CONTINUED STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL: HOW PLAN JEFES Y JEFAS AFFECTED POOR WOMEN’S LIVES IN GREATER BUENOS AIRES, 2002-2005

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Development Management & Policy

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Washington, DC
December 7, 2006
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Introduction

The “Heads of Households’ Program for Social Inclusion” (“Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar Desocupados por la Inclusión Social”)\(^1\) was launched by the Argentine government as a response to the economic emergency that hit the country in December 2001. This Plan\(^2\) was the most important social policy implemented by President Eduardo Duhalde. It critically contributed to poor families’ subsistence over the course of the subsequent years. The Plan provided a minimum monetary subsidy to unemployed heads of households with under-aged dependents. At the same time, it obliged beneficiaries to participate in one of several activities, designed to improve their future employment, educational and productive prospects. Called “non in-kind exchange” (in Spanish, “contraprestación”), beneficiaries should fulfill this requirement in order to receive the monetary benefit. Women made up 69.3 percent of the total beneficiaries of the Plan, \(^3\) even though they represent approximately a third of

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\(^1\) From now onwards we will refer to it as Plan Jefes y Jefas.

\(^2\) Plan Jefes embodied a social policy that was enacted by the government as an anti-poverty “plan” with goals and conditions for its beneficiaries. Given the exchangeable use of these terms, from now onwards “plan” and “social policy” will be utilized indistinctively.

the heads of households in Argentina.\(^4\) On average, 73.2 percent of the total beneficiaries engaged in the “contraprestación.”\(^5\) According to the Argentine Ministry of Labor,\(^6\) most of the women involved in the “contraprestación” ended up working in the community projects\(^7\) sponsored by the program. This fact had important effects in these women’s lives.\(^8\)

**Previous literature**

Many studies have been produced since *Plan Jefes y Jefas* was enacted in early 2002. By and large, national assessments on this social policy produced primarily by the Argentine Ministry of Labor paid attention to the effects of the program in terms of “installed capacities” (how much training and learning did the recipients complete), “self-esteem” (how the beneficiaries assess the plan in terms of their self-esteem), and satisfaction of the beneficiaries.\(^9\) International organizations, on the contrary, have focused on operational variables, such as its coverage according to its eligibility criteria, the impacts on poverty and employment, etc.\(^10\) These evaluations normally

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5 Alfredo Monza, y Claudia Giacometti…p. 11.


7 Given the exchangeable meaning of community project and community center, both terms will be used indistinctly.

8 The predominant forms that the *contraprestación* adopted were related to community work. Around a 60 percent of the total participants in the *contraprestación* were women performing community work. Carla Zibecchi, “Programas Sociales y su ceguera al género (Argentina 1992-2004). UN análisis centrado en las trayectorias y experiencias de los beneficiarios y beneficiarias del Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar”, Maestría en Políticas Sociales, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales – UBA, 2006, pp. 179-180.


paid scarce attention to the micro-social effects of these programs in terms of social inclusion, citizenship, group and individual trajectories, etc. Generally, macro level analyses focused on the efficiency and efficacy of its budget execution and the impact of the program on the overall economic structure. They also discussed what factors determined program eligibility and participation, and whether the program was successful in achieving the occupational insertion of the recipients and helping them attain a minimally decent standard of living.

Recent scholarship on social policies has paid attention not only to macroeconomic issues but also to other political, social and institutional aspects of the Plan Jefes y Jefas. Pautassi’s pioneer analysis focused on the question of social rights and benefits in the implementation of this particular social policy aimed at guaranteeing social inclusion. Muñoz’s political science study described how the program represents a dimension of the conflictive relationship between the state and


social demands in their struggle to set the political agenda. Golbert’s study also advanced a political analysis on the intervening actors in the promotion of the Plan Jefes y Jefas during the particularly unstable political juncture when it was enacted.

A more recent project by Giovagnoli analyzed the dimensions involved in political networking in the distribution of the program, combining quantitative and qualitative tools of analysis. Last, an important part of the project carried out by the UNSAM team has focused on how the institutional relations that support the implementation of the Plan affected the amplification of women and men’s citizenship, focusing on the beneficiaries’ practices and representations.

Over the last few years, other assessments on the Plan have inquired how the household, the community and gender relations are affected by the new patterns of social survival. They have for example analyzed how women were affected by the crisis and the Plan Jefes y Jefas as it was enacted. Other brief projects have explored the aspects related to the socialization of beneficiaries in the context of the labor or

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community activities in which they were involved through the program. More recent studies have taken a micro social approach. Several analyses have attempted to reckon the qualitative effects experienced by individuals and certain populations as they become members of this social policy. Zibecchi has focused on the government’s failure to include a gender perspective in the implementation of the Plan and some of the subjective meanings that emerged with it. Peralta has examined the experiences of program recipients, focusing on aspects like the meaning of work and the perceptions about welfare policies.

The present study
My study finds that the Plan Jefes y Jefas has become a fundamental part of poor women’s survival strategy as heads of households and wives. New meanings and representations have emerged as poor women became massively engaged in the program-sponsored community projects. It assumes that for many of them this has represented a first introduction to an activity outside the domestic dominion. It

21 An example is the study by Mariana Andrea Gabrinetti, “Trayectorias personales, laborales y significación sobre el trabajo en beneficiarios del Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogares Desocupados. Estudio de caso,” 2005.
24 The interactions experienced by participants in social programs usually adopt meanings that transcend their daily lives. In a sort of ‘secondary socialization’ individuals may redefine themselves when they become “a part of” a social project. Robert Castel, Centralidad del Trabajo y Cohesión Social, en El mundo del trabajo, La Découverte, París, 1998.
therefore explores the effects that the *Plan Jefes y Jefas* had on women as results from their involvement in collective projects from the standpoint of their self-perceptions and representations.

This thesis is based on the premise that the analysis of the specificities, circumstances and realities in which women are embedded is fundamental to comprehend the nature of the ‘apparent’ and ‘invisible’ transformations that they experience. Acknowledging how the setting of the Plan could lead to the amplification of the exercise of rights, this study also focuses on their practices and representations. This study advances an integrated investigation of the multiple subjective dimensions that were affected by this social program during the crisis. This analysis is required to give a full sense of poor women’s realities under the Plan’s design. In addition, I will be focusing on their experiences, representations and perceptions as they reflected potential (or actual) personal transformations such as family and social recognition. This study acknowledges how by virtue of recognition, women could potentially improve their unequal social status, provided that other material dimensions of their exclusion are also improved.

This research draws extensively on interviews with women beneficiaries of *Plan Jefes y Jefas*. As women narrate their life experiences, they become engaged with certain meanings and desires which interact with their gender identities. In the process of self-representation, the internal image or individual representation and the collective

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images constructed upon them have become connected. As a sort of pivot between the two realities, their female subjectivity has delineated the way they feel, the way they think, the way they experience reality.\textsuperscript{26}

State policies play an important role in facilitating or undermining poor women’s opportunities for personal development. Even though they have been analyzed as the mediations of a new “public” patriarchy which perpetuates women’s dependence on the social welfare provisions,\textsuperscript{27} they may also become a “power resource” for poor women.\textsuperscript{28} In the contexts of implementation of social policies, women’s socialization is a negotiated process, in which institutional modes of control are confronted with women’s behavior. As a consequence, women have the choice to embrace, accommodate or contest the social plan. \textit{Plan Jefes y Jefas} has represented this choice for poor women in the Greater Buenos Aires metropolitan area. \textsuperscript{29} In turn, the way they have embraced and accommodated to the policy’s system has certain effects on women’s perceptions and representations of their lives, their roles, their labor, their immediate context, and social policies.

\textsuperscript{27} Socialist feminists have analyzed the state’s social policies through their support of the nuclear family (which relies on male wages and female domestic services). In this light, the state embodies objectivity, neutrality, and rationality, thus representing the institutionalization of male subjectivity. Moreover, state policies therefore promote a social order in the interest of men as a gender.
\textsuperscript{28} More recent studies have moved away from the “top-down” approach towards a “power resource” analysis. They focus on the state practice and seek to restore female agency. Other studies concentrate on women as clients who may use the state’s resources to their advantage in the context of their domestic power struggles. Lynne Haney, “Homeboys, Babies, Men in Suits: The State and The Reproduction of Male Dominance”, \textit{American Sociological Review}, 1996, Vol.61 (October: 759-778), pp.760-61.
\textsuperscript{29} From now onwards Greater Buenos Aires and GBA will be used indistinctly.
State policies usually stress the development of “social capital,” while transferring resources in an assistance-based manner, often reproducing clientelistic practices. In the state’s view, citizenship “empowerment” is the result of a participatory engagement of individuals as co-executers of these policies. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish the development of a new consciousness as an unanticipated effect of social policies.  

Social participation in new collective organizations has a transformative potential for women. It breaks the separation between the public and private spaces, giving women the chance to elaborate a new language of rights. This study finds that women’s active involvement in projects promoting collective spaces where solidarity develops has generated important qualitative effects in their lives.

It is the purpose of this research to show that women who participate in collective projects promoting ties of solidarities outside their homes have amplified their social horizons – both emotionally and cognitively. This does not deny that social policies such as Plan Jefes y Jefas might reinforce women’s traditional roles. However,

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30 While poverty-alleviation programs foment women’s participation, organization and training, they also lead to social and female empowerment. Involvement in collective spaces may enhance a new consciousness which materializes in new demands for the improvement of labor and educational conditions, for more access to financial resources, and a stronger defense of their social rights. Lieve Daeren, “Mujeres Pobres: Prestadoras de servicios o sujetos de derecho? Los programas de superación de la pobreza en América Latina desde una mirada de género”, Seminario Internacional: “Políticas y programas de superación de la pobreza desde la perspectiva de la gobernabilidad democrática y el género”, CEPAL, Proyecto gobernabilidad democrática e igualdad de género en América Latina y el Caribe, Ecuador, agosto de 2004.


the program has broken their social isolation, and enlarged their social networks of support, while offering them new spaces of socialization and reciprocity. In this dynamic, some of them have developed new capacities—such as leadership—, increased the trust in themselves, and demanded recognition and respect for their contribution to community and domestic work, and for their female identity. Some of these women may eventually develop a new capacity to negotiate and modify family arrangements, demand a more equal redistribution of household work, and even to denounce violence and abuses in their families.

**The research plan**

In order to assess how *Plan Jefes y Jefas* affected poor urban women’s lives in Morón within the GBA area, this study addresses various questions:

1) What were the effects of participation in community solidarity projects on poor women’s lives?

2) Did poor women’s active involvement in community services grant them new material and symbolic resources?

3) What meanings, representations and perceptions did women’s involvement in community survival affect?

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33 The expression “Gran Buenos Aires” refers to the urban region extending from the City of Buenos Aires—considered an autonomous district since 1996’s constitutional reform, to the 24 urban districts—locally called “partidos”—that are geographically adjoined to it. Traditionally, the City of Buenos Aires was denominated the “Federal Capital” of the country. Its 24 adjacent urban districts altogether are also referred to as the “Conurbano Bonaerense,” an expression that can be recognized in the organization of the data recollection for the permanent household survey -Encuesta Permanente de Hogares, EPH. According to the 2001 National Demographic Survey –Censo Poblacional-, the total population of the Greater Buenos Aires area amounted to over 12 million people. Special Report: “Qué es el Gran Buenos Aires-?” Ministerio de Economía y Producción, Instituto de Estadística y Censos –INDEC-, Buenos Aires, 2003.
4) Did the socialization of their work at the community centers enhance poor women’s recognition and respect in their families and communities?

The main finding of this research is that the majority of poor female beneficiaries of Plan Jefes y Jefas became active through their involvement in community service and productive projects related to their family survival. Their participation in collective solidarity projects expanded their representations and perceptions of themselves, their work and families, while increasing their social and familial recognition. In this sense, a social policy which was envisioned as a short-lived, limited mechanism to hinder the economic crisis, might in time demonstrate to have positively affected poor women’s lives.

In order to highlight the effects that Plan Jefes y Jefas had on poor women’s perceptions and representations, several dimensions of the beneficiaries’ experience will be analyzed: a) the impacts of participation and solidarity in their lives; b) their perceptions of the program focusing on the meaning of work, the use of time, the learning experienced, and pride; c) their perceptions of the “Other” as opposed to the “Self” (emphasizing on non-working beneficiaries and “Piqueteros”34 groups); d) the

34 In the late 1990s, groups of unemployed factory workers began their protests by organizing road blockades in two Argentine provinces. Their emblematic presence with pickets in their hands awarded them the name “Piqueteros.” Later on, new groups of unemployed developed similar protest strategies in several urban centers of the Greater Buenos Aires region. Today, the “Piqueteros” are diversified into different groups and respond to different leaders. Some of these groups distribute and handle subsidies coming from social programs such as Plan Jefes. The “Piqueteros” can be interpreted as subordinate or
impacts of their experience on the family power structure as it relates to housework, income administration, and child care; e) the effects of socialization on their social recognition and respect.

This thesis is organized as follows. The first chapter will analyze the connections of intra and extra-domestic work in order to understand women’s poverty and social status in relation to men. The recent changes in the labor market and women’s differentiated labor insertion in relation to the inequalities experienced in the family are an important backdrop to our understanding of why and how poor women in Greater Buenos Aires face multiple social and economic problems. Women’s mobilization towards collective survival will illustrate how their gendered roles go hand-in-hand with the positions they adopt in the extra-domestic spheres especially in times of economic decline.

The second chapter will begin by outlining how Plan Jefes y Jefas’ design epitomized recent policy-making oriented towards short-term poverty-alleviation solutions. I will place emphasis on the material and symbolic dimensions involved in this type of social programs and how it may affect beneficiaries in both intended and unintended ways. It focuses particularly on the program’s set-up in relation to the contexts of socialization that it generated through the sponsorship of community service.

oppositional groups that articulate need interpretations intended to challenge, displace, and/or modify dominant ones. Having gained public visibility, their interpretations of what people need are not simply “representations,” but rather take the form of actions and interventions. Some dimensions of the relations of these movements with the Plan’s beneficiaries will be developed in Chapter 4.
The third chapter will provide an overview of the case study, highlighting the relevance of the choice for the district of Morón. A description of the community centers as the contexts where the interviewed women performed their labor activities associated to the program, and the way these centers operate will also be developed in this chapter. Next, the four centers visited will be fully depicted, paying attention to their material and cultural aspects. Finally, I will provide an overview of the social and economic characteristics of the interviewed population.

The fourth chapter will examine the effects of Plan Jefes y Jefas in contemporary poor women of the municipality of Morón. This is the main empirical chapter.

These first two chapters are based on secondary sources on work-family, gender inequalities, social policies, collective mobilization, and the existing literature on Plan Jefes y Jefas. The third and fourth chapters use guided interviews to beneficiaries based around the previously specified set of concepts in order to discuss the empirical validity of my research questions in relation to the case study selected. However, the effects of the Plan on poor women and their behavioral responses in this specific case study are informative of what can be expected in similar economically challenged areas of the GBA.

The analysis is based on the reconstruction of the various narratives incorporated in this investigation. For the most part, the background information was

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35 This area is located in the adjacent periphery of the City of Buenos Aires (where the Capital of the country is settled) inside the province of Buenos Aires.
provided by the “key informants,” namely the coordinators of the community centers visited during the recollection of empirical information. Additionally, the context data that informed this research was extracted from an interview conducted by an UNSAM investigator with the Director of Employment and Social Economy in the Municipality of Morón.

Although this work attempts to outline and examine important dimensions related to the effects of contemporary social policies on poor women, much more research is needed to fully comprehend the multiple constrains and opportunities they face. We expect that this work will contribute to advancing the current debates on the social policies implemented as a response to acute social turmoil in unstable economic environments as they affect gender inequalities.

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36 This Direction operates within the Secretary of Economic and Social Development in the Municipality of Morón (Dirección de Empleo y Economía Social, Secretaría de Desarrollo Económico y Social).
Chapter 1: Female Poverty in Argentina: Family, Work & Economic Crisis

This chapter will elaborate a framework to understand the material and symbolic circumstances that constrain poor Argentine women who experience poverty. By drawing connections between the inequalities that they face in the family, community and the labor market, this chapter will attempt to define the particular “female poverty” that women in the GBA suffer. Last, it will briefly examine how poor Argentine women extend the “naturally female” reproductive functions to the public sphere in times of economic hardship such as the crisis of 2001.

1.1 Introduction

Women represent a disproportionate share of Argentina’s poor. One of the main reasons for this is that they stand for a growing proportion of the households’ heads who are responsible for meeting household reproduction costs and domestic production, even when they are increasingly represented among low-wage workers. Growing inequality and persistent poverty are tightly intertwined with the gender division of labor and the household and family organization. These constrains explain why Argentine women have been particularly affected by the recent economic declines and structural restructuring processes.

