their goal made it seem as though supporting women was a method of helping the larger Latina/o community, as opposed to a gendered goal in of itself. This may have been a method of appeasing or allying themselves with other activists in the community. This is consistent with historian Benita Roth's argument that women involved in Chicana feminist

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[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] "What is Latin Women in Action?" Box 7, Folder 8, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[80] Ibid.

organizing generally saw their work as supporting a greater Chicano cause.[81] Roth wrote, "early Chicana feminist organizing was characterized by the express desire to stay linked to men and existing Chicano organizations while promoting a greater role from women in service to the Chicano cause."[82] For instance, Chicana feminists challenged the belief held by some Chicanos that gender traditionalism was necessary to preserve Chicano culture by arguing that more egalitarian families would help in the fight against Anglo dominance.[83] As a result, many Chicana feminist organizations emphasized the importance of maintaining family unity,[84] a priority Mujeres would come to emphasize in their work.

In order to pursue their goals and support the wider Chicana/o community, Mujeres created a contract with El Centro de la Causa to use their two-story building as a women's center beginning in the winter of 1973.[85] During the next year, one of Mujeres' main priorities was to expand day care services in the neighborhood by working with a community day care center.[86] This allowed them to help mothers directly in a way which was not confrontational to conservative members of the neighborhood, but may have given women the ability to more easily participate in activities outside of the home.

Mujeres experienced a setback in the fall of 1974 when the building they were leasing from El Centro de La Causa burned down.[87] Historians like Lilia Fernández and Martha Zurita have linked the fire to the hostility Mujeres faced because of their opposition to patriarchal traditionalism. For example, Fernández discussed evidence which indicated a local gang may have set the fire, because they previously used the location to deal drugs and did not believe

[81] Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*, 12.
[82] Ibid., 139.
[83] Ibid., 163.
[84] Ibid., 164
[85] "Mujeres Latinas en Accion, Inc.: Plans for FY 1976-77 and Tentative Plans for FY 1977-78," Box 7, Folder 8, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.

Mujeres' use of the space was legitimate.[88] Zurita also contextualized the fire as part of a larger trend of opposition and violence against the women of Mujeres. Mujeres members had been receiving suspicious phone calls in the weeks before the fire and one member was physically assaulted by gang members while at a local bar.[89] Zurita argued that these threats support the theory that the building was intentionally set on fire by community members opposed to the organization.[90] Regardless of the exact details surrounding the fire, it is clear that there was an environment of opposition and intimidation towards Mujeres. They supported women's independence which some in the community found threatening to traditional gender roles and the patriarchal status quo. This patriarchal traditionalism, as described by Horowitz, created an environment where threats and violence were seen as appropriate ways to try to restore male dominance.

Despite the fire and opposition from some parts of the community, Mujeres acquired another space for their organization by the spring of 1975.[91] In the new space, Mujeres staff members and volunteers turned their focus to establishing a drop-in center for young women, which opened on April 1, 1975.[92] The drop-in center was an informal, yet supervised, space for young women to socialize amongst themselves and receive support. The center offered recreational and educational activities.[93] Mujeres considered the gender norms of the community when creating the programs at the drop-in center; for example, staff noted that "because of

[88] Fernández, *Brown in the Windy* City, 251.
[89] Martha Zurita, "Mujeres Latinas en Acción: A Case Study of Latina Civil Rights" in *La Causa: Civil Rights, Social Justice and the Struggle for Equality in the Midwest,* ed. Gilberto Cárdenas, Gilberto, (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2004), 180.
[90] Ibid., 180.
[91] "Mujeres Latinas en Accion, Inc.: Plans for FY 1976-77 and Tentative Plans for FY 1977-78," Box 7, Folder 8, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[92] "Mujeres Latinas en Accion," Box 1, Folder 1, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[93] Ibid.

certain cultural values many young girls are not allowed out unless their parents are sure they will be adequately chaperoned."[94]

One of the aims of the drop-in center was to allow volunteers and staff to intervene if they realized one of the young women was experiencing a crisis. All of the Mujeres members working with the drop-in center had completed a six-week counseling course through the Institute for Juvenile Research.[95] This provided the staff and volunteers with the skills to help young women facing challenges. However, Mujeres also referred girls to more specialized services if needed.[96] In those instances, volunteers or staff members from Mujeres would accompany the young woman to the other agency and do any necessary follow-up. In this way, Mujeres staff and volunteers played a pseudo-maternal role in these young women's lives. The staff and volunteers offered emotional support. Their role went beyond just counseling and a referral service, because of the long-term and social nature of their relationship. The drop-in center became like a second home in that it was an appropriate place for young women to spend time without challenging social norms. By accompanying young women to appointments with other agencies, the staff and volunteers at Mujeres acted like mothers or sisters.

Since their founding, Mujeres strove to empower women in Pilsen in a way that did not alienate members of their community by observing certain social norms, such as acting in a pseudo-maternal role towards the young women in their program. However, they still faced opposition from some Pilsen residents as illustrated by the fire at their first location. Despite this opposition, Mujeres continued their work in the community with a renewed focus on serving young women.