Gender inequalities that Argentine women suffer are deeply entwined with the sexual division of labor. Gender is a social construction of the sexual difference

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between men and women, which represents a relational category. Both male and female genders interact in the social structure in the spheres of production and reproduction. Gendered roles\textsuperscript{38} exert an influence in the self-conception of individuals and shape their expectations while restraining their personal and collective projects. Social behavior, female and male representations, values and attitudes are assumed as natural even though they are determined by gender subordination and its power structure. By the same token, gender identities\textsuperscript{39} are shaped by the “gendered order.”\textsuperscript{40}

Finally, gender relations, like any other social relation, are subject to change, particularly in moments of crisis.\textsuperscript{41}

It has been argued that women’s involvement in the labor outside the domestic sphere can help modify their subordination.\textsuperscript{42} Women’s participation in the labor

\textsuperscript{38} In order to understand gender relations, three constructs are basic: “…boundaries, negotiation and domination, and consciousness. Boundaries express the complex structures – physical, social, ideological, and psychological- which establish differences and commonalities between men and women. The reciprocal processes of negotiation and domination elucidate the ways in which women and men act to support and/or challenge the existing system of gender relations. While domination describes systems of control and coercion, negotiation addresses the ways women and men bargain for privileges and resources. Consciousness assumes various forms ranging from gender awareness to feminist/anti-feminist consciousness, and is conceived as a process which develops dialectically in the social relations of the sexes.” Judith M. Gerson & Kathy Peiss, “Boundaries, Negotiation, Consciousness: Reconceptualising Gender Relations,” \textit{Social Problems}, Vol. 32, No. 4. (Apr., 1985), pp.317-331.

\textsuperscript{39} “Identities are constructed through difference –through the relation to what is not, to what is lacking, to what has been called…the constitutive outside.” Identities “can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render ‘outside’…” (Hall, 1996a:5, see also Laclau, 1990; Butler, 1993). The form of unity, of closure, that they exhibit is constructed and discursive. Another way of stating this is that identities involve discursive processes of essentialization and homogenization. A strategic essentialism denotes a strategy for achieving recognition and protection. Stephen Lynn “Gender, Citizenship and the Politics of Identity,” \textit{Latin American Perspectives}, Vol. 28, No. 6, Power, Policy and Neoliberalism. (Nov., 2001), pp. 54-69.


\textsuperscript{42} Elizabeth Jelin, \textit{Pan y Afectos: La Transformación de las Familias}, FCE, México, 2000, p. 121.
market should foster women’s personal development and social insertion, resulting in an essential route to economic empowerment and personal autonomy.\textsuperscript{43}

Yet, by itself, getting an income does not guarantee a better quality of life and decision-making power for women. As they gain access to the labor market, a process of conflict and negotiation takes shape in the realm of the family. In this light, the effects of women’s participation in the labor market need to be interpreted as a combination of private and public life, between reproductive and productive work. Women exercise multiple roles, combining intra-domestic tasks and economic or extra-domestic activities. Many women are responsible not only for domestic work and childbearing, but also for food and income supply.\textsuperscript{44}

In short, Argentine women’s subordination rests primarily in the sexual inequalities that structure productive relations and the division of labor. Even as women get massively involved in the labor market, they still are almost exclusively responsible for the domestic work and the family care. The way in which the labor market is structured, its relationship with the family and the “economy of care” shows that women have considerably less time than men, thus more limited access to education. This, in turn, affects their chances of receiving better salaries for their work.


Poor women suffer different levels of social exclusion. They find enormous difficulties to integrate in the diverse spheres of the social world. In essence, social exclusion begins to operate when individuals lose access to formal labor and the social security benefits derived from it. In this scenario, work is no longer a stable basis on which individuals construct and pursue a career project, as well as a family and community life. Individuals gradually de-affiliate from the production of goods and services, affecting their mobility, their access to recreational and cultural activities, etc. In this stance, a qualitative loss of social citizenship occurs, by which they are no longer able to enjoy their freedom and construct their identity since they cannot exercise social rights. In addition, social and familial bonds begin to disintegrate and

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45 Social exclusion largely characterized the social impact of the economic transformations that took shape during the 1990s, primarily caused by the loss of stable employment, which affected vast sectors of the population. The consequent loss of social security protection provoked social and familial disruptions. This process weakened social bonds by affecting individuals’ capacity to integrate with others in the production of goods and services, to move around, to build and remodel their habitat, to enjoy leisure and cultural activities, etc. In other words, social exclusion also implied the gradual loss of people’s capacity to enjoy their freedom and to construct their identities. Social exclusion limited the development of social rights, and its most extreme form disenfranchised civil and political rights. A gradual loss of citizenship was thus under way. Pablo Vinocur y Leopoldo Halperin, “Pobreza y políticas sociales en Argentina de los años noventa”, CEPAL, División de Desarrollo Social, Serie Políticas Sociales, Santiago de Chile, 2004.

46 Its opposite, social inclusion, is only guaranteed when individuals can develop their capacities in society provided that certain basic conditions of autonomy are assured, when social/economic policies promote equality, as they pursue economic rationality, Laura Pautassi, “Igualdad de derechos y desigualdad de oportunidades. Ciudadanía, derechos sociales y género en América Latina”, CIEPP, Agosto de 1999, p. 5.

47 Citizenship, whichever form it takes, from antiquity to the present, shares certain common characteristics: it has always implied a reciprocity of “rights in front of” and “duties towards” the community. Citizenship has entailed a belonging to a community in which individuals develop their lives. Such belonging has been accompanied by diverse levels of participation. Laura Pautassi…
social fragmentation takes shape. Finally, this process obstructs the emergence and consolidation of collective identities and the recognition of diversity in public spaces.  

In their constrained environments, poor Argentine women are unable to develop a sense of autonomy outside the sphere of the family. Given that social and political rights are enjoyed in the public realm, the abuses and inequalities suffered by these women are left to the private sphere of the family where the state cannot intervene. In turn, when the family is the only social institution where female identity is modeled a “mutilation” of women’s citizenship takes form.

1.2 The Labor Market, Women’s Work & Female Poverty

1.2.1 The recent evolution of the Labor Market

The evolution of the labor market structure in the 1990s serves to understand how the different forms of precarious employment and unemployment had a differential impact on women. During the 1990s, Argentina’s traditionally difficult labor market situation took darker shades. Though labor demand expanded dynamically during

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50 “Between 1991 and 2002 the following effects were observed: i) an increase in women’s economic activity rate from 27.7% to 32.4% and a small decrease of men’s activity rate from 52.7% to 51.9%; ii) a relative stability in women’s employment rate (around 25%) and a strong fall of men’s employment rate, from 49.2% to 40.4%; iii) the persistency of a growing sub-occupation rate for women, from 13.1% to 24.3%, and an increase in men’s sub-occupation rate going from 5.9% to 14.6%; iv) a growing unemployment rate for both men and women: women’s unemployment rate grew from 7.3% to 20.2%, while men’s grew from 6.9% to 22.3%. In short, the economy’s growth pattern developed during the 1990s and the posterior recession and crisis after the termination of the convertibility monetary model augmented the already existing symptoms of under-employment, the over-exploitation of the employed labor force, the flexibilization of employment conditions, the lack of social security protection, and the
this period, unemployment rates increased steadily due to the parallel increase of the labor supply. The evolution of the labor structure gave way to an unprecedented enlargement of informal labor, whose main traits were scarce productivity and a lack of security benefits.

Labor reforms implemented in the 1990s such as “labor flexibilization” were the main causes for the profusion of temporary and ostensibly precarious jobs and the growth of open unemployment mainly due to the occurrence of unstable labor cycles. At the same time, rampant income concentration and inequality encompassed an ever increasing poverty.

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52 Following the ILO traditional categorization, the informal sector reflects the economically productive sector constituted by non-structured units of scarce productivity and of small size. Self-employed professionals, workers without a fixed salary and chiefs or employees with a salary working in micro-enterprises are all included in the informal sector. ILO: Key Indicators of the Labour Market.
53 “Flexibilization of constraints, including trade union intervention, on employer decisions on the use of labour and labour-cost reductions were among the reforms deemed necessary for the success of the new economic model. These “labour reforms” were expected to improve external competitiveness and employment performance.” Adriana Marshall, “Labour Market Policies and Regulations in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico: Programmes and Impacts,” Employment Strategy Papers: A Comparative Study in the Framework of the Global Employment Agenda, prepared for the ILO’s project on Employment Challenges in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, 2004.
55 For more information on labour market policies implemented in the 1990s, see Adriana Marshall, “Labour Market Policies and Regulations in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico: Programmes and Impacts.”
Open unemployment, low-quality work and under-employment\(^{56}\) (usually referred to as “sub-empleo”), all comprise the growing instability that characterizes the daily struggle of the urban labor force in Argentina, which concentrates approximately 90 percent of the total labor force.\(^{57}\) Labor instability is characterized by continual rotations from different informal and/or precarious jobs and in-and-out of the active labor force. Gender, age and education are central to understand the incidence of labor instability.\(^{58}\) Unemployment and under-employment put additional stress on women and youth, affecting them and their families simultaneously. They are more vulnerable to the negative impacts of the economy given the fewer resources on which they count.

Given the highly segmented productive structure, low-quality labor has since the 1990s predominated. In October of 2001 shortly before the crisis erupted, at least 37 percent of all urban employed were non professional “self-employed” (“cuentapropistas”) and employers or employees in micro-enterprises –not counting domestic workers. Aggregate employment of small and micro enterprises –they have between 6 and 25 employees- amounted to more than half of urban employment. The aggregate of non-registered employed (“asalariados no registrados”), non-professionals self-employed (“cuenta propia no profesionales”), workers without a fixed salary and domestic services’ workers embody the total amount of precarious workers. The

\(^{56}\) Underemployed: employed population that involuntarily work less than 35 hours weekly, and would be willing to work more hours. Under-employment is normally the case of employees who work fewer hours than they would be willing to because employers offer time-limited contracts to more employees rather than full-time contracts with legal entitlements to a few workers.


apparent recovery of employment registered in October of 2002 obeyed to a further extension of informal labor, with most precarious activities becoming the more predominant forms of labor.\textsuperscript{59}

Open unemployment that reached over 18 percent of the economically active population in December of 2001 affected some subgroups more consistently. Men aged between 25 and 34 were generally better off than the rest of the economically active population. In May of 2002, as the crisis advanced—after a long recession period which had begun in 1998 and had further affected the labor stability—the highest peak of unemployment amounted to 21 percent of the economically active population.\textsuperscript{60}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>December 2001</th>
<th>May 2002</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Unemployment in Argentina</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
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In the Greater Buenos Aires area (GBA), in October 2001 46.4 percent of the economically active population fourteen years and older was employed, while 19.2 percent were unemployed. Further reinforcing the precarious labor structure, 16.6 percent were under-employed, and 31.3 percent were over-employed.\textsuperscript{61} \textsuperscript{62} As stated before, these trends particularly affected women and youth. This assertion is true in the

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Over-employed: employed population that works more than 45 hours weekly, INDEC, www.indec.gov.ar
case of the interviewed women, most of who lost already precarious jobs and were exposed since 2001 to tremendous economic hardship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor Status</th>
<th>Economically Active Population</th>
<th>14 Years or Older in GBA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under-Employed</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-Employed</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2.2 Women and Work
Argentine women increasingly entered the labor market since the 1960s. This trend intensified towards the end of the 1980s. Nonetheless, their economic situation remained precarious. The increase in women’s labor involvement responded to different reasons, being the loss of job safety for the male head of the household fundamental. The increase of women’s education, the decline of fertility rates, and the pursuit of female economic independence were also important.\(^{63}\)

Currently, women have unequal labor opportunities as compared to men. These inequalities are determined by two inter-related phenomena: the occupational segmentation by sex and the sub-valuation of female work. Information available on

the GBA area shows that in October 2005, women’s total economic activity\textsuperscript{64} rate was 50.4 percent \textit{vis-à-vis} 76.4 percent for men. Furthermore, 43.5 percent of women were employed, compared to 68.8 percent of men.

However, not all women are equal. While all women share structural constraints in their labor insertion, poor women face much harder circumstances as they participate in labor. Factors like socioeconomic, ethnic or racial origins further affect poor women. Since labor participation of women is directly associated with the socioeconomic status of the household, less privileged women have much lower activity rates in the formal labor market than women in non-poor households. By the end of the nineties, only 36.5 percent of poor women (from the lowest-income segments) participated in the labor market, compared to 48.3 percent of middle-income women and 55.4 percent of top income women.\textsuperscript{65}

Poor women are vulnerable to two simultaneous exclusion processes in their attempt to work. On a structural level, all women are subject to maternity and reproductive-related open and covert discrimination. Additionally, the existing legal protection was designed in a context of formal employment, not covering the informal and dependent job activities that precisely poor women are most likely to undertake. Not by coincidence, female participation was channeled towards precarious activities

\textsuperscript{64} The “Economically Active Population” is characterized by the individuals who have a work occupation, or who are looking for one. Both employed and unemployed individuals comprise this category.

\textsuperscript{65} This information was elaborated by Elizabeth Jelin, \textit{Pan y Afectos – La transformación de las familias}, FCE, México, 2000, p. 39.
in the informal labor market\textsuperscript{66} which did not require any professional qualification and lacked any social security coverage.\textsuperscript{67} In sum, legal frameworks fail to acknowledge that the labor market’s characteristics, the sexual division of labor in the domestic and public spheres, the control over the household’s resources, and the access to productive goods and services all condition female and male access to work in opposite directions.

1.2.3 Female Poverty
Poverty is intimately associated with the prevalent labor patterns of labor insertion. The gendered segmentation of labor results in a limited access to both material and symbolic resources, especially for women. In the most economically disadvantaged groups, this phenomenon contributes to an intergenerational transmission of poverty.\textsuperscript{68} The socially typified “female activities”\textsuperscript{69} often belong to the informal sector where the incidence of poverty is higher, earnings are lower, work is less protected and the possibilities of organization and representation of interests are less likely to occur.\textsuperscript{70} Given poor women’s major involvement in the informal economy and in precarious jobs, they are more exposed to the downturns of the economy, all which reinforces

\textsuperscript{66} According to the ILO, the definition of “employment in the informal economy” as a percentage of the total national employment includes employment in small micro-productive units whose particular traits correspond to each country’s labor structure. ILO: Key Indicators of the Labour Market.


\textsuperscript{69} In poor socioeconomic sectors, the ‘female’ activities are primarily associated to services: domestic work, in households other than their own performing cleaning, laundering/ironing, sowing, child care, elderly care and health-centers related care. In some cases, informal commerce-related activities are undertaken by women.

\textsuperscript{70} Rosalia Cortés, Women’s work in Argentina in the eighties: new forms of unprotected work?, Mimeo, Buenos Aires, 1991.
their poverty. These populations are thus, working-but-poor. Moreover, since women chiefly work in poorly-remunerated activities, they depend on their partner as the family’s primary bread-winners.\textsuperscript{71}

On the whole, poor Argentine women have unequal access to economic, social, cultural and political resources in contemporary societies. However, productive resources, such as credit, land, and human development enhanced by access to adequate education, remunerated opportunities in the labor market, and participation in the political and decision-making process as well as involvement in social networks, are overall more limited for poor women.

In poor socioeconomic sectors, separation and divorce often coincide with abandonment and domestic violence. Under these circumstances, women and their families are extremely vulnerable to fall into poverty. The “feminization of poverty”\textsuperscript{72} in Argentina is tightly related to the critical increase of families whose head is female,\textsuperscript{73} and implies a differentiated experience of poverty for men and women.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{71}In Latin America, the informal economy concentrates almost half of the labor opportunities (46 percent), and women have a higher share (49 percent) of that percentage than men (44 percent). M. E. Valenzuela, \textit{Políticas de empleo para superar la pobreza: Argentina}, Editorial Andros, OIT, Sgo. de Chile, 2004, p. 41.


\textsuperscript{73}This phenomenon is the result from an increase in single-motherhood and divorces, the weakening of family relations regulating income transfers from men towards their families, and the social consequences of economic crisis and structural adjustment programs. Betriz Giri, “Trabajo, participación social y relaciones de género”, Ateneo: Documento 32, El Sostén de los Hogares, Secretaría de Desarrollo Social, Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 2003, p. 13.

Poor women heads of household living with their children face a double burden: they must support their family economically (even though some of them may count on their ex husbands’ usually unstable support), and do the housework while taking care of their children. They are also subject to discrimination in education, employment and access to credit and capital. Thus poverty amplifies already existing gender inequalities.

Argentine female-headed households are alarmingly poor. In October of 2002, 38 percent of the female-headed households were poor, while poverty reached 67 percent of the female-headed households with young children.

1.3 Social Responses to Economic Hardship: Women’s Promotion of Survival

Despite the inequalities experienced in intra and extra domestic spheres, poor Argentine women have actively engaged in strategies aimed at collective survival. These interventions have responded to economic difficulties in a fashion that has often reproduced women’s gendered roles, while also opening opportunities for changes. In addition, these actions have often preceded and later intertwined with poverty-alleviation policies such as Plan Jefes y Jefas in early 2002.

Just as economic collapses occur, unequal impacts exert different pressures on the diverse constituents in society. Belt-tightening policies, for instance, result in more

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75 Jelin, Pan y Aféctos: La transformación de las familias, FCE, México, 2000, p. 91.
76 Ibid, pp.99-100.
limited access to employment, social services and material resources necessary to live, strongly affecting poor women. Given their unequal standing, women usually assume the responsibility of the domestic sphere –even financially-. As a consequence, they feel subjectively more compelled to generate family subsistence strategies in the face of downturns in the household’s economy.\textsuperscript{78}

In the face of increased economic grievances, the typical strategies\textsuperscript{79} that families pursue are: the extension of working hours of already employed members, or additional entries into the labor market of other –usually younger- members of the family; the decrease of consumption of goods and services; the reorganization of residency patterns by incorporating new members who can collaborate with a salary, etc. Social and collective responses include informal networks of mutual help.\textsuperscript{80}

The accomplishment of the reproductive function leads women to get in contact with the local space, with the neighbors, and with the local state in its role of provider of urban services.\textsuperscript{81} Women’s presence in the extra-domestic local space is permanent, though not undertaking labor activities but rather performing reproductive

\textsuperscript{79} In Ariel Fiszbein, Paula Giovagnoli and Isidro Aduriz, “Argentina’s crisis and its impact on household welfare,” Working Paper N.1/02, World Bank Office for Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, November 2002, these authors stated that households affected by the crisis have progressively adopted what they called “coping strategies” (according to their family income) such as: (a) adaptive household strategies (by changing consumption patterns and use of services), (b) active household strategies (involving the increasing use of physical, financial and human assets available to the household), and (c) social network strategies. The latter include relying on assistance from friends, family, NGOs and/or the government. Given its government-sponsored nature, \textit{Plan Jefes y Jefas} constitutes an example of social network strategies, which became one of the most important survival means adopted by the poorest segments of the population.
\textsuperscript{80} Elizabeth Jelin, \textit{Pan y Afectos: La transformación de las familias}, FCE, 2000, México, pp. 101-103
\textsuperscript{81} María del Carmen Feijoó, “Una bibliografía anotada de los estudios sobre el status de las mujeres en América Latina”, CEDES/CLACSO/CONICET,
responsibilities aimed at survival. In the urban space, these actions usually spur the emergence of solidarity bonds and reciprocity networks within the neighborhood or immediate community suffering analogous economic grievances.

Historically, these actions have usually been organized at the neighborhood level around a set of practical issues, and mainly represented temporary solutions to the economic emergency. The vast majority have responded to the breakdown of their subsistence economy by organizing collective meals, health cooperatives, mothers’ clubs, neighborhood water-rights groups, or their own crafts and textile collectives. Throughout the years, these actions have entailed a significant female participation, and their proliferation in the face of continual or cyclic economic declines has turned them into relatively permanent phenomena. Some experiences of community organization of services and state intervention in the form of social policies can make a difference for socio-economically challenged sectors of the population who cannot afford services such as child care. They may be governmentally sponsored, materialize

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82 Women’s experience of socio-economic crises and state social policies oriented to theirs and their families’ welfare, is usually mediated by wealth (socio-economic status), marital status, age (which relates to their life experience and expectations), family structure, class (whether or not they had to work for a wage), religious belief, education and ethnicity. Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (ed.) “Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction – The Struggle for Modernity,” OUP, 1995, p. 183.


85 Ibid, p.103.
grassroots organizations’ projects which appeal to social solidarity, or else be promoted by NGOs.

Collective action organized at the survival level has been extensively defined in different ways. The concepts of ‘community based organizations’ and ‘own-account social-political initiatives’ (usually referred to as “cuentapropismo social-político”) illustrate some of the most important definitions based on their functional dimensions. The latter notion delves on the improvised nature of pioneer survival actions generated by social agents who are not politically affiliated. They initially begin their actions with their own resources and later on develop relationships with new or existing social or state-sponsored networks. The antagonistic model is the one by which collective interventions aimed at solving generalized lack of resources spring from political machineries. Both set forth a transformative potential in poor and excluded communities and usually embody a variety of social organizations. However, both types of organizations develop opposite articulation patterns in order to obtain and provide social services, such as the “clientelistic pattern” and the “network pattern.” In the first case, a local political leader (more precisely called “caudillo político”) exerts asymmetric relations of dominion on the territorially-based political mediators (usually

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86 A close enough term for these survival social strategies would be “grassroots’ organizations”.
called “punteros políticos”\textsuperscript{89}, who in turn externalize the same vertical power over the dependent social programs’ beneficiaries. In controlling the material resources derived from social policies these leaders allow the organizations to exist. However, they severely limit the development of the organizations, which are tied to their political needs and opportunities. Conversely, the network pattern of articulation has allowed many organizations to become legitimized while providing them with access to information, material resources, etc.\textsuperscript{90}

Both of these patterns coexist in present-day GBA poverty bastions. What is more important, they have become fundamental in the implementation of social policies. Finally, some of these collective survival projects still share the legacies of the Peronist\textsuperscript{91} political and ideological identity, as well as its historical legitimacy. The existence of survival networks in poor urban conglomerates is largely associated to typically clientelistic\textsuperscript{92} Peronist “problem-solving networks”\textsuperscript{93} and of the legacy of

\textsuperscript{89} There is no exact translation for the term “puntero político.” They are the “mediators” or “brokers” that, by virtue of their actions and the representation of leadership that they exert, usually administer and/or distribute material resources or facilitate help. They mediate the relationship between the “patron” and the “clients.” For more information on their roles and the “theatrical” representations that they enact, see Javier Auyero, “Evita como performance. Mediación y resolución de problemas entre los pobres urbanos del Gran Buenos Aires”, en Javier Auyero (comp.), ¿Favores por votos? Estudios sobre clientelismo político contemporáneo, Editorial Losada, Buenos Aires, 1997.


\textsuperscript{91} Juan Domingo Perón was the Argentine populist political leader par excellence whose influence created the socio-political cleavage Peronism-anti Peronism in the Argentine society. He governed during the following presidential terms: 1946-1951; 1951-1955 (he was deposed before completing this term); 1973-1974 (he died only a year after he started this last term). Among several other books, consult Joseph A. Page, Perón, una biografía, Grijalbo, Buenos Aires, 1999.

\textsuperscript{92} Clientelism is here broadly understood not only as an “exchange of goods for votes” but also as a set of distributive and performative actions embedded in social relations. Javier Auyero, “Evita como performance. Mediación y resolución de problemas entre los pobres urbanos del Gran Buenos Aires”, en
Peronism as a strategy of rule continually exercised by contemporary politicians in Argentina.

In addition, beneficiaries’ involvement in these organizations (before and after they become beneficiaries of social programs) represents a valid survival strategy which has been persistently exercised in populations endangered by economic declines.\textsuperscript{94, 95}

In this context, women’s engagement in actions aimed at survival has been historically conditioned by the structures that affect their unequal access to resources.\textsuperscript{96} Their entrepreneurial initiatives depend on external economic support, relying partly on the state’s provisions to articulate some of their collective interventions. At the same time, in contemporary Argentina, poor women residing in urban areas such as the GBA are called to actively participate and cooperate with the state’s interventions.

Female Latin American activists –in this case, Argentine poor women in the GBA area- assert their traditional roles as wives and mothers as they fight for survival on behalf of their families, and class consciousness is not at the basis of their

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\textsuperscript{95} For information about the different social impacts of the socio-economic crisis in poor urban populations after the crisis of 2001, see Sandra Cesilini (coord.) et al., “Crisis Económica y Crisis Social en las Organizaciones Sociales, las Comunidades y las Familias Argentinas: Evaluación rápida de la emergencia social”, ERES Report II, December 2002.  
\end{flushleft}
organization. Since poor women usually do not develop other identities far from their spouse-mother roles (such as workers’ identities), in times of hardship they recur to a ground where their identities are clear: the ground of motherhood. In reaching out to fight for collective survival, they are exercising a sort of “social motherhood.” Meanwhile, gender images are constructed through the implementation of policies for the poor. In turn, the reproduction of certain gender relations in the political ground coexists with potentially transformative social actions primarily headed by women.

After the economic crisis of 2001 in Argentina, five social responses to the crisis were identified at the neighborhood level: barter networks, popular food kitchens, diverse unemployed workers’ protests, neighbors’ assemblies (in middle-class neighborhoods), and “socially recovered productive factories” (usually referred to as “fábricas recuperadas”). In all of these actions, there was a high presence of women who, by reaching out to their immediate communities and neighbors (besides relying on their relatives’ help) pursued alternatives for their families’ survival. Their poverty and lack of access to opportunities made their roles as mother-spouses the center of their lives. In this context, Plan Jefes y Jefas granted an opportunity for many women who would have otherwise stayed isolated in their private homes.

97 Ibid.
98 Graciela Di Marco, “Ciudadanía femenina”, en Relaciones de Género y Exclusión en la Argentina de los 90, ADEUEM Editorial Espacios, Argentina, 1998. This concept will be further applied to chapter 4.
99 For more information on this, see Marcela Cerrutti and Alejandro Grimson, “Buenos Aires, neoliberalismo y después Cambios socioeconómicos y respuestas populares,” Working Paper, Center for Migration and Development, Princeton University, July 2004, p.34.
Among the survival strategies seen after the crisis burst out, some socio-economically disadvantaged sectors joined or occasionally cooperated with the “movements of unemployed workers” of the “Piqueteros” movement. Some community projects also established connections with these movements in order to gain access to material and human resources.

2.1 Introduction
As part of the economic model implemented in the 1990s, the economic policies delineated a new socioeconomic matrix characterized by a high degree of vulnerability. In the new productive system workers’ participation was minimized, while devaluing the inherited labor patterns and dismantling the welfare state. The adverse outcomes of these reforms resulted in an alarming growth of poverty. Certainly, poverty and extreme poverty grew relentlessly since 1993, significantly accelerated since 1998, and explosively expanded in 2002 and 2003. The zenith of this process was reached in October of 2002, a few months after the crisis burst, when 57.5 percent of the population was under the poverty line, while 27.5 percent was under the extreme poverty line. By the end of 2002, 15 million people were poor, out of whom 42 percent were urban poor.

101 The concept of “social vulnerability” refers to the possession, control and mobilization of material and symbolic resources that allow the individual to develop in society. Financial capitals, labor experience, education, family structure, participation in social networks of reciprocity, are some of its main traits. Carlos H. Filgueira, “Estructura de Oportunidades y Vulnerabilidad Social, Aproximaciones conceptuales recientes”, Seminario Internacional: “Las diferentes expresiones de la vulnerabilidad social en América Latina y el Caribe”, CEPAL, Santiago de Chile, Junio de 2001.
104 Data obtained from the Permanent Household Survey (“Encuesta Permanente de Hogares”) of the INDEC in October of 2002, for 28 urban agglomerates, which represent 67,7% of the Argentine population.
These effects in turn, called for state intervention via employment and income maintenance programs—forms of state intervention that had little precedent in Latin America and in Argentina. Following the recipes for advancements of the so-called Social Liberalism advocated by the Washington Consensus’ constituents, an increasing number of policies were created as a consequence of the process of dismantling and retrenchment of public institutions.

At the same time, the structural and cultural transformations that took place during the 1990s had a profound impact on the conception of state intervention. The market became the legitimized arena for individual achievement, while the state’s leverage was reduced to assist populations that failed to benefit from the “spill-over” effect (“efecto derrame”) expected as a result of the economic transformations. While the universal rights and benefits associated to remunerated work weakened, they were gradually replaced by “residual assistance” programs. By the end of the 1990s,


108 A crisis of the connection between labor security-social security highlights the metamorphosis of the social problem (the so-called “cuestión social”). As long as employment articulated the main aspects of social citizenship, unemployment reveals not only a problem of lack of labor offer but it also distorts the limits of social citizenship, producing an acute social segmentation. Nora Britos (coord.) et al., “Políticas sociales, ciudadanía y desempleo: arreglos institucionales y representaciones sociales”, Informe de Investigación, Escuela de Trabajo Social, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 2003.
social policies begun to entitle temporary “benefits” to candidates deemed eligible, while demanding a “non in-kind exchange” for the subsidy received.\textsuperscript{109}

When the crisis of 2001 struck Argentina, social policies\textsuperscript{110} attempted for the first time to incorporate the notion of “social inclusion” to their content and design.\textsuperscript{111} Though vaguely defined, this reveals an institutional awareness of the process of social exclusion that had continually worsened since the 1990s. However, the “emergency” nature of social policies, their focalized targeting method\textsuperscript{112} \textsuperscript{113} and their assistance-based content (referred to as “asistencialismo”) certainly counteracted any attempt to accomplish a sensible process of social inclusion in the long run.\textsuperscript{114}


\textsuperscript{110} By public policy we understand the set of programs and activities advanced by one or more of the state’s powers in order to regulate a social problem that affects specific segments of the population or the entire society by delaying or annulling the development of productive forces. Though it might be privately executed, state resources are allocated and social actors make decisions towards its completion, M. E. Valenzuela, “Políticas públicas para la promoción de la igualdad de género en el trabajo y el combate a la pobreza”, en M. E. Valenzuela Ed. Políticas de Empleo para Superar la Pobreza: Argentina, Proyecto Género, Pobreza y Empleo en América Latina, OIT, Santiago de Chile, 2004.

\textsuperscript{111} This is the case for the two latest social programs: “Heads of Households’ Plan for Social Inclusion” launched in 2002 and “Families’ Program for Social Inclusion” initiated in 2003.

\textsuperscript{112} “Focalized targeting” is a key element in contemporary policymaking. It is usually informed by three different criteria: a) a territorial criteria, b) an income criteria, c) an individual criteria (based on either the stage in the life cycle -i.e. children, the elderly- and/or condition (i.e. pregnant women, head of household, etc.). Pablo Vinocur y Leopoldo Halperin, “Pobreza y políticas sociales en Argentina de los años noventa”, CEPAL, División de Desarrollo Social, Serie Políticas Sociales, Santiago de Chile, 2004.

\textsuperscript{113} In general, focalized policies are not universal in nature, they have no fiscal impacts –given that their subsidies are so small–, and they prove a structural inability to deal with massive problems of employment and poverty. Rubén M. Lo Vuolo, “Social Protection in Latin America: Different Approaches to Managing Social Exclusion and their Outcomes,” ESRC Seminar Series: Social Policy, Stability and Exclusion in Latin America, London, June, 2005.

\textsuperscript{114} These three elements were elaborated by Pablo Vinocur and Leopoldo Halperin in “Pobreza y políticas sociales en Argentina de los años noventa” in order to characterize the main traits of contemporary social policies.
2.2 Plan Jefes y Jefas

Enacted with decrees 165 and 565 on January 22nd of 2002, Plan Jefes y Jefas’ stated goal was to “promote the family right to social inclusion,” thereby understood as “the right to an adequate standard of living for an individual and his/her family, including food provision, clothing, adequate housing, and the improvement of the conditions of existence.” Its legitimacy was based on the declaration of a “food, sanitary and occupational emergency.”

The program designers in the Ministry of Labor rapidly acknowledged the fact that it represented an “emergency solution” facing a socio-economic collapse without precedents in Argentine history. At the same time, the process of exclusion and inequality underway was destabilizing to political institutions. In addition, the program served as a mechanism to contain social conflict that would have otherwise endangered the system’s political institutions. In this sense, the state’s discourse asserted that the protection of social rights was an indispensable condition to allow for a full democracy.

Plan Jefes y Jefas offered a limited monetary subsidy to socially targeted poor unemployed heads of households with children or mentally challenged dependents. The program was initially conceived as an income protection/income transfer policy...

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given the acute social and economic crisis. Nevertheless, although it was not an unemployment reduction program, a new resolution promoting the beneficiaries’ labor insertion was added to the program. Upon this principle, a new requirement was imposed on its beneficiaries in the form of a “non in-kind exchange” ("contraprestación") for the subsidy. Therefore, the participation of beneficiaries in training-for-labor activities, their involvement in productive projects and/or community services, their gradual incorporation to formal education, and their insertion in the formal employment market became substantial.

Plan Jefes y Jefas, like other social policy models proposed today, acts upon a segmented notion of social inclusion since it focuses on the lowest-income sectors of the population. In that sense, this program reproduces the legitimized relationship

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119 Employment programs and income maintenance schemes for the unemployed, with or without training components, may be divided into 1) cash transfers to the unemployed, 2) employment creation programs, 3) assistance to sectors with a potential for employment generation, 4) supply-side programs such as training for the unemployed or incentives to retire from or to delay entry into the labor force, and 5) intermediation and placement. Adriana Marshall, “Labor market policies and regulations in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico: Programs and impacts.”