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[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.

Mujeres' Work with Runaway Girls: Expansion of Motherhood

Mujeres staff members and volunteers expanded their pseudo-maternal role by incorporating services for runaway girls, like crisis intervention, counseling, and temporary foster homes. Mujeres staff and volunteers blurred the boundary between their volunteer/professional lives, their families, and their community participation by opening their homes to runaway girls. Though adherents of patriarchal traditionalism in Pilsen criticized Mujeres for challenging gender norms about women's roles in public life, Mujeres' ultimate goal was to preserve family unity and create safe domestic spaces.

In May 1975, Mujeres' staff proposed the creation of services for runaway girls, in response to growing rates of runaways in Pilsen. In the program proposal for "Runaway Services at the Drop-In Center," the staff noted that 91 cases of runaways were recorded in the 12th Police District (which included the neighborhoods of Pilsen and Heart of Chicago) in 1974.[97] However, this number probably underestimated the actual rate of runaways, because it was collected by the Department of Human Services and only included those who came into contact with the police or other authorities. In their analysis of this problem, Mujeres staff wrote: "In view of the traditionally tight-knit Latino family, and the chaperoning of young girls, we feel that 91 runaways in one year constitutes an alarmingly high rate."[98] Mujeres attributed girls' decisions to run away to dysfunction in the household, such as disagreement with a parent or situations of abuse. However, running away often led girls to face other challenges like homelessness or drug and alcohol use, and made them vulnerable to crimes like rape or petty theft.[99] In this way, Mujeres staff members understood the misuse of drugs or alcohol to be a symptom of gender-

[97] "Program Proposal: Runaway Services at the Drop-In Center in the Pilsen Community," Box 7, Folder 10, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.

based discrimination and not the original source of the problem. Mujeres was dedicated to addressing the root causes that drove girls to run away: "We feel that a primary goal of the program is to keep families intact when possible and involve parents in the treatment plan."[100] By 1977, Mujeres had implemented their program for runaway girls and were serving an average of nine runaways a month by offering temporary housing in two homes in Pilsen, in addition to other services.[101]

Both the field workers and foster parents acted as maternal figures for runaway girls. In addition to administrative tasks like recruiting new foster families and ensuring proper licensing of foster homes, the field workers met directly with the girls in order to provide services.[102] The field workers were responsible for creating schedules for the runaway girls once they were in the program, such as schooling and recreational activities.[103] The field workers also handled girls' medical emergencies and accompanied them to appointments. Such activities would normally be considered the prerogatives of the girls' parents, but the field workers acted as their parents in these instances. The field workers also maintained contact with the runaway girls' biological parents when possible in order to see if reunification would be viable and what support the parents needed. Though the field workers were temporarily fulfilling maternal roles, their ultimate goal was to maintain family unity.

In cases where girls could not be immediately reunited with their biological families, field workers placed the girls into foster homes. This underscored their commitment to family as

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[100] Ibid.
[101] "List of Activities/Events Sponsored by Mujeres Latinas en Accion 1975-77", Box 7, Folder 8, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[102] "What is Latin Women in Action," Box 1, Folder 3, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[103] Lourdes Sullivan, "Memo to David Reed, Executive Director, Chicago Area Project. Re: Guidelines for Youth Placement. Date: April 23, 1985," Box 20, Folder 8, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.

an important social and cultural unit. Through their programs for runaway girls, places and practices associated with domesticity and femininity were framed as uniquely capable of solving a community problem. As the work of Horowitz clearly demonstrated, traditionalism in Pilsen honored women's maternal practices and domesticity. The field workers and staff of Mujeres reimagined the possibilities for these respected traits and expanded what was considered part of the domestic sphere to include girls who were not their biological daughters and, more generally, the entire community.

Foster parents literally extended their domestic spaces to include those who were not biological family members by opening their homes to runaway girls on a temporary basis until they could be reunited with their parents when the crisis situation was resolved or until the girls found safe permanent housing.[104] Foster parents integrated runaway girls into their household routines, blurring the line between what was 'volunteer work' and 'community service' and what was household labor. This is consistent with what sociologist Nancy Naples calls 'activist mothering,' a term used to describe women's work that blurs the boundaries between traditional mothering and community activism.[105] Foster parents' mothering extended beyond providing a place for girls to sleep.

Foster parents provided a link to runaway girls' culture and language, which Mujeres saw as closely related to ideas of ethnic identity. For instance, Mujeres' program proposal about incorporating runaway services at the drop-in center read: "We hope that by providing bilingual staff and volunteers that our runaway service could accept referrals of Latinas from other areas

[104] Lourdes Sullivan, "Memo to Lilian Cruz, Supervisor Pilsen Team. Re: Length of Placement with Temporary Housing Program. Dated April 16, 1985," Box 20, Folder 8, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[105] Naples, "Activist Mothering," 441-463.

of the city where services are not available and placement in a Latin family is preferable."[106] Though the program proposal is not explicit about why a 'Latin family' would be preferable, several are implied. First, having foster parents fluent in both Spanish and English would be ideal since the runaway girl and her biological parents might not be proficient in both languages. Second, Latina/o foster parents would have been better equipped to understand the cultural context and gender norms which may have affected the girl's decision to run away. Cultural context may have been linked to one's place of origin, so having foster parents who could relate to the girls' places of origin would be helpful. For instance, the program proposal read:

> One area where the diversity of the population is clear is with runaways. Since many families in the community have migrated here from Texas or Mexico, there are often still ties there and girls may run away to Texas or Mexico. The traffic also works in the reverse, when families move back to Texas or Mexico, and the girls return alone to Chicago.[107]

In general, Pilsen residents had diverse international and domestic migration experiences, as some were recent arrivals and others were long-time Chicagoans. Mujeres staff may have believed these personal experiences of migration and cultural adjustment would make it easier for foster parents to relate to the runaway girls. Latina/o families' knowledge of Spanish and experience of cultural adjustment uniquely positioned them to be ideal foster parents for runaway Latina girls.

Mujeres' emphasis on importance of families revealed a degree of underlying conservatism, despite their reputation for non-conformity in Pilsen. In placing runaway girls with families, they reinforced norms about the ideal household, such as the importance of the relationship between parents and children. For instance, none of their publicity or internal documents about the foster family program mentioned non-traditional families, such households

[106] "Program Proposal: Runaway Services at the Drop-In Center in the Pilsen Community," Box 7, Folder 10, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[107] Ibid.

headed by single women or same-sex couples. This silence allowed norms about traditional families to remain unchallenged. As a result, their foster family program could have reinforced certain hierarchies and orthodoxies related to gender roles and parental authority.

The services Mujeres offered to runaway girls illustrated how the organization extended their practices of motherhood outside of their biological families and expanded practices associated with domesticity and femininity to include the entire community. This pseudo-maternal role offered an important identity to Mujeres staff and volunteers. In Pilsen, becoming a mother often indicated that one's status had changed. For instance, Horowitz illustrated how becoming a devoted mother allowed Lena to transform her identity in a positive manner despite her transgression of gender norms by becoming pregnant outside of marriage. Perhaps, Mujeres members believed emphasizing the maternal aspects of their work would allow the organization to achieve a similar transformation. In founding an organization dedicated to women's empowerment and women's participation in public life, they transgressed gender norms in Pilsen associated with patriarchal traditionalism. Though the organization's members had to transgress gender norms to become 'mothers' to the community, their maternal devotion to runaway girls and the community more broadly allowed them to situate their work into a culturally-appropriate framework.

The work of Mujeres volunteers and foster families is reminiscent of historian Barbara Welter's argument in "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," in which she described how women used the association between femininity and moral goodness to justify their involvement in public life. For instance, women were supposed to participate only in "morally uplifting tasks," such as teaching children or caring for the sick.[108] Welter identified social changes such as westward migration and industrialism as propelling women into new roles. She wrote that, in

[108] Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," 164.

response to these changes, some women "tried to keep the virtues [associated with traditional women's roles] and enlarge the scope of womanhood."[109] Though separated by a century and influenced by different demographic conditions, Mujeres volunteers and foster mothers used similar strategies to the women Welter described. The women associated with Mujeres justified their public involvement by describing it as an expansion of motherhood and traditional women's roles, such as caring for children. Social changes, like migration and drug abuse, made these new roles necessary to maintain community well-being. In both cases, women used language and imagery associated with the ideals of womanhood to expand public roles for themselves in the face of social changes.

Mujeres' Use of Ethnic Identity in Pilsen-based Programs

Ethnic identity and ethnic pride permeated Mujeres' programming at two levels. First, their use of ethnic identity distinguished their services from those offered by other women's groups outside of Pilsen. Mujeres believed other groups were not adequately providing services to the Latina community, because they disregarded factors specific to that community, like language and cultural norms. Second, Mujeres' programs supported the transmission of culture between generations based on an idea of shared ethnic identity and history. This cultural transmission mimicked what may normally be expected to happen within a family. The relatively recent arrival of many families to Pilsen would have heightened the need for this inter-generational cultural transmission in the face of cultural adaption and integration. Mujeres emphasized the importance of supporting this cultural transmission in order to give clients a positive sense of self, which could empower them.

In public documents describing their services, Mujeres highlighted their organization's ability to integrate ethnic identity into their work. In one document from late 1977, they argued

[109] Ibid., 174.

that social service organizations in Pilsen run by outsiders operated "without appropriate consideration of cultural differences."[110] In contrast, they wrote that Mujeres and other "Latino organizations in Pilsen provide services that are more accessible because of having staff and boards with cultural backgrounds similar to the client populations, and who live in the community."[111] In addition to acknowledging their clients' cultural backgrounds while offering services like counseling and referrals, Mujeres sought to celebrate and raise awareness about Latina/o culture. For instance, Mujeres' executive director, Luz Maria Prieto, listed organizing cultural awareness workshops as a goal for the 1976-1977 financial year in an internal planning document.[112] Mujeres also offered classes about gender and Latina/o culture, such as one titled "Women and Culture." The course would explore "Latin women as seen in this culture through music, literature, and art [and] our changing roles."[113] The reference to 'changing roles' hinted that the course would do more than summarize the cultural contributions of Latina women. Instead, the course would offer a framework for empowerment that took culture and gender into account, as well as the immigrant experience and integration into American culture.