120 Employment creation is now beginning to be recognized as a means of reducing poverty. “…Crisis response by the ILO was visible and effective in countries such as Afghanistan and Argentina, and the role of the ILO and the centrality of employment-related issues in crisis management and reconstruction…” Report of the Director-General: “ILO Programme Implementation, 2002-03,” ILO, Geneva, p. 27. [http://www-ilo-mirror.cornell.edu/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc92/pdf/rep-i-a.pdf](http://www-ilo-mirror.cornell.edu/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc92/pdf/rep-i-a.pdf)
between “beneficiary/user” and the state.\textsuperscript{121} Recent “emergency programs”\textsuperscript{122} have been formulated as mechanisms to restrain and alleviate the effects of structural adjustment on specific population groups most adversely affected by crisis junctures, namely children, women, the elderly and native (indígenas) populations. A point that has been already debated, \textit{Plan Jefes y Jefas} –like many other contemporary programs– has replaced the concept of universality in pursuit of an egalitarian society with an emphasis in the provision of basic services to the poor.\textsuperscript{123} As stated before, \textit{Plan Jefes y Jefas}’ explicitly enunciated the protection of social rights. However, the premises that guided its design and functioning did not necessarily materialize the extension of rights and benefits aimed at promoting social inclusion. The instrumental rationality underlying this social program legitimized the dominant representations of poverty\textsuperscript{124} and the contemporary solutions proposed to solve it.\textsuperscript{125}

In \textit{Plan Jefes y Jefas}, the non in-kind exchange attempted to promote economically-viable activities in the community as well as human development. The

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{121} This categorization was produced by Graciela Cardarelli y Mónica Rosenfeld, “Con las mejores intenciones: acerca de la relación entre el Estado pedagógico y los agentes sociales”, en Silvia Duschatzky (comp.), \textit{Tutelados y Asistidos, Programas sociales políticas públicas y subjetividad}, Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2001, p. 26.
\item \textsuperscript{122} In understanding this shift towards focalized policies, we need to bear in mind the influence exerted by the orthodox vision acclaimed by the World Bank under its “social risk management” premises. Rubén M. Lo Vuolo, “Social Protection in Latin America: Different Approaches to Managing Social Exclusion and their Outcomes,” ESRC Seminar Series: Social Policy, Stability and Exclusion in Latin America, London, June 2005.
\item \textsuperscript{123} María Elena Valenzuela, “Políticas públicas para la promoción de la igualdad de género en el trabajo y el combate a la pobreza,” en M. E. Valenzuela (Ed.) \textit{Políticas de Empleo para Superar la Pobreza: Argentina”}, Proyecto Género, Pobreza y Empleo en América Latina, OIT, Chile, 2004, p. 20.
\item \textsuperscript{124} In every social programming process, a political, a technical and a social construction of poverty are elaborated. In this dynamic, the state’s hegemonic position is reassured. Three dimensions are put forward as this process operates: a rhetoric stance, a bureaucratic stance, and a social control stance. See Graciela Cardarelli y Mónica Rosenfeld, “Con las mejores intenciones: acerca de la relación entre el Estado pedagógico y los agentes sociales”, pp. 44-57.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Ibid, pp. 59-61.
\end{itemize}
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fulfillment of these activities was meant to endorse the program’s goal of “social inclusion” through the formative, productive or community activities.\textsuperscript{126} In this sense, the program reproduced the state’s predominant mindset that seeks to alleviate –and eventually overcome- poverty through the sponsoring of human and community-based capacities. At the same time, it legitimized the notion by which underscoring work-oriented policies will improve the future labor insertion of poor populations.\textsuperscript{127}

Nevertheless, \textit{Plan Jefes y Jefas} can be categorized as a unique social policy for several reasons. It was the largest focalized social policy ever set forth in Argentina, with approximately 1.9 million beneficiaries at its peak -October 2002\textsuperscript{128}. Even though it was focalized through eligibility criteria,\textsuperscript{129} it was massively extended to poor populations. An unprecedented scenario of vast poverty called for a uniquely large program. This, in turn, shows how policymaking is a dynamic field that reflects the debates and consensus advanced in society at large.


\textsuperscript{127} This program reproduced the primary patterns of contemporary employment programs: assistance-based nature, focalization and a decreased labor quality. A particularly important problem of this plan is its “blindness” for gender…Carla Zibecchi, “Programas Sociales y su ceguera al género (Argentina 1992-2004). Un análisis centrado en las trayectorias y experiencias de los beneficiarios y beneficiarias del Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar”, Maestría en Políticas Sociales, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales– UBA, 2006, p. 179.


\textsuperscript{129} For information on the specific criteria that was applied in the plan’s conditions of eligibility, see Pablo Vinocur y Leopoldo Halperin, “Pobreza y políticas sociales en Argentina de los años noventa”, CEPAL, División de Desarrollo Social, Serie de Políticas Sociales, Santiago de Chile, 2004, p. 38.
On the low end, the program had a limited impact on poverty and extreme poverty. Although the program was benefiting a considerable number of families, analyzing the total eligible heads of households, only 30 percent of them had access to it, as the survey conducted in October 2002 shows. Nevertheless, the program was reaching families experiencing the worst social-economic conditions. For instance, the same survey proved that, considering the total income of beneficiaries’ families, 92 percent were under the poverty line.\footnote{Luis Beccaria, Oscar Altimir and Martín Gonzalez Rozada…p. 19.}

An unexpected outcome of this social policy was that even though it was designed for heads of households, it ended up covering mainly spouses.\footnote{Still so, later on we will see how “spouses” are in many cases “de facto” heads of households or “single mothers in that they cover most of the housework, child care and financial burden of the household.} Evidently so, male heads of households had greater access to odd or informal jobs than women.\footnote{As stated in the previous chapter, nonetheless, women have increasingly become heads of households (amounting to approximately 25-30 percent of the total heads of households in Argentina. Even bearing this in mind, the program mainly covered women who are not the head of the household. My observation of the interviewed women confirms this assertion. See the ratio of female to male heads of households in Morón in the following chapter. See also the profiles of the interviewed women in the Methodological Appendix.} During the first year of the program (in September/October 2002), men only stood for 30.6 percent of the total recipients, while women amounted to around 69.4 percent of them. Similarly, in the Greater Buenos Aires Area, women amounted to 67.5 percent of beneficiaries, a much larger percentage than men (32.5 percent).\footnote{Laura Pautassi, “Beneficios y Beneficiarias: Análisis del Programa Jefes y Jefas de Hogar Desocupados de Argentina”, en M. E. Valenzuela (ed.) Políticas de Empleo para superar la Pobreza-Argentina, Proyecto Género, Pobreza y Empleo en América Latina, OIT, 2004.} Two years later, total female membership decreased to 63.8 percent, while men’s quota...
amounted to 30.4 percent, still corroborating a male under representation and a female over representation in the program.\textsuperscript{134}

This outcome can be partly attributed to the already discussed exclusion of poor women from the formal labor market and their confinement to the informal economy, the household and reproductive functions. This has important consequences in times of economic crisis. In such critical junctures, social policies can offer an opportunity for immediate survival. In this case, families relied on the subsidy offered by the plan as a supplementary salary to the male income –even though the latter was also precarious and in decline-. The program’s monetary contribution represented one of the survival strategies adopted by families suffering extreme economic deprivation by the end of 2001.

A second highlight of \emph{Plan Jefes y Jefas} was its partially decentralized and participatory nature, a trait that facilitated poor women’s large participation in community projects.

\emph{Plan Jefes y Jefas} inherited the social programming changes operated since 1995 by which a stronger participation of civil society and NGOs was promoted at the municipal level. The new \emph{civil participatory approach} was meant to boost individuals’ and communities’ managerial capacities through the enactment of “\emph{strategic planning}.” In order to achieve this goal, training, micro-productive projects and self-sustainable survival community projects were encouraged. The goal of social policies

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
was thus to protect and strengthen individual capacities in the context of their socialization, namely their families, neighborhoods, and communities. From the standpoint of the government, the most important matter was how to articulate its own efforts with the organizations in the civil society.\footnote{This vision was portrayed by Daniel Arroyo (ex member of the Ministry of Labor) in “El Sostén de los Hogares: Trabajo, participación social y relaciones de género”, Ateneo: Doc. 32, Secretaría de Desarrollo Social, Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 2003.}

In that sense, \textit{Plan Jefes y Jefas} materialized what contemporary social plans\footnote{Since the mid 1990s, in addition to food programs, two other types of policies have increasingly been promoted: on the one hand, income protection policies; on the other, labor-based programs, usually called “workfare programs.” Overall, the Argentine government identifies four types of social policies being applied today: (a) All sorts of food programs that usually generate an own aggregate value chain, by which local orchards and supermarkets coordinate strategies to deliver and exchange foodstuffs. (b) The second type is concerned with the socio-economic aspect of the local community and attempts to fuel micro-productive projects. Among structurally poor communities, small scale production has been exchanged in “barter clubs.” (c) A third type of policies has to do with generating human capacities while strengthening the community through ‘strategic planning’. In turn, they improve individuals’ technical skills to run these programs while strengthening local NGOs. The goal is to set an “economy of urban services” or a “social economy” while providing the members of poor communities the tools to “defend themselves” from their economic situation. (d) The fourth type is embodied in employment programs. However, they generally rely on national public infrastructure programs. The classic example was the “Programa Trabajar;” which in reality did not generate programs that could lead to local economic development. Daniel Arroyo, “El Sostén de los Hogares: Trabajo, participación social y relaciones de género”.} advocate for: a sort of “welfare mix,” by which diverse social actors –such as the local state, NGOs and community leaders together with the “submerged” (poor) communities- are urged to act together. Particularly the community-sponsored activities were structured upon group solidarity, an “organized community” and a “partner state.”\footnote{This categorization was elaborated by Graciela Cardarelli y Mónica Rosenfeld, “Con las mejores intenciones: acerca de la relación entre el Estado pedagógico y los agentes sociales”, en Silvia Duschatzky (comp.), \textit{Tutelados y Asistidos, Programas sociales políticas públicas y subjetividad}, Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2001… p. 32.} Although these “partners” are called “equals,” the state is still the
main source of political and symbolic power. Yet, these “partnerships” between the state’s local units, civil partnership, NGOs, and in some cases the private sector can only temporarily alleviate the needs by giving limited support. These actions are not sustainable in the long run given the scarce resources. Since welfare programs often result in “resource distribution clientilistic programs” (not addressing the structural causes of extreme poverty) they promote their recipients’ dependency. In relation to these circumstances, the Plan Jefes y Jefas falls short.

As the “welfare mix” takes form, the program beneficiaries and individuals that embody neighborhood organizations experience multiple senses of belonging, loyalties and functions. These individuals have assumed varied and often overlapped roles such as program-trained beneficiaries, children’s educators, neighborhood representatives, key actors in political groups, local government’s employees, etc. As a consequence, a new “assisted/subsidized citizenship” may arise as a result of this social assistance model. In this respect, Plan Jefes y Jefas was no exception: civil society was revalued as the privileged space where this anti-poverty “safety net” was assembled. The rationale is that in a context of an increasing social segmentation, civil society represents the ideal space where democratic reconstruction can occur. Despite the fact that in local arenas of community socialization anti-democratic patterns can taint daily

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139 This term was elaborated by Elizabeth Jelin in Pan y afectos: la transformación de las familias, FCE, México, 1998, p. 104.
140 Colloquially termed as “puntero político.” The definition of this term was elaborated in Chapter 1.
141 Graciela Cardarelli y Mónica Rosenfeld…p. 46.
142 Civil Society is interpreted here as the groups that interact in the immediate poor communities.
experience, they can also become important contexts where positive effects are experienced by program beneficiaries.

Following the Plan Jefes y Jefas’s design, every municipality—in coordination with the provincial government, administered and distributed the plan, while monitoring community projects. Community leaders and beneficiaries articulate and run these projects, with the economic and organizational support of the local government, NGOs, the private sector and religious organizations. The “Consejos Consultivos Provinciales” (Provincial Consultive Councils) were in charge of the accountability, development and follow up of the access of the recipients to the program. The “Consejos Consultivos Municipales y Barrales” (Municipal and Neighborhood Consultive Councils) were deemed to set the eligibility criteria for the beneficiaries’ incorporation to the diverse productive projects according to their profiles and demand. The mechanism to control the development of the plan’s activities was embodied in the Provincial and Municipal Consultive Councils.

Seeking to set out a plural and accessible administration of the program, both of these bodies welcomed members of the civil society such as workers’ representatives and union members, private sector organizations, members of social and/or non-governmental organizations, representatives of confessional and/or religious

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143 Graciela Cardarelli and Mónica Rosenfeld…pp. 31-39.
144 The program was executed through a decentralized organization that created bodies such as “Provincial-Municipal Consultive Councils” (Consejos Consultivos Provinciales-Municipales) both in the provincial and municipal levels of government.
145 This information was obtained from the “Manual of Instructions for Municipalities and Consultive Counsels” elaborated by the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security to the realm of Plan Jefes y Jefas’ implementation.
organizations and government officials.\textsuperscript{146} In short, the participatory approach was mainly embodied in these councils, though the general design of the program allowed for multiple “partnerships” such as the community projects where many actors intervened.

In accordance with the program’s design, the beneficiaries could fulfill the non in-kind exchange for the subsidy engaging in: a) “productive activities,” b) “educative activities,” or c) “community activities.” Productive activities aimed at endorsing “micro-productive projects” ("micro-emprendimientos productivos"). These micro-projects were conceived as self-managed initiatives that would produce low-scale goods and services and would in turn generate work and material resources while improving the prospects of the beneficiaries’ future labor insertion.

The “educative component” granted the opportunity to either complete formal elementary and/or secondary school education for adults or to get enrolled in professionally-oriented courses that would enhance the employability of the beneficiaries. The prerequisite was the previous scrutiny of the beneficiary’s labor and educational trajectory.

\textsuperscript{146} The intention to implement a program born out of a social concerted effort was evident in March 2002, when the government invited the Catholic Church and UNDP officials to the “Diálogo Argentino” ("Argentine Dialogue"), in order to formulate a new strategy to alleviate poverty with a universal character. A month later, the “Family Right to Social Inclusion” was sanctioned, according to which an income to every family would be guaranteed.
Finally, “community activities” were oriented towards the welfare of local communities. Community projects focused on services. They had to be oriented towards the needs and problems detected locally, count on human and financial resources made available to them and integrate civil society members, non-governmental institutions and public officials. In these projects, beneficiaries participated by collaborating in multiple tasks associated to the operating project. At the same time, community projects had to be “socially useful” by contributing to the common welfare of the local community.

As the program started, other variants of these basic categories were included, such as inserting beneficiaries in the private sector by establishing agreements between the latter and the municipality. In order to accomplish this, the interested enterprises were to enroll in an “Employers’ Registry” and should only complement the subsidy of the recipients to provide a full income to beneficiary-workers. Administrative work in municipalities was another form that the required non in-kind exchange adopted.

In reality, Plan Jefes y Jefas relies on infrastructure and human resources already in existence for its implementation. For example, the plan relied on community centers and all sorts of social entrepreneurs. In addition, almost 90 percent of the operating projects registered and sponsored by the Plan belonged to the category

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147 Community Projects have been catalogued by the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security in the “Second Evaluation of Program Heads of Household” (“Segunda Evaluación del Plan Jefes de Hogar”) as “collective activities that assist a number of necessities and social problems of great heterogeneity, that are generally associated to the beneficiaries’ context, and promote the development of activities that tend to address social issues or neighborhood and community infrastructure deficits.”
“community projects.” In such projects, “micro-productive activities” (26 percent), “social and community activities” (17 percent), and public spaces’ maintenance (14 percent) represented the largest percentages. Among all community projects, the “community food kitchens” (“ comedores comunitarios”)149, school support lessons, community orchards, bakeries, and “community clothing centers” (“roperitos comunitarios”) predominated.

The micro-productive projects were primarily centered on the production of foodstuff – vegetables and fruits, horticulture, apiculture, bread and marmalades; manufacture or artisan production – furniture, clothing, shoe-making; and the provision of services – mailing, child and elderly care assistance. In most of the cases, basic technical equipment was unavailable and the work was informally divided. The location of these projects was usually facilitated by neighbors or beneficiaries; and they lacked a wide commercial or distributive circuit.151

Women’s engagement in the Plan was outstanding. As can be seen in the following table, In October 2002, 69.7 percent of the female beneficiaries were working in the program-sponsored activities, compared to 30.3 percent of male beneficiaries. At the same time, 59.9 percent of men were working outside the program

149 Ibid, p. 44.
150 Given their very similar meaning, the terms “community food kitchen” and “community soup kitchen” will be used indistinctly in this study.
–and not in the program’s activities-, in comparison to only 40.1 percent of women. In this sense, the impact of the plan is evidently positive for women.\textsuperscript{152}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Working with \textit{P.JyJ*}</td>
<td>Working outside \textit{P.JyJ}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>October 2002</strong> (six months after plan was enacted)</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\* \textit{P.JyJ} stands for \textit{Plan Jefes y Jefas}

Poor women, otherwise economically inactive, working informally or unemployed, engaged in the program-sponsored community work activities. Though unexpected for the plan’s designers, women were more inclined to make the non in-kind exchange requirement their main labor activity. A total 74.3 percent of the beneficiaries were working under the program’s activities, among whom 87.4 percent collaborated in community projects.\textsuperscript{153}

According to another assessment, approximately 93.4 percent of the female beneficiaries undertook the labor or training activities sponsored by the program.\textsuperscript{154}

Their broader membership and participation in \textit{Plan Jefes y Jefas} has been attributed to family survival strategies assumed in order to cope with the economic crisis. In turn, women’s participation was the most outstanding unexpected outcome of this social policy.