Mujeres' partnerships within Pilsen also demonstrated the importance they placed on ethnic identity. For instance, members of Mujeres helped with the planning and implementation of the Latino Drug Intervention Program in Pilsen, though the program was not run directly by Mujeres. The program aimed to help those affected by drug use by offering counseling,

[110] "What is Latin Women in Action?", Box 1, Folder 3, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Luz Prieto, "Action Steps, Organization Unit: Social Services Component," Box 7, Folder 8, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[113] "What is Latin Women in Action?", Box 1, Folder 3, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.

informational outreach in the community, and educational and vocational classes.[114] Staff members of the Latino Drug Intervention Program met with groups of girls at Mujeres' drop-in center, further demonstrating their close working relationship.[115] The Latino Drug Intervention Program incorporated ethnic identity by offering culturally-informed counseling, Chicano awareness classes and events, and through the ethnic backgrounds of their staff. Though the program had the pan-ethnic term 'Latino' in its name, most of its everyday programming emphasized Chicano culture and Mexican heritage.

For instance, during a Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program staff meeting in early 1974, Ruth Horowitz and Mauro Castro gave a presentation about how to incorporate Chicano culture into counseling sessions. In general, counselors were supposed to create a trusting relationship with the client, identify how a client's values and beliefs affected how the client saw their life and their difficulties, and then support the client in using their values to problem-solve.[116] The staff of the Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program understood Chicano culture as influencing all aspects of this therapeutic process. An agenda for this presentation read:

> The Chicano culture of Pilsen-Heart of Chicago differs from the Anglo culture in many ways. The nature of family relationships is different, the social character and traditions of the community are different and the ethnic identity is different. This necessitates development of a counseling system and set of alternatives which are adaptive to the Chicano population we are dealing with.[117]

Creating a counseling system adapted to Chicano culture involved ensuring the counselors understood cultural norms and values, which affected how clients viewed their goals and

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[114] "Proposed Second Week Agenda – Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program's Training Information Cycle," Box 20, Folder 14, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[115] "Program Proposal: Runaway Services at the Drop-In Center in the Pilsen Community," Box 7, Folder 10, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[116] "Proposed Second Week Agenda – Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program's Training Information Cycle," Box 20, Folder 14, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[117] Ibid.

challenges. The agenda specifically highlighted the importance of "sex roles" in Chicano culture, noting that counseling services would have to be adapted: "Because of the rigid separation of sex roles and the man's role as dominant, it is essential that the client and his or her counselor be of the same sex."[118] This approach to counseling services involved adhering to cultural and gender norms and did not directly call attention to how strict patriarchal traditionalism may have been the underlying cause of some community difficulties. However, as Mujeres members had realized, the unique vulnerability of runaway girls led some to abuse drugs – indicating that factors related to gender, not the drugs alone, caused crisis situations. As a result, individual counselors, especially in all-female settings, may have challenged gender norms more than this official policy indicated.

The Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program also embraced ethnic identity through their educational and cultural programming. Various community agencies offered classes on topics like Chicano history, perceptions of Latinas/os in the dominant culture, inter-ethnic conflict, and the relationship between city services and the Latina/o community.[119] As implied by these class topics, the Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program had a politicized understanding of ethnic identity and linked Chicano identity to issues of structural inequality and discrimination. In a planning document about the classes, the staff wrote: "Classes in Chicano awareness will help both the staff and the youth involved in the program discover who they are, where they are coming from and where they are going."[120] Their goals linked learning about Chicano identity to fostering solidarity within the community and a positive self-image. They believed this positive self-image would motivate clients to make more constructive choices in their personal lives and

[118] Ibid.
[119] "Proposed 3rd Week Agenda – Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program Training & Information Cycle," Box 20, Folder 15, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[120] Ibid.

give back to the community. For instance, the Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program planned for the youth to organize celebrations in honor of Mexican Independence Day and the Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe.[121] These educational programs and events cultivated a sense of Chicano identity which incorporated both political and cultural significance.

The Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program also emphasized the importance of having staff members from the community so the clients could more easily relate to them and, perhaps, so clients could have role models of their ethnic background. Gwen Stern and Maria Heinz interviewed 15 Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program staff members in January 1975 about their background, including their ethnic identity.[122] The choice of the interviewers indicated the close relationship between the Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program and Mujeres – Gwen Stern was a volunteer with Mujeres and María Mangual (whose married name was Maria Heinz[123]) helped found Mujeres. The interviews revealed that staff were between the ages of 17 and 26 and that five out of 15 staff members were women.[124] Stern and Heinz considered 11 staff members Latino, but noted that the term *Latino* was used by the researchers even when the staff members used different words to describe themselves: "The category 'Latino' was used by the researchers to include anyone with one or both parents of Mexican descent."[125] Staff members self-identified with a variety of labels, including "Mexican," "Mexican-Norwegian," "Chicano" and "Mexican-American."[126] Staff members also discussed their language ability, place of birth, and residence during the interviews. Most staff members indicated that they were somewhat or