\textsuperscript{153} Ibid, p. 17.

Even though it has been claimed that in practice, this program encouraged the reproduction of unprotected low-quality labor and functioned as a mechanism for co-opting loyalties and votes,\textsuperscript{155} in reality, \textit{Plan Jefes y Jefas} encouraged the participation of women in activities outside their households.

Admittedly, \textit{Plan Jefes y Jefas} reproduced the mechanisms of occupational segregation of women, relegating them to activities associated to reproductive work.\textsuperscript{156} Its design had neither an explicit intention to affect the intra-familial relations, nor in favoring women’s opportunities in the productive, reproductive and citizenship’s spheres. It analyzed the risk of impoverishment and social exclusion, and took the household as the only valid unit of analysis, treating it as homogenous and disregarding gender inequalities. However, its positive effect on women’s activity rates cannot be denied. During its enactment, unexpected positive outcomes emerged. Furthermore, transformative dynamics in the family and immediate community could arise from women’s engagement in the program’s underscored labor activities.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
Chapter 3: The Heads of Households’ Plan for Social Inclusion: An Overview of the Case

In this chapter I will advance an overview of the case. I will first outline the main historical, institutional and political features of the municipality of Morón, and provide an account of the demographic characteristics of its population. In the second section, I will describe the community centers visited during the fieldwork, where the beneficiaries of the Plan conduct activities in exchange for their subsidy. I will provide an overview of their origins, basic characteristics, infrastructure, affiliations, and human and material resources. I will then summarize the history of community projects in Morón, focusing on their main activities, their sources of economic support, and the importance of the community leaders/coordinators. In the last section of this chapter, I will discuss the cultural aspects observed at the community centers, mainly the gender dynamics related to the division of work.

3.1. The Municipality of Morón

Morón is located on the west side of the GBA1. It is very close to the City of Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina. This district originated with the industrialization process beginning in the 1930s as working-class populations migrated and settled in peripheral areas in search for their own land. Since the 1970s, the deindustrialization process, the inflation cycles, the recession periods and the general

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157 The term “municipality,” refers to the political and institutional dimensions of the space where Morón is located. Conversely, “district” (in Spanish “partido”) highlights its fiscal, administrative and territorial dimensions. In this study both terms will be used indistinctly.

158 The INDEC (National Institute of Statistics and Surveys) has delimited three regions GBA1-GBA2-GBA3 according to geographic and socio-economic criteria for the purpose of elaborating the national statistics on population, poverty, employment, etc.

159 See Methodological Appendix for more information on the case.
economic decline have profoundly changed the urban landscape of the GBA region as a whole. These processes thus, have deeply affected Morón (and the other districts of the GBA) creating poverty bastions within its realm. Morón recently suffered important territorial changes: it was divided into three districts. The current territory of Morón kept the middle class in it –even though it still has very poor populations-

Today, the GBA area is inhabited by almost 30 percent of the total poor populations in Argentina. Although the GBA1 section is economically better than the GBA2 and GBA3 sections, it still suffers considerable levels of poverty, unemployment and basic unmet needs. For instance, in 2001 13.6 percent of the households in the GBA1 area were extremely poor, and a total of 33 percent of its residents were under the national poverty line.

The district of Morón is politically and institutionally different from the rest of the Greater Buenos Aires area. The district currently administers 7,500 program beneficiaries. At its highest peak, 14,000 recipients were signed up by the municipality, and 4,000 additional individuals became beneficiaries through other means. Unlike other districts, Morón has pursued a transparent administration since the last Mayor was elected. Sabatella, the Mayor of Morón has its own political party different from the ruling Partido Justicialista or Peronismo-. This is reflected in the way Plan Jefes y Jefas was implemented in this district. The current administration has

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161 For more information on these assertions, see the Methodological Appendix.
162 The municipality of Morón has especially attempted to avoid clientelistic patterns of program distribution, and to handle public funds more transparently.
made an important effort to incorporate discursively the notion of gender and the construction of citizenship, from a perspective that highlights social inclusion. The authorities recognize that participating in community projects does not by itself lead to the social integration of the beneficiaries in public and productive long-term projects and to the construction of social citizenship.\textsuperscript{163} Regardless of the real implications of the administration’s decisions, the explicit allusion to social inclusion shows a particular institutional orientation which makes this case all the more relevant to assess the effects of \textit{Plan Jefes y Jefas} on poor women’s lives.

**A demographic overview of men and women in Morón**

In Morón, women amount to 52.5 percent of the population, while men amount to 47.5 percent. Present-day gender inequalities can be recognized in Morón: from the overall 39.9 percent that work, men amount to 24.2 percent, while women only reach 15.8 percent. Meanwhile, men’s total inactive population amounts to 14.1 percent, as opposed to 29 percent in the case of women.\textsuperscript{164} In 2001, almost 71 percent of men were the head of the household in Morón, while a little more than 29 percent of women declared to be the head of the household. Furthermore, 46 percent of women were economically active, in comparison to 74 percent of men.

\textsuperscript{163} These conclusions were elaborated by the UNSAM team comprised by Graciela Di Marco, Ana Laura Rodríguez Gustá, Valeria Llovet and Alejandra Brener, in “Ejercicio de derechos y capacidades institucionales en la implementación de un programa de inclusión social”, 3era Conferencia Latinoamericana de Ciencia Política, Universidad de Campinhas, Brazil, 2006.

\textsuperscript{164} \url{http://www.indec.mecon.gov.ar/censo2001s2_2/Datos/04568C92.xls}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population in Morón</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of Households in Morón</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed Population in Morón</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Inactive Population in Morón</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Active Population in Morón</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration based on the INDEC: "Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2001."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration based on the INDEC: "Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2001."

Sixty-one percent of men were employed against 14 percent unemployed. By contrast, 33 percent of women were employed versus nearly 13 percent unemployed.\(^{165}\)

Regarding education,\(^{166}\) uneducated men amount to 0.9 percent of the local population, while women’s non-educated population reaches 1.4 percent. As for elementary school, 4.8 percent of women

\(^{165}\) However, this information needs to be analyzed cautiously given this source’s impossibility to grasp the sub-employed populations with precarious or unstable jobs, particularly in times of economic crisis. The differences are noticed more precisely in the groups most vulnerable to low-quality labor (women, youth and the elderly) and in both the employed and inactive populations who look for an employment
have not completed this cycle, compared to 3.3 percent in the case of men. In the following educational levels, women show similar conditions to men.\textsuperscript{167}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncompleted Elementary Education</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration based on the INDEC: "Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2001."

3.2. \textit{The Stage: The Community Centers in Morón}

3.2.1. The Organizational Entry & the Arrival at the Community Centers

Over 15 interviews were conducted in the district of Morón during the first semester of 2006. The interviews were done in four community centers which are currently operating under the combined sponsorship of the local municipality, religious orders and NGOs. The Research Department of the University of San Martín facilitated me a first contact with the ‘Coordinator of Community Projects’ of the Municipality of Morón, who provided me with the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of these community centers. Once an initial contact with the coordinator/supervisor of each community center was established, I proceeded to ask whether I could visit the center in order to meet the beneficiaries and personally request a later interview.

\textsuperscript{166} This information was obtained from the national census of 2001, and reflects the level of education achieved by men and women 14 years or older. It does not reflect this variable according to different socio-economic levels. It is assumed though, that the levels of education of poor populations are lower.

\textsuperscript{167} \url{http://www.indec.mecon.gov.ar/censo2001s2_2/Datos/04568C78.xls}
The names and locations of the four centers visited and their coordinators are detailed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Community Center, Location</th>
<th>Name of Coordinator/ Facilitator</th>
<th>Was he/she interviewed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Kitchen and Community Child-Care Center “Sagrado Corazón de Jesús”,</strong> (Comedor Comunitario y Centro de Cuidado de Niños “Sagrado Corazón de Jesús”)</td>
<td>Angela Murano</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibañez Neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Neighbors’ Board of San Juan Neighborhood - Community Clothing Center”</strong> (“Junta Vecinal Barrio San Juan - Ropero Comunitario”)</td>
<td>Raúl Santillán</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Juan Neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children’s Food Kitchen at the Chapel “Sagrados Corazones”</strong> (Comedor de Niños Capilla “Sagrados Corazones”)</td>
<td>Carlos (helper/facilitator of Blanca Taccari, the coordinator)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texalar Neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Center-Breakfast Salon “Caritas Felices”</strong> (Centro Comunitario - Copa de Leche “Caritas Felices”)</td>
<td>Mirta Maidana</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Juan Neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four centers have distinctive characteristics related to their origin, affiliations and social atmosphere. The **first community project**, called *Food Kitchen and Community Child-Care Center “Sagrado Corazón de Jesús”*, was located in Ibañez Neighborhood. This
neighborhood was only fifteen minutes away by bus from the Morón train station, making it much more accessible than the rest. Except from the street on which it is located, the surrounding roads are all paved.

The food kitchen is situated ten blocks away from the next district, La Matanza. The coordinator of this center, Angela, explained that she started the project in 1995, when she coordinated the purchase of the land on which the center stands today, in the name of the local Don Bosco Order of the Catholic Church. This center has always been affiliated to the religious order, and thus has maintained a religious orientation in its activities. The coordinator explained that the trajectory of this center has been historically tainted by a continual effort to survive. Her independent efforts to find sources of funding in the national, provincial, and municipal governments were at some point interpreted as an “interference” with the functions undertaken by several previous municipal administrations. Hence, this self-starting community project was closed several times, and later moved to its current location in Morón. In addition, her outspoken attempts to fight domestic violence experienced by some of the children who attend the food kitchen were badly taken and several “campaigns” against her were maneuvered by these parents.

Regardless of all the odds faced by this center, it is presently consolidated as a center for community help, children’s school support, mothers’ child-care facility and community food kitchen. This center is a perfect example of socio-political

168 Angela had done volunteer social work for years –since 1983-.
entrepreneurship. Its coordinator initiated the project seeking an affiliation with a religious order with the goal of providing some solidity to it. Later on, she developed parallel networking strategies with different organizations that help these centers, including the local government at the municipality.

The land on which it is situated is very large, taking almost half a block. The front yard is regularly used as a soccer field. There is a big fence wide open at the entrance. A sign with the full name of the center is right on top of the entrance to the two-storey building. The food kitchen is organized in a first salon, a pretty large space primarily filled with tables and chairs. There is a TV screen on the upper right side of the salon, and many pictures and photos of the children and elderly people who regularly attend the facility. Angela’s office, a playing ground patio, a kitchen, a small library, and several classrooms follow the order of the construction.

The coordinator, rather skeptic at the beginning, welcomed us and asked to be interviewed first before moving on to talk with any of the program beneficiaries. Her experience and testimony as the main promoter of this project helped us understand how it operates, how it gets funded, its relationship to the municipality, how the beneficiaries started working there, etc. In our following two visits to the center we were able to interview four female beneficiaries subsidized by the plan: Mirta, María del Carmen, Delia and Graciela. All of them were granted Plan Jefes y Jefas’ subsidy.

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170 Following the concept of “network pattern articulation” developed by Pablo Forni, “Prácticas organizativas...”
after they had been volunteers at the center for up to a year. Angela applied for their subsidies at the municipality of Morón.

The **second center** visited was of a completely different nature. The most striking difference in relation to the first center was a big sign at the entrance which says: “Junta Vecinal Barrio San Juan” (“Neighbors’ Board of San Juan Neighborhood”). Only underneath this sign is readable, now in lower case, *Community Clothing Center*. Already this hint gave us a different perspective of this community project. In a previous telephone conversation with Raúl, the coordinator, I had successfully requested to visit the center and interview program beneficiaries. As we arrived in a dark rainy day, we noticed five people were awaiting us. It seemed as if they had especially gone to meet us. There was no activity in the center. The infrastructure was very poor. The center consisted of a one-room construction divided by a shabby curtain. There was one table at the center, illuminated by one light bulb hanging from the tin roof. Old clothes were crumbled up against two walls and it seemed as if a long time ago, a clothing center had existed in this space. The interviews confirmed our suspicion that up to one year ago, the center had performed tailoring for the donated clothing, and had also held knitting classes for interested neighbors. None of that seemed to be operating presently. The clothing center was over half an hour away from the train station. San Juan neighborhood (commonly known as the south of Castelar neighborhood), was in fact, an “emergency” shantytown. Its roads are not paved, and only two public buses run this far out in the district of Morón.
A certain tension between the present people was noticeable. Raúl was ready to talk. As he thoroughly explained, this center was a space where neighbors could get clothing just by expressing their need. Nonetheless, his welcoming statements gave us the notion that he had been politically involved with the previous municipal administration. He said he had “gathered” voters for the previous mayor in Morón, who had promised to grant him a “position” in the municipality. As a result, Raúl had been assigned the “supervision” of the clothing center that was quickly organized when Plan Jefes y Jefas was enacted, something which he thought was an “insult” to his capacities. Clearly so, he did not appreciate or identify with the labor carried out by this center, given his political goals. This community space had initially been a political unit, and later on became the base of the community clothing center. Acting as a “broker”/territorially-based political mediator\textsuperscript{171} the coordinator chose a few people to whom he entitled the subsidy provided by Plan Jefes y Jefas. Other members of this center received different subsidies coming mainly from Plan Barrios Bonaerenses.\textsuperscript{172}

These impressions could indicate that this center sprung from the political machinery in place at Morón when Plan Jefes y Jefas was first released. In this case,


\textsuperscript{172} “Plan Barrios Bonaerenses” was a labor program implemented in the province of Buenos Aires since 2001. For more information see “Informe sobre los programas de empleo”, Documento de Trabajo GP/09, Ministerio de Economía, Buenos Aires, 2001.

http://www.mecon.gov.ar/peconomica/basehome/empleo_provinciales.pdf#search=%22plan%20barrios%20bonaerenses%22
thus, the “clientelistic pattern of articulation”\footnote{Pablo Forni, “Prácticas organizativas, patrones de articulación y desarrollo de las organizaciones comunitarias de base. Estudios de caso en barrios de la Matanza”, Documento de Trabajo No. 029, IDICSO, Universidad del Salvador, 2004.} seems to have guided the process of conformation of this community center. Even though it seems that the clothing center worked as such for a few years, its “politically-structured” beginning probably conditioned the further development in its realm, something which is all the more evident today.

After listening to Raúl’s statements, we were able to interview two female beneficiaries who were present, Sonia and Luisa. Their interviews were at all times supervised by the coordinator, all which inhibited them to fully express their ideas. Despite these nuances, our visit to this center was very significant in that it gave us a broader outlook on community centers and how their nature and contexts could vary so drastically within the same district.

The \textbf{third community project} we visited was organized and sponsored by both the Chapel “Sagrados Corazones” and the most important national catholic NGO “Cáritas.”\footnote{The name “Cáritas” derives from the Latin word caritas-atis, which means “charity.” Interesting enough, this name and the historical origins of the Cáritas organization denote the old notion by which society organized “charity actions” to provide for the “poor and defenseless.” Contemporary social policies have shifted towards the notion of social agency, by which poor people are entitled to—and must—take a course of action to improve their lives. Hence, social plans today encourage community and individuals’ participation to improve their lives’ conditions.} Its name, written up on a sign, was \textit{Children’s Food Kitchen at the Chapel “Sagrados Corazones.”} In turn, this project has a combined origin stemming from a locally consolidated religious order and a historically consolidated Argentine NGO, together with a highly regarded civil coordinator who mentored the project,
Blanca. She started out as a social worker and leader in the mid-seventies, and has since maintained an impeccable trajectory working with poor communities. The center counts on the permanent sponsorship and active involvement of the church. Carlos, a social worker who is in the seminar to become a priest, is the facilitator of the center. Another woman who works for Cáritas also integrates the stable group of people working at the center. In this respect, the center is a combination of “socio-political entrepreneurship” with decisively important partners.

This project started in the year 2000, when the Chapel “Sagrados Corazones,” together with Blanca who was already known in the department of Social Action of the Municipality of Morón, bought the land from a family. The center slowly gained strength and became well-known by the neighbors of Texalar, who were already suffering the consequences of the economic decline experienced since 1998. From 2000 until 2004, the center organized a daily food kitchen for hundreds of extremely poor neighbors. As time went by, other initiatives took form, such as organizing school support classes for kids, and psychological therapy for children and adults. Choirs, social events of all kinds, and religious meetings were a part of the center’s agenda. A highlight of this multi-purpose space was that shortly after the crisis erupted, a locally based organization, “Madre Tierra” (“Mother Land”) approached the center in search of sponsors. This organization aids poor families to improve their housing conditions, by granting monetary micro-credits. Soon after the contact was established, the first six women who had started out as volunteers in the food kitchen and later became beneficiaries of Plan Jefes y Jefas, begun coordinating Madre Tierra’s actions in
Morón. Women who beforehand could not write their own names on a sheet of paper had rapidly been empowered to direct these significant projects. They responsibly benefited from the micro-credits as well. Most of these women of the “first round” of beneficiaries who worked in “Sagrados Corazones,” are today finishing high school through Plan Jefes y Jefas’ educational promotion. These women initially became beneficiaries when Blanca applied for the program’s benefit in their name. On the contrary, beneficiaries working today at “Sagrados Corazones” were signed up by the municipality to work there in accordance with their labor and educational backgrounds. At its highest peak, twenty people worked at the center: while women were a majority (around seventeen), men were occasionally hired in maintenance and surveillance. Additionally, the women’s partners helped in several initiatives, such as community festivals. Most of the free-lance therapists are men and the gym instructor is a young neighbor who is still studying.

“Sagrados Corazones”’ infrastructure consists of a long rectangular space divided into four sections: first stands a mid-sized construction where the eating salon, the kitchen, the bathrooms and a meeting room are located. Drawing boards, tables, chairs and other materials are at hand. Children’s pictures and drawings, guiding schemes of activities and other illustrative papers are hanging on every wall. The second section of the center is a small patio where green grapes grow. Next, a second smaller construction hosts the little “clothing center” and a room full of dry foodstuff that is mainly provided by the government. Finally, there is an orchard in the backyard.
All sorts of vegetables and fruits grow there. Seeds are shared with neighbors in order for them to produce their own home orchards.

Given that the telephone line was out of service, the arrival to this center was spontaneous. In contrast with the second experience, the people at “Sagrados Corazones” were very friendly and open to our request for interviews. In our first visit we could interview Carlos, the facilitator. Blanca was at the time sponsoring a community project in the coast of the Province of Buenos Aires. The second visit was pre-arranged with Carlos. Two female beneficiaries, Ethel and Estela, and one male beneficiary, Jorge, attended our second meeting for interviews.

The fourth community center visited for the purpose of this research, “Caritas Felices” (“Happy Faces”) was located in San Juan, the same neighborhood as the Neighbors’ Board-Community Clothing Center. This center originally emerged in the realm of the “Fundación Eva Perón” (“Eva Perón Foundation”). Clearly, its strongest liaison was the legacy of the Peronist era. The actual coordinator, Mirta Maidana, somehow resembles the image of old-times Evita, with her shiny blonde hair, her thin well-built body structure, and her “performance.”  

The community center stands across the street from an old “Evita” neighborhood center that does not operate today. Actually, the only sign indicating the presence of a community center stands in front of the obsolete center, and not in the real location of “Caritas Felices.”

The community center represents an improvised “socio-political entrepreneurship” project that Mirta promoted, perhaps influenced by the community-oriented Peronist atmosphere still dwelling this area of Morón. Moreover, the organization of this center somehow projects an old imaginary embedded in the Peronist legacy which promoted popular actions, popular culture, while enhancing dignity to the people. In 2005, for example, a popular folklore festival was sponsored by “Caritas Felices,” in which neighbors and people of different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds shared a popular bonding experience.

This center has no strong religious or political affiliations. Furthermore, “Caritas Felices” has developed a “network pattern of articulation,” by which it has built connections with other organizations, the local government, NGOs, organizations of unemployed, etc. in order to obtain economic support. These efforts have allowed this organization to become legitimized while providing it with access to information and material resources. Nonetheless, unlike the other three centers visited, it has a direct commercial relationship with one branch of the “Piqueteros” groups, the organization “Barrios de Pie.” Given the emergency and the initial lack of material resources, the “Piqueteros” leased an oven to this community center charging a ten percent of the monetary benefits obtained in the bakery that works at the center. Another “protective institution” that sponsors the center is the Dioceses of Luján, with

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176 “Folklore music” (“música folklore”) represents a conglomerate of historically, culturally and temporally assimilated popular dancing traditions and rhythms.
which Mirta has a personal connection. Given her capacity to build support networks for the community center, Mirta can be categorized as a “social entrepreneur.”

Over twenty people work at “Caritas Felices.” Unlike the other three centers observed, there is a high percentage of men in this community project. Still so, a woman is the coordinator, proving that women still are the main promoters of community actions. Volunteers come and go, even though some have lost Plan Jefes y Jefas’ subsidy. In most cases –like in the other centers visited-, the beneficiaries who work there started as volunteers. Later on, Mirta mediated their application to the program’s benefit in the local municipality. Mirta had long been involved in community development. She had participated in the “Plan Vida” distributing milk and other goods to poor families. Such were her natural leadership skills that at one point she was appointed the president of the “Trabajadores Vecinales Organizados” –TVO- (“Organized Neighborhood Workers”) as a leader of the “manzaneras” commission.

The center’s infrastructure is improvised. In fact, it stands behind Mirta’s small house. This important point proves that the community project was born out of an independent civil initiative. The coordinator explained how at the beginning they did

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178 “Plan Más Vida” was a nutritional program implemented in 1994 in the province of Buenos Aires by the government of Eduardo Duhalde. For more information, see http://www.mdhyt.gba.gov.ar/documentos/01_manzaneras/nota03.htm

179 “Manzaneras” were the women in charge of distributing dairy goods to poor families/mothers under Plan Vida’s design.
not have a proper bathroom or food salon. Soon after the center gained full strength and neighborhood recognition, the government provided some materials which made it possible to build them. However, the floor of the center and the water pipes system are still not properly installed and the windows’ construction has not been finished. In this respect, according to Mirta, the government’s support has not been permanent.

Throughout the last couple of years, the municipality has collaborated materially with many celebrations organized by the community center, such as Easter, Child’s Day, Independence Day, etc. In a few occasions, the municipality offered “Caritas Felices” workers to run the food quarters during massive public events, such as a national celebration held at the “Hipódromo Argentino de Palermo” (where the national horse tracks are located). In these events, the earned gains were granted to the food kitchen. In addition, the coordinator has successfully built connections with local NGOs, especially Cáritas. In 2005, the center’s workers were invited to participate in an important TV charity show hosted at a national sports club. This experience awarded her initiative with public recognition and several additional sources of funding. The center has a big eating salon, a small patio and a few smaller rooms which are normally used for scholar and other artistic activities.

Three men were interviewed at “Caritas Felices:” Carlos, Julio and Raúl. Other men who were present also participated in our conversations. However, given that they are beneficiaries of another social plan, “Barrios Bonaerenses,” their testimony cannot be considered for this study. Still so, their experience was similar and their life stories
very interesting to hear. As soon as I arrived at the community project, it was obvious that many individuals wanted to take part in the interviews. As a word of mouth, people started to gather around me. This interview was more of a group interaction where I took notes while trying to maintain a line of questioning. At one point, six men, Mirta and another woman were sitting around me, all of them eager to talk and showing interest in the questions being asked. This experience was very striking. Their statements allowed me to grasp the fact that in their case, a deeper sense of desperate exclusion had brought them to the center. As men, their labor trajectories were longer and all of them had experienced some stability. With the economic crisis, nonetheless, men’s work opportunities had narrowed down dramatically. Following their wives or neighbors, they had “abandoned” the expectation of working in the “city,” and had looked for a “shelter” in the community center. At the same time, their socialization with women and children and contact with other realities seems to have broadened their outlook on the notions of family and work.

3.2.2 Brief history of Community Projects in Morón
Some of the community projects where beneficiaries undertake their labor activities were brought up before Plan Jefes y Jefas was implemented. However, shortly after the Plan was enacted, most of their workers were Plan Jefes y Jefas’ recipients. Meanwhile, other projects were created as the crisis unfolded. Most of the visited

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180 The city of Buenos Aires.
projects displayed a high degree of socio-political entrepreneurship (usually referred to as “cuentapropismo social y político”\textsuperscript{181}).

Probably unique to the case of Morón is the fact that the majority of the community centers sprang from the personal initiative of social agents and the Church, who soon became the centers’ coordinators. In this way, the community centers did not spring from political machineries. Their affiliations and networking style are fundamental to understand how they have survived and how and why they could eventually disappear as time goes by. As we have seen, all the centers visited are endowed with different capacities and dynamics which set forth both the presence and the absence of various levels of civic engagement, recognition and democracy.

These centers, together with a reduced cast of stable individual “actors” (that have stayed in these centers even as they cease to receive Plan Jefes y Jefas’ subsidy) show how for the most part, they embody social actions that go beyond the focalized interventions of any social policy, including Plan Jefes y Jefas. The Plan’s most important contribution to the centers was a large supply of individuals who participated in their activities. In fact, the participation in “activities valid to the beneficiaries”\textsuperscript{182} was highly encouraged by the Municipality of Morón.


\textsuperscript{182} This quote is extracted from an interview conducted by a member of the UNSAM project with the Director of the Secretary of Economic and Social Development in the Municipality of Morón, which took place during the first semester of 2006.
3.2.3 What do the centers do? What are their activities?
Most of Morón’s community projects –around 580 projects at its highest peak,\textsuperscript{183} are articulated as community soup/food kitchens (“comedores comunitarios”) or breakfast salons (“copa de leche”). Nonetheless, their actions go far beyond these basic social reproduction functions. Indeed, these centers have become true engines for their communities. Aside from the soup kitchen, child care facilities, school support lessons, and community thrift stores (“roperitos comunitarios”), some of the centers that have a religious affiliation offer additional services to the community, such as psychological therapy, religious workshops, and support groups to people suffering from drug, alcohol and sexual abuse, etc. I found evidence of this in the centers “Sagrado Corazón de Jesús” and “Sagrados Corazones.” In addition, some of them have also developed small-scale productive projects such as bakeries and orchards.

In Morón, the centers which do not have any strong religious ties are usually more oriented towards popular cultural events. These community centers often organize popular festivals to celebrate Easter, “Child’s Day,”\textsuperscript{184} Independence Day, etc. They also sponsor folkloric dances’ festivals joined with typical national menus, celebrate the children’s birthdays, weddings and so on. The following chart illustrates the different categories:

\begin{itemize}
\item This information is approximate and was provided by the Coordinator of Community Projects in the Municipality of Morón, whose name is not to be disclosed for the purpose of this investigation.
\item In Argentina, unlike other countries, “(National) Child’s Day” (“Día del Niño”) is celebrated every April 30\textsuperscript{th}.
\end{itemize}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORIENTATION OF SERVICES</th>
<th>SERVICES OFFERED BY COMMUNITY CENTERS/PROJECTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(BASIC SERVICES) ORIENTED TOWARDS SURVIVAL OF COMMUNITY</td>
<td>Basic infrastructure: soup/food kitchens; child care facilities; school support lessons; community thrift stores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More developed infrastructure: small-scale productive projects such as bakeries and orchards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORIENTED TOWARDS RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL AID</td>
<td>religious workshops; psychological therapy; support groups to people suffering from drug, alcohol and sexual abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORIENTED TOWARDS THE PRESERVATION OF POPULAR CULTURE</td>
<td>popular festivals; national holidays; weddings; family gatherings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Angela, the coordinator of the community center “Sagrado Corazón de Jesús,” accurately described these centers’ multi-functional nature:

“In the morning we have a kindergarten of around twenty four five-year-old kids, (taken care by) “mom-care givers.” We have school support in the mornings and we have an elementary course for adults (who obtain) an official diploma. It is a delegation of an official school here in Morón. I have (support for) youth groups, I work a lot with adolescents, from (drug or alcoholic abuse) prevention to recreation. And of course all the religious-related activities. We make bread, we have a tailor workshop…that is why I don’t know what this is…it is many things…”

3.2.4 What are the centers’ sources of economic support?
Their primary sources of income are donations from NGOs, private enterprises, the local municipality, and religious orders. Most of the government donations consist on “dry foodstuff,” namely provisions of rice, pasta, vegetable oil, canned tomatoes, and sanitary materials. As stated before, an important source of income or materials comes from what community centers usually produce and sell in their own neighborhoods, mainly bread or vegetables.
NGOs like Cáritas help with construction materials and foodstuff of a similar nature. In some cases, they also facilitate school support teachers or social workers. Historically, particular arrangements have been attained by community centers with different NGOs. Two examples of organizational ties with NGOs are worth noting since they reflect the solidarity bonds that emerged as these centers faced every day’s survival.

Angela learnt that an NGO called “The food bank” (“Banco de Alimentos”) that receives foodstuffs from different supermarkets in the GBA (because they have suffered some damage –for example, battered cans- or because their expiration date is due) was offering community centers any kinds of foods for ten cents the kilogram. This agreement allowed institutions like “Sagrados Corazones” to count on materials otherwise impossible to get –such as cookies, cornflakes, etc, for a marginal cost. The second example is related to the monthly two-hundred Argentine Pesos’ (ARS) coupon that Supermarket “Coto” contributes many of these soup kitchens. With it, the centers can consume any goods at these supermarkets.

Illustrating how arrangements to get material or monetary resources operate, Angela described how, regardless of the soup kitchen’s existing religious affiliation to the Don Bosco Dioceses, she has persistently pursued economic support from all the available sources. Survival is the most legitimate project she defends.

185 However, Angela assured she called every food company and certified that even though the date to consume them might show expired, (and within a time span of 3 months depending on the food type) the food is still edible without any risk of food poisoning.
“I utilize everything, (resources from) Nation, Province, Church….if it is in the benefit of this project, I use all the available resources… I do take advantage of politics…”

The coordinator of “Caritas Felices,” Mirta, explained how in the absence of a proper oven to bake the bread -that they usually sell to the neighbors in order to obtain much needed resources- they had relied on the collaboration of “Barrios de Pie.” This organization embodies one of the branches of the well-known “Piqueteros” groups. In some cases, these “organizations of unemployed workers” assist community projects with either equipment or human resources in exchange for some revenue. In the case of “Caritas Felices,” they agreed on leasing an oven to the center’s bakery with the condition of getting 10 percent of the money obtained when the bread was sold. At the same time, the school support teacher working at this community center is a member of “Barrios de Pie.”

This example reflects how in a context of extreme poverty, the neighborhood-run centers often combined community services with micro-productive projects. In so doing, they often reached out for non-governmental sources of economic support. In addition, the community leaders and beneficiaries of the centers strategically used the material help, the contacts and any other information offered by the municipality as a means to their community’s subsistence.”


187 This conclusion was elaborated by Carlos, the main facilitator/helper at the Community Soup Kitchen “Sagrados Corazones,” located in Morón, during an interview in the first semester of 2006.
3.2.5 The Importance of Project Coordinators/Community Leaders:

In all the centers visited, a “community leader” or coordinator was often referenced as the nodal point of the entire project. Angela, Mirta, Carlos, Raúl, and Blanca, most of whom were interviewed during the field research were highly regarded by their colleagues and by every member of their community centers. They not only mentored the project activities and their rhythm of implementation, but in most cases served as social workers and personal counselors.

Community leaders like Angela often experience a double identity, as they become the promoters of daily life survival, while they also act as “decentralized state delegates” or quasi-functionaries in specific territorial realms. Angela represents the image of a “good community leader” with a consolidated position in the community as a figure of solidarity. From that position, however, she exerts a certain amount of power in the realm of the community project she leads. At the same time, she is a “high agent” in that she represents a permanent “client” in the eyes of the municipality of Morón.

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188 Community is defined by the groups of individuals that share a history, knowledge, traditions, habits and also problems and needs. They inter-relate, they recognize a shared identity and undertake common activities. Graciela Cardarelli and Mónica Rosenfeld, “Con las mejores intenciones: acerca de la relación entre el Estado pedagógico y los agentes sociales” in Silvia Duschatzky (comp.), Tutelados y Asistidos, Programas sociales políticas públicas y subjetividad, Editorial Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2000, p. 31.


191 The term “high agent” was coined by Graciela Cardarelli and Mónica Rosenfeld in “Con las mejores intenciones: acerca de la relación entre el Estado pedagógico y los agentes sociales”, p. 57.
A sense of conscious commitment and satisfaction were clear in the project coordinators’ narratives. Angela, for instance, expressed how her involvement in this project was some sort of a “natural mission” that she wouldn’t have really envisioned before beginning her first community initiatives in 1995. Her testimony is a vivid example of some of the long trajectories that have historically configured collective survival projects:

“You know? It was pretty crazy. I tell you that I am a believer. Maybe for someone that is agnostic it is very hard to believe what I say. But I didn’t set my mind on anything in my life. It all happened by itself.”