[121] Ibid.
[122] "Staff Interviews," Box 20, Folder 17, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[123] Trevor Jensen, "Maria T. Mangual: 1944-2007," *Chicago Tribune,* August 24, 2007.
[124] "Staff Interviews," Box 20, Folder 17, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.

completely bilingual in English and Spanish.[127] Additionally, most staff members were also long-term residents of Chicago or born in the city. Stern and Heinz note that "Nine staff members were born in Chicago which is 60% of the staff. This indicates that at least 60% of the staff is second or third generation in terms of migration to Chicago from Mexico" (emphasis in the original).[128] This emphasis on length of residence in Chicago demonstrated that concerns about ethnicity, national identity, and cultural adaption remained relevant, even for those with no personal experience of migration. The Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program's staff statistics may not be reflective of other community organizations in Pilsen, as the program wanted to recruit staff who could easily relate to the clients. This may have led the program to hire younger staff members. However, the types of questions asked during the interviews reveal what community organizations like Mujeres found important – ethnic identity, language skills, immigration history, and length of residence in Chicago.

Mujeres integrated ethnic identity into their programming in order to provide culturally-appropriate services for their clients and to transmit cultural knowledge and pride. In their partnership with the Latino Youth Drug Intervention Program, this took the form of culturally-sensitive counseling services, educational programs, and staffing decisions. Though Mujeres described themselves as a pan-ethnic organization in their name (Mujeres **Latinas** en Acción), their willingness to partner with a Chicano organization demonstrated their openness in allowing clients to self-identify as they saw fit. The use of the term Chicano indicated a politicized understanding of ethnic identity, which took into account both nationality and history. In this way, Mujeres' use of the term *Latina* expanded one's freedom and self-expression, instead of requiring all clients to put a pan-ethnic identity above a national or local one. This is consistent

[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.

with Stern's claim that the most salient identity labels within Pilsen were the ones which indicated distinctions within Pilsen's Latina/o community.

Mujeres' Use of Ethnic Identity Beyond Pilsen

Mujeres had to make choices about how to utilize their ethnic identity when interacting with organizations outside of Pilsen. In this regard, they often made choices similar to other Pilsen community organizations, such as using a broad ethnic label to emphasize the size and importance of the group they were representing. In other cases, their choices de-emphasized the importance of ethnic identity. These varied choices could be seen in Mujeres' work with the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse, Planned Parenthood, and the National Council of La Raza.

The Committee to End Sterilization Abuse (CESA) arose from the work of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union (CWLU) in the 1970s. The CWLU was active in promoting many women's issues, including those related to abortion and women's health more broadly. According to CESA meeting minutes,[129] activists became involved in work regarding sterilization abuse in July 1975. Maritsa Arrastia of New York CESA came to Chicago to discuss CESA's work in New York, sterilization efforts in Puerto Rico, and population control in general.[130] In response, community groups in Chicago, including CWLU, became interested in learning about sterilization in Chicago hospitals and the prevalence of sterilization abuse. Activists used the term sterilization abuse to describe sterilizations which occurred without free and informed consent.[131] Examples of this included medical professionals requesting consent in a

[129] These CESA meeting minutes are from September 15, 1975 and September 22, 1975. Neither document has explicitly listed authors. The authors may be Jenny Knauss (who donated the documents) or her colleagues in CESA. See Box 4, Folder 5, Jenny Knauss Collection, Manuscript Series XCIII, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.

language the patient did not understand or government officials threatening a woman would lose her welfare benefits if she did not undergo a sterilization.

As activists involved with Chicago's branch of CESA first learned about sterilization abuse from Maritsa Arrastia in the context of population control efforts in Puerto Rico and elsewhere, the activists' understanding of sterilization abuse was always tied to its role in structural inequality and racism. CESA's meeting minutes demonstrated the internal conversations women of different backgrounds were having about the organization's goals and strategies. These discussions often involved the racial aspects of sterilization policies and how racial issues should be communicated when promoting CESA's work, especially when working with diverse populations and community organizations.

The interactions and disagreements between Mujeres and other members of CESA demonstrate Mujeres' priorities and how they perceived the identity of their group. CESA meeting minutes reflected Mujeres' careful balancing act between ensuring the interests of Latina women were represented in CESA's work without becoming publicly linked with organizations seen as supporting abortion such as the CWLU.