“Twenty three years ago I was…( I will tell you) briefly, the story of my life, alright? I thought that I was giving too much to my kids, because I had been very poor. Like all the previous generation, we did all up-side-down. We gave our children too much…”

“And well, when I (still) had only two (kids), I bought them brand stuff, I tried to give them all that I never had, until the moment when I realized that I was spoiling them. Because they demanded me more, they threw away and broke things faster…”

“And I realized that it wasn’t good for me…”

“I reevaluated what I could do, and said: “well, let’s go help poor kids.” I had no idea where to find poor kids, or anything. Then, Romina, my youngest daughter filled a can with candies or chocolates that I brought her from my work. And Javier –my other kid- collected little glass balls. When we filled a five-litter jar, we started looking where to take it, until I went to the “Hogar del Menor” (“Minors’ Asylum”), and introduced myself there and left it there. I fell in love with the place, and I started doing voluntary work there…”

“…I ended up doing solidarity work in a children’s asylum, I adopted a daughter of twelve years old, already grown up. And well, that made me think, what happens, right? Why do the kids get to an asylum, no? And then I realized that, well, the basis for everything is the family, and really, I wanted to help the families, so that the kids wouldn’t get to the asylums. And I started with this idea of coming to an emergency neighborhood…”

“This land was bought in ’95, and think that in ten years I could, …that is to say, this “I” reference is a little, you know?, like elevating my ego, no? But really I was the mentor, and who thought about all of this, and who sustained all of this…”

Being an immigrant herself, Angela had a first-hand childhood experience rooted in poverty. Maintaining a lineal and coherent life narrative, this circumstance helped her to develop a sense of empathy with poor children. Solidarity, in her life, was a need
grown out of her experience with poverty. Her testimony shows how women have
historically incarnated valuable social roles in their communities by structuring
pragmatic responses to the visible effects of economic declines:

“This happened to me: I came from Italy very poor. In the postwar time, I had nothing to eat,
nothing. We (she together with her parents) arrived here in ’58, when the political problems
begun, that Perón left, that he came back, that he stayed…”

“I lived in ‘four tin walls’ all my life, and my dad was a ‘fighter,’ and my mom is still
‘fighting.’ Dad died already, and well he left me that, right? the (sense of) “fight.” And always,
sure, having gone from one country to another one…that is why I understand people who leave.
I lost four years of my life that I don’t remember. Because I was learning the language, trying
to fit in… ‘There comes the ‘tana’, there comes the ‘tana,’ there was always this pejorative
thing…”

In addition, Angela’s use of language was very telling in terms of her self-
representation. Deeply self-reflective and aware of her socially distinct character
traits, Angela also articulated how her personal leadership qualities enhanced her role
as the project coordinator:

“Yes, I am a person who reads a lot, that educates herself, that attends every (available)
formative (course). I exert a lot of ‘influence’ on people. I have, eh, we call it ‘charisma’ of a
‘leader,’ and well, that makes people ‘fall in love’ with me. And sometimes, that, as I tell them,
can be good or bad. There are ‘good leaders’ and ‘bad leaders’ too. And one must learn to
distinguish. In the workshops I talk a lot about this: to think, to discuss, and (only) then, to
accept. One cannot accept all that a leader says.”

In sum, community leaders in this area of the GBA have historically been involved in
collective survival projects. These leaders are women who today are in their mid-
fifties. In the case of the female leaders interviewed, they exercise a fundamental role
in the community projects; in most cases they started the projects with their own
resources and later became informed on the different alternatives to get funding. These

192 This is a pejorative way of saying “Italian woman” in colloquial conversations.
193 In normal life, the style and form that the language adopts seeks to impose the representation of social
agents’ own importance and credibility. Pierre Bordieu, Language and Symbolic Power, Harvard
women feel deeply committed to the project and have personally experienced poverty. They are often conscious of their female identities embedded in a reproductive role. Nonetheless, they have adopted a commandant role which in most cases has entailed a strong exercise of authority, agency and respect from all the members of the projects, including men.

3.3 The Cultural Dimensions of Community Work: “Female” and “Male” activities

The constitution of the subject is the result of a “performative” labor, defined by the constant “interpellation” which presses the subject to adhere to a gender norm. In this light, we interpret that the attitudes towards work observed in Morón’s community projects proved how strong gendered labor segregation operates. In other words, women mainly perform reproductive functions, while men apply knowledge obtained in previous labor trajectories –such as labor in construction- to contribute to the infrastructure of the centers.

Women typically undertake “female” work activities in community projects. The most important are: cooking and distributing food for large groups of people –both children and the elderly-, child caring, nursing the elderly, providing school support for both children and adults, cleaning, sowing and ironing used clothes that are donated to them in order to dress the poor, etc. A fundamental responsibility that most women assume is a “maternal role” that translates into innumerable tasks, even giving comfort

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to the people by listening to them. In all likelihood, these gendered-work activities crystallized a traditional sexual division of labor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Female” Community Activities</th>
<th>“Male” Community Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooking &amp; distributing food</td>
<td>Guarding centers’ security</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child caring</td>
<td>Construction &amp; maintenance of centers</td>
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<td>Nursing the elderly</td>
<td>Logistics during events</td>
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<td>Providing school support</td>
<td>Carrying heavy materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cleaning &amp; keeping centers organized</td>
<td>Driving vehicles with merchandise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinating food orders</td>
<td>Baking the bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sowing, ironing &amp; washing clothes</td>
<td>Doing barbecues during especial events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leading discussion groups, choirs, theater</td>
<td>Helping in soup kitchen’s organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>plays, etc.</td>
<td>Helping during medical emergencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching knitting &amp; sowing lessons</td>
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<td>Doing arts &amp; crafts in workshops</td>
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Seemingly, men are mainly in charge of doing “male work” or “heavy work,” as they put it. In other words, most of them usually help out with whatever is necessary to maintain the installations of these community centers, either tiling the floors, fixing windows and pipes, carrying merchandise, hauling tables and chairs when the festivals are held outdoors, driving the buses, and providing security to the centers. In other cases, they also help out in the kitchen, mostly baking the bread, or in the decoration of the houses when parties are organized. They assume these tasks as their “natural” responsibilities.

Concerning the feelings about the type of work they undertake, women seem satisfied with their contribution carrying out female traditional work. Some women
choose to undertake merely female tasks, while others engage in more challenging activities such as leading discussion groups. Some women working in the provision of social services envision their tasks as a life mission. Mirta, the coordinator of the center “Caritas Felices” (“Happy Faces”) stressed during the interview that for her, being a woman on top of being the coordinator of the project had been very self-defining. Illustrating how for many female participants gender roles have shaped their identities, the fact that the children call Mirta “grandma” (“abuela”) was reassuring for her. She further stressed:

“Helping a child I am happy, it (gives you) a different outlook…”

In the case of men, given a chance to say how they felt about it, one of them simply stated: “it is like that, we do what is needed.” This reflects that for the most part, men’s identities are also defined by gender. Even though their daily tasks as participants of these community projects do not seem to particularly gratify them given that they expect to get a “real job” –as they tacitly expressed it- outside the community centers in the near future, they attribute social value to this work. In that context, this experience seems to have activated a new valorization of their work, even of their “male work.” Representative of a general perception observed, one of them said: “…we learnt things we did not see before, we have witnessed destitution like we never imagined in the eyes of children.”
Chapter 4: The micro-social effects of Plan Jefes y Jefas on poor Argentine women

4.1. Introduction

The participation of female beneficiaries of the Plan in community projects resulted in their most viable work opportunity for several reasons. Most of the interviewed women devoted their central-age years (20-45) to reproductive activities. They are very poor. Their low educational backgrounds and lack of labor trajectories prevented them from finding formal and even precarious jobs. Therefore, their participation as plan beneficiaries in the community centers should be interpreted within a context of material and symbolic deprivation.

Poor women’s participation in collective survival projects has been explained as a fulfillment of “gender practical interests” and “gender strategic interests.” Practical gender interests are substantiated in the sexual division of labor by which women mobilize to fulfill their mothers/wives’ duties as a reflex of inductive experience. Strategic interests, in contrast, aim at transforming women’s positions of subordination. The participation of the women studied in this research is mainly concerned with their practical survival. Yet, as a reflex of their participation, the existing power relations and identities in which they are embedded have become more

evident. As I will show in this chapter, the very act of participation altered their perceptions of their own roles and personal value.

Women were engaged in community work under the Plan’s setting. Still, the majority of the women who were interviewed had previously engaged in community services and community-based organizations. Therefore, for many of them being involved in social work was not new. As their narratives often expressed, by means of participation they pursued a search for dignity, a struggle for a better life, the recognition of differences, and an interrelation with different actors in the social world.

These preliminary observations could elucidate social, cultural and political changes framed in the realm of the community centers and the neighborhood that the \textit{Plan Jefes y Jefas} not necessarily initiated but at least reinforced.

This study asserts that the arrangements under which female program beneficiaries participated in community projects allowed them to complement their gendered reproductive roles with their work. Not only were their daily obligations relatively short, but also close to their homes, in their immediate neighborhoods. More importantly, they could always count on the services provided by the centers for their

\footnotesize{197} Thus, a self-selective choice on the part of these women operated at the time when the state program sponsors begun the task of matching beneficiaries’ involvement with different social and productive projects. For more information on self-selective participative choices in the realm of social movements see Kent M. Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, \textit{Generations and Politics: A Panel Study of Young Adults and Their Parents,} Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1981.

\footnotesize{198} Only within the structure of a narrative meaning can take form. In other words, the work of narrative engages the individual with certain meanings and desires. Patrizia Violi, “Gender, Subjectivity and Language” in Gisela Bock and Susan James (eds.) \textit{Beyond Equality and Difference, Citizenship, feminist politics and female subjectivity,} Routledge, London, 1992, p. 173.
own families. In turn, these women did not transcend their mother-spouses roles. They integrated these roles to the fight for survival outside their households.

Moreover, in the community centers visited, participation and solidarity channeled in the form of social motherhood.¹⁹⁹ Women exercised social motherhood spontaneously and as a result of Plan Jefes’ policy design. Admittedly, their labor at the community centers was tightly related to their reproductive functions. Nonetheless, they experienced positive effects mainly related to their self-value, recognition and respect in the contexts in which these functions were developed. The community centers represented a new space of socialization for most of the female participants who would have otherwise remained in their private household and family spheres. They provided a social space characterized by the presence of equals, women in similar circumstances, with similar problems, and with whom to share their lives.²⁰⁰

The chapter is organized as follows. In the first section I will describe the impacts of women’s participation in collective projects of solidarity, emphasizing the access to new spaces of socialization, namely the community centers. Following this section, the representations and perceptions of the interviewed women will be

¹⁹⁹ This notion was developed by Graciela Di Marco in "Ciudadanía femenina", en Relaciones de Género y Exclusión en la Argentina de los 90, ADEUEM Editorial Espacios, Argentina, 1998. “Social motherhood” can exist when women go outside their homes fighting for survival, while they socialize their demands. These actions related to the social reproduction of their families can in some cases, serve as vehicles to construct a “female citizenship.” In other cases, they can reinforce women’s difference and subordination.

²⁰⁰ Poor women in Morón interact in the social world, “…a multi-dimensional space constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation and distribution that are constituted by the set of properties present in the social universe…As members of the same class, they occupy similar positions and share similar conditions. In turn, they have similar dispositions and interests, produce similar practices and adopt similar stances...” Pierre Bordieu, Language and Symbolic Power, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991, p. 230.
disaggregated in a few categories in order to discuss the different areas where these women experienced changes. The categories I will discuss are: the representations that Plan Jefes y Jefas embodied for women, the meaning of work as a source of personal pride, the definition of the self versus the others in their social realities, and the development of more power within the family as it resulted from changes in self-perception. I conclude by arguing that the poor women interviewed enjoy new levels of social recognition and respect given their experience of socialization and reciprocity at the community centers visited. The narrative of the findings is organized around women’s life stories.

4.2 How Women’s Participation affected their Lives
The interviewed women’s participation in community projects did not begin with the Plan Jefes y Jefas. The program expanded these spaces and promoted women’s involvement, thus boosting collective actions already in place. Participating in these spaces, women experienced positive impacts in their lives, such as an increase in their self-realization, personal value, and awareness of their capabilities. They also experienced an expansion of the resources they can count on, both materially and symbolically. Moreover, they found new meanings and motives in their daily lives. Most of the women interviewed expressed gratification by the fact that their participation was oriented towards the welfare of the community.
Luisa\textsuperscript{201} had never worked in a community center until she became a program beneficiary. Five years ago, she started working for the first time in a family tailor workshop. Therefore, she had always worked in isolation from the outside world. Additionally, her labor experience had not been related to collective projects. Nonetheless, a long-standing sense of solidarity is recognizable in her narrative. As she further explained, from the time she bought her sowing machine, she has continually engaged in helping other women by sowing clothes for their children at a very low cost, or even for free.

Not surprisingly, Luisa valued her participation in the “San Juan Community Clothing Center,” because it was there that she met other people. In the center she got in touch with other people’s experiences of poverty. This helped her revalue her own position and gave her the signal that she could help other people. She felt gifted to experience this satisfaction. Participating at the center was not an obligation but something Luisa was happy to do. She experienced a deep sense of solidarity by means of participation:

“…when you come here you don’t say “I go because I must go,” or for the one hundred and fifty pesos…no, you don’t feel obliged to come, you feel obliged to come and help people. That is what I mean. And you come and well, you don’t say “uy, I have to come to justify this,” no, no, all the contrary”.

In this respect, Luisa is representative of most of the women interviewed: participating in social projects had marked a before-and-after sequence in their lives. It had initiated

\textsuperscript{201} Interview with Luisa during the first semester of 2006, “Neighbors’ Board of San Juan Neighborhood - Community Clothing Center,” San Juan Neighborhood, Morón, Buenos Aires.
an innovative experience in which they transcended the domestic sphere to become publicly active.

Consider now the story of Ethel,202 an active member and volunteer at the “Sagrados Corazones” community center. Her narrative evinces a mélange of religious vocabulary with feminist-oriented claims. Her life story is no different than many other women in her conditions: she has five children, lives with her partner, and is usually responsible for the housework and child care.

Ethel recently became aware of the fact that there was a “whole world” outside of her household not imagined before. According to her, this awareness made her grow personally into a “public woman.”

Before volunteering in “Sagrados Corazones” and becoming a plan recipient, she was confined to being a mother and wife. Rearing five children, handling her household’s work and occasionally working as a domestic servant had long postponed other life considerations. As she started participating in the community center, she asserted, her life horizon expanded enormously. In turn, being herself a source of comfort for other people in need granted her a broader sense of her own capabilities.

She also expressed that although she knew that she had the talent to express herself in public, this quality had remained “archived” until recently. She became aware of her own capabilities by interacting with the other members of “Sagrados

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The interaction embedded in a context of social solidarity gave her a sense of security and self-value, not experienced before becoming a beneficiary of the Plan.

“Eh… I, beyond the plan, right?, work here as a volunteer…it made me grow a lot, see? To stop thinking only about my things, no?, that I thought that…when you are locked up in your house, you think that the only person with problems is you, that money doesn’t reach you, that this or that…”

“That is what happened to me, see? That is the best: to have learnt to share myself to others, and not to live isolated with myself. And it also made me (feel) good to be there for others and not only for my children…”

In addition, Ethel explained that she recently learnt that devoting her time to other people’s needs was the best education she could give to her kids.

“So, that is the best education (I can give my kids), to give my time for others.”

Ethel’s testimony – in line with other women’s comments -- recognized that the Plan’s subsidy was an important reason to participate. Yet, the economic satisfaction was far counterbalanced by the hands-on experience of helping other people:

It is also a fact that I was being compensated monetarily, but what fulfilled me most was not the monetary (aspect of it). Yes, it was necessary. But on a personal level, what I obtained was more important, more valuable…”

Participation in community-oriented work enhanced socialization and opportunities for some women. As Ethel stated, through her work in the community center, she

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203 Participation in the different spaces of socialization shapes male and female identities, which in turn facilitates or undermines the exercise of citizenship. Citizenship is intimately associated to power relations while contributing to the production of social meanings, mainly through symbolic resources. Graciela Di Marco, “Ciudadanía femenina”, in Relaciones de Género y Exclusión en la Argentina de los 90, ADEUEM Editorial Espacios, Argentina, 1998.

learnt about an initiative called “Madre Tierra.”\textsuperscript{205} Thanks to her participation in the community center, this opportunity became available for her – as well as for other women.

“Eh…we, for example, (together) with the classmates in school (all beneficiaries and volunteers at the center), belong to a commission that works with “Madre Tierra,” a rotating fund to improve housing (conditions).”

Also, her social networks of support expanded. Indeed, Ethel recognized how her changes in self-confidence begun in the contexts of socialization and reciprocities structured by the program at the community centers. As a consequence of this process, new projects sprung up. Ethel explained how she and her coworkers are now thinking about generating a new project to help women suffering similar grievances. Solidarity and participation seemed to structure their new mindset:

“...yes, we personally would like to do something like that (community support). We have grown wings! But (we would like) our own (project), not under others’ tutelage.”

“...we liked the idea of creating a center where our kids could stay so that the mothers can go out to work, right?...Not only that (a child-care center). (We think about a place) related to women’s (issues), with support for battered women, with workshops (oriented) for women, (so that they can) be security to be able to work.”