One disagreement between Mirtha N. Font and Mary Tully at a CESA meeting on September 15, 1975 demonstrated how Mujeres fought to ensure that the interests of Latina women were represented by CESA's work. The meeting minutes did not list Font's organizational affiliation, but they listed Tully as a member of Mujeres. According to the meeting minutes:

> From the floor, Mirtha N. Font bought up the issue of "focus" in presenting the work of C.E.S.A. to the public…Font mentioned that it was important to consider that an audience of "poor whites," for example, might not see sterilization as their problem if presented as a U.S. tool to control Puerto Ricans,

> but might recognize their position as victims if other aspects of sterilization are also emphasized.[132]

Tully of Mujeres responded "that poor whites and others could respond to the issue of imperialism and that she wouldn't like to see the problem of sterilization presented in a fragmented fashion."[133]

Tully's reply may have reflected her sense of obligation to use her social position as a white woman to call attention to the concerns of less privileged women. Her comment may have also reflected the expectations that Mujeres' leaders placed on white representatives of the organization or her desire to prove her legitimacy. White representatives of Mujeres could never be completely and authentically part of the group, because Mujeres as an organization was committed to creating a group run for, and by, Latinas. Tully may have felt a need to prove her dedication to Latina issues in order to justify her membership in an organization, which ostensibly was not meant for women like her. This exchange alone cannot fully reveal Tully's intentions, especially because her discussion with Font did not develop further as someone else (who the meeting minutes did not identify by name) suggested they should finish discussing updates before debating goals and strategy.

However, Puerto Rico was not explicitly discussed again even during the section dedicated to goals and strategy. The meeting minutes outline their goals as "1) consciousness raising through health education," "2) action – focusing primarily on enforcing, reforming, or changing regulations," and "3) Building community organization for an alternative health care system."[134] Population control and imperialist policies were only mentioned as a subpart of the first goal, consciousness-raising.

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[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.

This interaction demonstrated the relationship between Mujeres and a non-Latina feminist organization, which illustrated how Mujeres understood Latina identity and attempted to translate those ideas into their work. Despite the fact that most members of Mujeres were Mexican, the organization prioritized including Puerto Rican women. Tully argued that sterilization abuse should not be presented without giving the context of its use against Puerto Rican women and for imperialist purposes. The fact that Tully represented Mujeres at the CESA meeting was also notable. According to historian Lilia Fernández, Tully was a white progressive and active in community organizations in Pilsen.[135] Fernández argued that having white women represent Mujeres at certain meetings outside of the neighborhood was not unusual. This may have been a strategic choice to prevent Mujeres from becoming associated with organizations that would have alienated some social conservatives in Pilsen. As CESA was closely tied to the CWLU, which promoted abortion access, having Tully represent Mujeres could help distance the organization from those aspects of the CWLU's work.

In contrast to their work with CESA, Mujeres members did not center ethnic identity as much in their work with Planned Parenthood, perhaps in consideration of Planned Parenthood's broad and diverse constituency. Additionally, Mujeres made different choices about institutional representation. As with CESA, Mujeres placed Gwen Stern, a white woman, on the board of Planned Parenthood during the early years of their collaboration. Later, Mujeres had a more public and direct relationship with Planned Parenthood, perhaps indicating a shift in the values and priorities they wanted to communicate.

According to Fernández, Mujeres' choice to have Stern represent them on the board of Planned Parenthood was a 'strategic' decision, because of Stern's ethnic identity.[136] Having a

[135] Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City,* 253.
[136] Ibid., 346-347.

white woman on the Chicago board of Planned Parenthood helped Mujeres distance itself from an organization seen as supporting abortion. Abortion was a sensitive subject for Mujeres, and as such, they never publicly promoted it, which would have alienated opponents to abortion Pilsen.[137] This is similar to Mujeres' choice to have Mary Tully represent their organization at meetings with CESA in 1975. Stern and Tully's representation of Mujeres during meetings with outside institutions hinted at the role of identity in coalitional politics. Choosing Stern and Tully as representatives was as strategic choice, but denied Latina members the opportunity to share their own experiences with other activists and gain skills related to working with organizations outside of Pilsen. Prioritizing the organization's reputation within Pilsen and maintaining their members' somewhat conservative image as symbolic 'mothers' of the Pilsen community precluded Mujeres from certain more radical options during their activism outside of the neighborhood.

However, this strategy of having white women represent Mujeres in meetings with outside feminist organizations began changing by 1976 when Luz Maria Prieto, Mujeres' executive director, was unanimously elected to the Board of Directors of Planned Parenthood in the Chicago area.[138] Prieto also served as the Secretary of Planned Parenthood's Chicago area board of directors.[139] She also represented Mujeres on the Planned Parenthood Association Chicago Area Client Services and Volunteer Committee in 1977 and 1978.[140] In this capacity, she attended committee meetings and provided feedback and recommendations on existing

[137] Ibid., 256.
[138] Letter from David C. Hilliard, dated July 1976, Box 21, Folder 9, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[139] Letter from Luz Maria Prieto, dated Feb 14, 1978, Box 21, Folder 9, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[140] Planned Parenthood Association/Chicago Area Client Services and Volunteer Committee 1977-78 Contact List, Box 21, Folder 8, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.

Planned Parenthood programming, such as pregnancy counseling programs and recruiting volunteers.[141]

According to the meeting minutes of the Client Services and Volunteer Committee, most of Prieto's contributions focused on event logistics and planning. For example, meeting minutes dated April 14, 1977 stated: "Luz Prieto suggested that arrangements be made with host organizations for provision of babysitting services. This is used at other agencies to stimulate attendance."[142] Meeting minutes for the next month recorded that Prieto was involved in organizing events for youth.[143] Unlike, the meeting minutes from CESA, which described Tully's emphasis on incorporating ethnic identity into their planning, the Client Services and Volunteer Committee meeting minutes did not record Prieto making similar contributions. Why did Prieto not mention ethnic identity more considering that it was central to Mujeres' organizational mission? It is possible that Prieto mentioned ethnic identity in more subtle ways that were not recorded by the meeting minutes. Additionally, Prieto may have felt more secure in her role representing a Latina women's organization, as she was a Latina women, and did not need to use comments in meetings to establish her dedication or legitimacy. The absence of Latina issues in the meeting minutes may have also reflected the limits of coalitional politics in fully integrating a diversity of perspectives, including ethnic identity. Regardless, the very presence of Prieto on the board and at Client Services and Volunteer Committee meetings reflected a change in how Mujeres engaged with outside organizations, which advocated for policies that some more conservative members of the Pilsen community might have found objectionable.

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[141] Jean Nielsen, Direct Services Committee Meeting Minutes, dated November 10, 1976, Box 21, Folder 8, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[142] Jean Nielsen, Direct Services Committee Meeting Notes, dated April 14, 1977, Box 21, Folder 8, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[143] Jean Nielsen, Direct Services Committee Meeting Minutes, dated June 8, 1977, Box 21, Folder 8, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.

In addition to collaborating with Chicago groups like CESA and Chicago Area Planned Parenthood, Mujeres worked with the National Council of La Raza (NCLR). The NCLR was originally founded in the 1960s as a regional Chicano organization, which went by the name Southwest Council of La Raza (SWCLR).[144] According to sociologist Cristina G. Mora, the organization's founders chose the term *la raza*,[145] because they believed other labels like Spanish-speaking or Spanish-surnamed excluded many people who ought to be included.[146] Initially, SWCLR focused on funding projects initiated by their member organizations. However, by the time Mujeres began working with the organization, they had changed their name to National Council of La Raza and moved to Washington, D.C., where they broadened their focus from regional to national issues.[147] At this time, the NCLR began emphasizing their view of a Hispanic pan-ethnicity.[148] The NCLR had an ambiguous and inclusive definition of Hispanic, based on the idea that different Hispanic groups were connected by a shared culture and experiences of socioeconomic disadvantage.[149]

Mujeres applied to be an affiliate of the National Council of La Raza in 1987. In their application, they requested assistance with resource development, planning and goal-setting, financial management, and working with the private sector.[150] This reflected the NCLR's change in priorities once they moved to Washington, D.C. – they shifted from direct financial assistance to offering technical and other support. Unlike in Mujeres' work with Planned Parenthood, their application to be an affiliate with the NCLR clearly communicated the role of ethnic identity in

[144] Mora, *Making Hispanics*, 54.
[145] *La raza* literally translates to "the race." The term was embraced by participants in the Chicano movement and was often used as a synonym for Hispanic or Latina/o people.
[146] Mora, *Making Hispanics*, 54.
[147] Mora, *Making Hispanics*, 58.
[148] Ibid., 60-61.
[149] Ibid., 67-69.
[150] "National Council of La Raza Affiliate Network Application for Affiliation," Box 20, Folder 19, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.

their organization. For instance, their statement of purpose in the application read, in part, that their mission was "to provide social services to Latinas (most of whom have multi-problem families and are mono-lingual, Spanish-speaking)."[151] This definition of Latina is notable because it included a language component, which was not always the case with other community organizations in Pilsen. The application also asked applicants about the ethnic background of their board members. Mujeres answered that currently four out of seven board members were Hispanic, but they hoped to increase the board's size and the number of Hispanic members.[152] Their goal was to have at least ten Hispanic board members serving on a board with twelve to eighteen members total. The application asked Mujeres what percentage of their clients were Hispanic – they answered approximately 85%.[153] Unlike the meeting minutes of the Planned Parenthood Client Services and Volunteer Committee, this application highlighted the importance of ethnic identity.

In response to this application, the NCLR Board of Directors unanimously approved Mujeres' request to be an affiliate during their meeting on April 10, 1987.[154] However, the fact that Mujeres joined the NCLR as an affiliate should not be taken by itself to imply that they used the same definition of Hispanic pan-ethnicity that the NCLR did. The NCLR did have affiliate members that represented specific national groups as there was no requirement for affiliates to represent or serve pan-ethnic constituencies.[155] However, as seen in their other work with CESA and their choice to use the term *Latina* in their name, Mujeres did use a similar version of pan-ethnicity in their work. According to Mora, the NCLR communication often used the terms

[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Letter from Raul Yzaguirre, dated April 13, 1987, Box 20, Folder 19, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
[155] Mora, *Making Hispanics*, 81.

Hispanic, Latino, and *la raza* interchangeably.[156] This can be seen in a letter the NCLR president Raul Yzaguirre sent to Mujeres after they became an affiliate. He referred to Mujeres' clients as "Latinas" and "Hispanic women" – both labels acknowledged gender and a sense of pan-ethnicity.[157] Through their affiliation with the NLCR, Mujeres became part of a national network of organizations that advocated for a Latina/o pan-ethnic constituency.

Outside of Pilsen, Mujeres often emphasized the inclusiveness of their pan-ethnic identity, which was a strategy many other Pilsen-based community organizations used. This choice is most obvious in their interactions with the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse and the National Council of La Raza. In contrast, ethnic identity was not a documented part of their interactions with Planned Parenthood, which may have been a reflection of Planned Parenthood's priorities and choices about what was worth recording. Mujeres' changing choices about how to mobilize ethnic identity were also reflected in the ethnic background of the representatives they sent to CESA and Planned Parenthood. The decision to have Mary Tully and Gwen Stern represent Mujeres to CESA and Planned Parenthood, respectively, indicated a strategy of distancing Mujeres from aspects of those organizations which conservatives in Pilsen might find objectionable while still maintaining a working relationship. This strategic choice prevented Mujeres' Latina members from gaining direct experience in coalitional politics and limited Mujeres' options for activism outside of the neighborhood. This strategy shifted when Luz Maria Prieto, Mujeres' executive director, began representing Mujeres in interactions with Planned Parenthood, perhaps indicating Mujeres' increased willingness to be publicly aligned with the organization.

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[156] Ibid., 79-82.
[157] Letter from Raul Yzaguirre, dated November 17, 1987, Box 20, Folder 20, Mujeres Latinas en Accion Records, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.

Conclusion

Members of Mujeres Latinas en Acción expanded the practices associated with motherhood to include caring for all of Pilsen, with a focus on helping young Latina women. The meanings associated with motherhood were influenced by both ethnic identity and the gender traditionalism that existed in Pilsen during the 1970s and 1980s. Mujeres members acted as 'mothers' for young women by creating a pseudo-domestic space in the drop-in center and through their foster program. By embracing certain practices associated with motherhood, Mujeres members were able to gain increased community acceptance while still engaging in sometimes radical practices, such as participating in male-dominated spaces in public life. Just as becoming a mother could transform the status of an individual woman, Mujeres' embrace of mothering practices changed the organization's institutional identity to become more acceptable to the community, despite their work challenging gender traditionalism and male dominance. However, their choice to prioritize their reputation within Pilsen limited their ability to engage in certain types of activism outside of the neighborhood, such as having Latina members represent the organization in certain situations. Instead, they sought to create working relationships with organizations outside of Pilsen in a manner which avoided controversy and projected a unified view of the Latina/o community, despite disagreements within Pilsen about gender and ethnic identity.

Mujeres members justified their participation in activism as an expansion of their traditional feminine roles, which is reminiscent Welter's argument about women's participation in public life in the 19th century. In both cases, larger social forces motivated women's entrance into public life. For Mujeres members, the male-dominated Chicano movement highlighted that Latina women's needs were not being fully addressed. This context influenced how they

constructed and mobilized a pan-ethnic identity to fulfill their goals as both women and Latinas inside and outside of Pilsen.

Today, Mujeres is proud to be the "longest-standing Latina organization in the country, serving to empower Latinas through services which reflect their values and culture."[158] In March 2018, Mujeres celebrated 45 years of service to Chicago's Latina community. As the organization continues their work and looks to the future, they echoed the words of one of their founders, María Mangual: "Our fighting days are not behind us – but once again ahead of us. It will require cross-generational efforts… We need to ensure that we remain vigilant to protect the rights of our daughters and granddaughters…"[159] Mujeres continues to use the language of motherhood to frame their activism.

Mujeres' choice to engage in practices associated with motherhood influenced the possibilities associated with coalitional politics both inside and outside of Pilsen. This strategy provided them a means to gain community support despite the strength of gender traditionalism in Pilsen. As a result, Mujeres was able to successfully collaborate with community organizations, forming coalitions around their shared interest in issues affecting Latina/o Chicagoans and ensuring gender was considered in programmatic decisions. Mujeres also worked with feminist organizations outside the neighborhood, highlighting the perspectives and priorities of Latina communities. In these situations, their maternal practices played less of a role, but still gave them the authority to speak on behalf of their community. Mujeres strove to create a new version of motherhood and family, one free of patriarchy and inequality. Mujeres' success offers an important example for others engaged in coalitional activism that reaches

[158] Mujeres Latinas en Acción, "History."
[159] Ibid.

across borders of ethnicity and gender to create new spaces that embrace a person's whole identity.

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CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES (CLAS) September 2014 – present
Student Programs and Administrative Assistant, University of Chicago
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ILLINOIS COALITION FOR IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE RIGHTS June 2017 – September 2017
Policy Intern
- Wrote and published a 30-page report about the disparities in U Visa certification policies among Illinois law enforcement and the resulting adverse effects on the ability of immigrant crime victims to access justice
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NATIONAL IMMIGRANT JUSTICE CENTER July 2016 – September 2016
Intern, Immigrant Legal Defense
- Prepared immigration applications for submission with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, including applications for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), employment authorization, and U Visas
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BRIGHTON PARK NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL (BPNC) July 2015 – September 2015
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- Analyzed qualitative and quantitative community survey data about health and education in Brighton Park
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UCHICAGO FEMINIST FORUM October 2014 – present
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