“Beforehand, I would have not thought about it, it would have seemed nonsense, (that) it had nothing to do with me, things like that.”

As stated before, participation meant in most cases, materializing “social motherhood” in countless ways. In Estela’s\textsuperscript{206} case, her participation allowed her to reinterpret her motherhood as a valuable function. Estela was born and lived in Paraguay until she immigrated to Argentina at an early age. She lost touch with her roots in Paraguay.

\textsuperscript{205} This local organization helps poor people build their homes by granting micro-credits without interests. The recipients of these credits are in charge of building/improving their housing and they are expected to actively promote this initiative to other families in similar situations. This has already been explained in Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{206} Interview with Estela during the first semester of 2006, Children’s Food Kitchen at the Chapel “Sagrados Corazones,” Texalar Neighborhood, Morón, Buenos Aires.
Reevaluating the relation to the social world expressed her need to reestablish a sense of belonging. In this process, she constructed relationships and daily meanings in the neighborhood. After years of poverty and alienation, she found a new space - the community center - where she reinvigorated. In that space she discovered friendship. What is more, she revalued the role of providing child care. It seems fair to say that she reconciled her experience as a mother through the exercise of that “social motherhood.”

“The good thing I found here, say, is that I begun to have friendships, to love kids more, because here we were with almost ninety children. And you have to be there, cleaning their hands, their mouths, and I felt a very special thing…”

Often antagonized by their partners, women like Estela felt very strongly about their participation in the community center, proving how it has become a structural part of most of these women’s lives:

“Yes… I can’t wait the hours to come here. Since the previous night I say to my husband: “look, tomorrow I have to work.” “Again?!” he asks. “Yes, you know I have to go!,”’ I say to him.”

Let us turn now to the story of Graciela. She is divorced and has two children, and is a beneficiary of the Plan. Her labor experience is entirely associated to community work. Having worked as a volunteer and stable employee at several community centers, she has long-term experience with how they operate and what is expected from her. She currently works in the food kitchen of the community center “Sagrado Corazón de Jesús.” Her testimony further substantiated the fact that this particular

work space is compatible with women’s mother roles in their own families. She is pleased with the fact that she can have daily contact with her children while she undertakes her labor activities. More importantly, she believes her work in a context of solidarity reinforces her value, especially in front of her children:

“Yes, my kids like what I do… and they want to go everywhere with me. And yes, they integrate (here)…”

Delia²⁰⁹ separated from her husband – and the father of her eight children – over three years ago. A couple of years ago, some of her kids became drug addicts. Upon Delia’s personal request, two of them are now detained in rehabilitation centers in the province of Buenos Aires. Very recently, the youngest of her sons has started to show signs of drug addiction, something which deeply disturbs Delia. On top of these critical circumstances, her ex husband has discontinued the economic contribution he makes to the household several times in the past couple of years. These events occurred as the economic crisis unfolded.

In this scenario, Delia talked to Angela, the community center’s coordinator to start volunteering at the center until her membership with Plan Jefes was approved. Angela mediated Delia’s claim for the program’s subsidy in the municipality. In the past, Delia had only worked doing housework and baby-sitting. Her identity is deeply associated to her marriage and motherhood.

Her experience working as a beneficiary at the center shows that for some of these women, working in these contexts is very rewarding. Engaging in activities that

²⁰⁹ Interview with Delia during the first semester of 2006, Food Kitchen and Community Child-Care Center “Sagrado Corazón de Jesús,” Ibañez Neighborhood, Morón, Buenos Aires.
affect the wellbeing of the community and acquiring new responsibilities outside her family’s sphere gave her the opportunity to renew her self-image. In her case, a space of personal freedom opened.

“I started as a volunteer. And it had always been my dream to work in a soup kitchen…”

“Well, here I know I have my responsibility. Beforehand I also came on Sundays. I must come from Mondays to Fridays. But I feel comfortable. It is like if I go, I have a responsibility, I have to go yes or yes. Unless I have other things to do… there are Sundays I (feel) I have to come because I feel good…”

In sum, most of the interviewed commented that the feeling of social expansion was one of the best outcomes of their participation in the community centers’ projects.

### 4.3 Neighborhood Solidarity and its Impacts on Women’s Lives

A previous study asserted that:

“…small productive projects,…community centers, childcare centers, etc, rest on a group of “special poor constituents”…trained and supported by the state, non-governmental or international organizations, to allow a passage from marginality to a “dignified poverty,” under the premise of solidarity between equals –or equally poor individuals.”

As I show for the case of the Plan Jefes y Jefas, social programs sponsoring new or existing community centers act upon group solidarity, an “organized community” and a “partner state.” Hence, solidarity is both a spontaneous fact occurring in many neighborhoods suffering economic declines, and also a state-sponsored value in the interest of the municipalities’ program completion.

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Solidarity ties materialize in the neighborhood, making it a space of recognition. The neighborhood constitutes the space of symbolic and social practices. It is a primary space of socialization, cooperation, and sense of belonging.\textsuperscript{211}

Bearing in mind their heterogeneity, the community centers visited represented social space with various forms of solidarity.\textsuperscript{212} As I described in chapter 3, these centers are open spaces offering all sorts of material and practical services to poor people living in Morón. They also serve as essential collective welfare organizations. Volunteers and workers at community centers assist poor people coming every day to eat, talk, attend school support sessions, and the like.

The Plan promoted people’s participation in the community centers, which in turn fostered social ties of solidarity. Women appreciated these communal aspects of the centers. The impacts of solidarity are recognizable in the female beneficiaries’


\textsuperscript{212} The nature of the collective survival projects that sprung up as the economic emergency developed can be interpreted within the notion of “social economy.” These projects are collective as well as communities’ actions articulating material utility with cooperation and solidarity values, whose efforts and results are distributed equally, under diverse economic, historical and cultural contexts. The social economy is deemed to connect identities, group trajectories, differentiated capabilities, while providing a space where productive activities coexist with social reproduction. Therefore, the connection of these spheres in a project of community survival may have democratizing effects on its participants. Graciela Di Marco y Javier Moro, Cap. III: “Experiencias de la Economía Solidaria frente a la crisis argentina: estudio desde una dimensión de género”, en María E. Valenzuela: “Políticas de Empleo para superar la Pobreza”, OIT, 2004.
Reinforcing the positive outcomes of participative actions, Graciela explained how in her opinion, Morón had become a space of solidarity during the last few years:

“...I think it changed, that Morón changed and like, it’s like now something happens to you, and you know where to go to (for help), right? You feel safer…”

When being inquired about the changes in her self-perception since she works in the soup kitchen, Graciela mentioned that by helping other people in need, she feels personally fulfilled. She enjoys sponsoring solidarity actions by getting resources for other people who cannot do it for themselves. Knowing she made a difference to others makes her feel empowered.

“...it is different because I can help...sometimes we have things (food, for example), and Angela tells us: “well girls, if you know of somebody that needs something of what we have here, let me know.” Well, in fact a little grandma (that has) eighty something years old, fell down, broke her knee, they couldn’t do surgery on her, she had a casket, she still has a casket. And we gave her cookies, marmalade, eh, I have asked (to get her) some medicines and we have gotten some...to help her…”

Another dimension of solidarity within the centers was crystallized in the organization of diverse social initiatives that relate to broader national social justice struggles. Graciela recounted how concerted efforts are regularly carried out in the realm of the neighborhood to share this experience while contributing to the community centers’

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213 The “neighborhood space” represents a key territory in the urban space where consumption-production and other recreational and symbolic activities are carried out. Neighborhood-based solidarity adopts different forms according to the historical and socio-cultural trajectory of the urban space where it is located. Aldo Ameigeiras, “El pensar popular: Entre la memoria popular y el imaginario colectivo en la cotidianeidad del ámbito barrial”, en Floreal H. Forni (comp.), De la exclusión a la organización: hacia la integración de los pobres en los nuevos barrios del conurbano bonaerense, Ediciones Ciccus, Buenos Aires, 2002.
welfare. This dimension of organized solidarity is in her view, a source of legitimacy for the center’s mission:

“…sometimes we organize festivals where the soup kitchen can sell something for its own (economic) benefit…On Sunday we had to go to the Gorqui (a local club)...to which also Angela and a group of young people from here came…”

“…that festival was done specifically for the “settlement” issue. About what’s going to happen on Friday (March 24th, 30th anniversary of the beginning of the Dictatorship in 1976) so on Sunday we discussed that topic. The “Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo”214 came, the mayor came, well, many celebrities too. And well, this was one of the soup kitchens invited, obviously for our benefit. And well, we went to participate, besides (attending) the event.”

Female participation and neighborhood solidarity are encompassed in Graciela’s summary of how the different community soup kitchens encourage and profit from barrio-based social initiatives:

“…I attend meetings held in a welfare entity, which is a commission of Morón (together with) different soup kitchens and breakfast salons. For example, from this soup kitchen I go, and we get together with other groups of other entities. Eh...there we talk, right? For example, on “Child’s Day” we had met, we had prepared little bags (with presents for the kids), everything. There was a party at the San José square. Participating with milk, with this or that, in unity. That we do. In February we did a carnival, we also set up our little spot to sell “pasta frola” (a typical Argentine cake). (The Secretary of) Culture, that is to say, the municipality, offers the services that they have, the music, everything. So, there was folklore, girls performing Brazilian dances, you see, there was…everything in San José square. So yes, we get together. That is to say, (with) the neighborhood we get united there, to prepare this.”

Luisa strongly perceives herself as an outgiving person. In her narrative, it becomes clear how in fact many women participating in the program’s projects already experienced a sense of solidarity before being program beneficiaries. In turn, participating for her was somewhat of a self-selective process.215 Additionally, it

214 “Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo” is a social movement leaded by grandmothers who lost their grandchildren in the hands of the dictatorship that begun in March 1976 in Argentina. For more information on this topic, see “Filiación - Identidad - Restitución. 15 años de lucha de Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, El Bloque Editorial, Buenos Aires,” 1995.

215 This concept of self-selection was elaborated by Graciela Cardarelli and Mónica Rosenfeld in “Con las mejores intenciones: acerca de la relación entre el Estado pedagógico y los agentes sociales”, en Silvia Duschatzky (comp.), Tutelados y Asistidos, Programas sociales políticas públicas y subjetividad, Editorial Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2000.
reinforced her personal adherence to social welfare. In her life, affecting the wellbeing of other people has always represented a challenge. She battles between a context of indifference and her motivation to be generous. The program-sponsored community center, in turn, has granted her the opportunity (and the space) to share herself to others under an institutionalized setting. In this context, solidarity is not contested but rather valued. The impact of this opportunity on her life has proved truly positive:

“...yes, I am very generous, or else I give everything, or I give too much, and that is my flaw. I have always been told so. And you feel good, comfortable, but I have always been told that. “You are capable of giving everything, and then? you have nothing left for yourself.” But then you say, “but the other person really needs it.””

“I (like the plan) for what I do...You feel good helping other people…”

4.4 Women’s representations
As they socialize, individuals usually engage in mental representations, namely acts of perception and appreciation, of cognition and recognition. In this process, the objective structures of the social space are incorporated into their categories of perception. In order to construct the vision of their own position in this world (that is, their social identity) social agents continually perform the labor of representation. In doing so, they project their interests and notions.\(^{216}\)

The perceptions expressed by the interviewed women result from their subjective elaboration of the contexts in which they interact. These contexts are the community projects. Self-perception of the female beneficiaries is the axis on which

the further interpretative analysis is constructed in order to examine poor women’s representations of their work and lives.

4.4.1 What Representations emerged with Plan Jefes y Jefas?

Sonia had never worked in a community center before becoming a program beneficiary. Her “social world” had been reduced to her family and household work. Like the rest of the interviewed, she used a plural “we” to explain how she visualized herself in a situation of total material destitution prior to her involvement in the program. In addition, her self-representation reflects that of the other plan beneficiaries who work with her:

“So well, when they began to sign (people) in… we were all miserable, we had no money, my husband (was) unemployed, I (was) unemployed…our kid had just been born…”

Another beneficiary, Luisa, when inquired about the labor she undertook at the “roperito” (community clothing center), emphasized how working outside the house had been a major life event. Luisa felt a sense of relative independence from the household and the beginning of her public identity. Luisa’s assertion suggests how being a part of a publicly noticeable project has endowed her with a public identity:

“…Before coming here, I (related) with my neighbors, and that was it…(now) I have more relationships, I know more people that sees me and says “ah, you see? I went to the ‘roperito’” and this or that…”

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217 Interview with Sonia on May 2006, “Neighbors’ Board of San Juan Neighborhood - Community Clothing Center,” San Juan Neighborhood, Morón, Buenos Aires.
*Luisa* also reflected on her perception of the type of work she does under the plan, by stressing how helping other people in similar situations has been personally rewarding:

“…because you feel good to do something and by that to help (other) people…”

*Estela’s* account doing her “contraprestación” at the community center helped her materially and it also changed how she interpreted the meaning of her own life. She felt dignified by the opportunity of working while getting a subsidy. In doing so, she developed the ability to relate to poor people in ways previously unimagined. Beforehand, she explained how she felt completely aimless and alone. Now, instead, she has a big network of people who continually help her. Mirroring herself in those people she finds strength to pull every day’s fight to survive. Now, she can construct her life narrative:220

“Since I am here, it totally changed for me…I know that they are all good people, that is what I say. They are good people and “solidary” people, that never say “no, I have nothing, this soup kitchen is closed, there is not a plate of food for your kids,” no. If they are not in the list, they give me food for them anyway.”

“The plan…since this plan started, it changed for me, I am not the person I was before. I am now a new person. Beforehand I was bad, if (somebody) knocked at my door “ma’m, do you have a piece of bread?”, and (I answered) “go find a job if you want bread!” Now I don’t do that, and here I learnt that, in this soup kitchen I learnt that. Although I had my kids, I didn’t care about others. My attitude towards people changed since I am in this soup kitchen.”

Like *Sonia*, nearly all women expressed how the set-up of the community projects afforded them with a sense of security by allowing them to combine their work

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schedules and family responsibilities. Nevertheless, this indisputable advantage masks the burden that women assume as their ‘natural’ and personal responsibilities: their families’ symbolic and material reproduction:

“...we share everything. We come here with our kids, because I…actually I don’t have anyone to take care of them at home, you know? My husband goes to work, my other daughter is at school, and he stays alone (her younger son). And so I have to come with him...”

Except for the case of Mirta, all the rest of the women perceived Plan Jefes y Jefas – to different degrees- as a fairly positive program. In turn, her assessment is very significant because she clearly articulates the subjective dimensions of the daily life of a poor woman who having valuable work experience, has recently suffered a downgrading of her opportunities. In her case, the plan reinforced the gender subordination that she had been struggling to overcome by working long hours in a tailor’s workshop. This job represented a creative moment in her life. Although she acknowledged the program as a minimal economic contribution, the main argument for her dissatisfaction was the fact that for her, the community work she did under the program’s sponsorship was not a “real job.”

“I worked in family households, I worked in a tailor’s repair shop, seven-eight years of tailoring, before the plan. That is why I don’t like the plan, because it is very boring! That is to say, it is not a job where you say “I go, work the schedule, I know what I (have to) do,” here you are looking around (what to do). You don’t know if you clean the same...”

“I know what it is to have a schedule, and to go to work every day. And I did different things during the day…but I knew. I always worked like that. So that is what I don’t like. I don’t like the plan. In reality I started in the plan because I signed in due to a strong need, because the tailoring repair shop has a season.”

221 Interview with Mirta during the first semester of 2006, Food Kitchen and Community Child-Care Center “Sagrado Corazón de Jesús,” Ibañez Neighborhood, Morón, Buenos Aires.
She stressed that she did not learn anything at the center, thus the plan represented no real benefits for her. In Mirta’s perceptions, the plan has hindered her creative capabilities by solely offering “female” --gendered-- care-giving work.

Her representations glimpse discomfort of having changed her previous long-hours routine outside her home for a short and unrewarding work: an unwanted “return to the household.” Incorporating the objective structures of the social space into the categories of her perception, Mirta sees both her household and the community center as two spaces where she is not personally realized. For her, the experience of motherhood is alienating:

“…I didn’t learn anything from the plan. Because I already know how to take care of my children, I already have kids. You have a lot of responsibilities…”
“(I) didn’t (change)...because first in order to change there has to be some experience. And here nothing of that (happened)…”

In contrast, for other women, the plan represented a “break” from the household work, an opportunity to socialize, a space where their social identities took shape.

Mirta also highlighted a valid parallel vision of the plan: for many people, it became a safety net without any “commitment” with the survival mission that the community centers embody:

“(the plan) is convenient, you know you come when you want to, or you don’t. And you know that you go and get the money. It’s like the plan is convenient for the lazy people. That is the issue. Maybe you have a lot of children, your husband is unemployed, and you get that money, well it’s a help for you.”

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222 Motherhood can be seen under two lights. On the one hand, it may represent a vehicle to alienate women from citizenship reinforcing difference and subordination. On the other, it may represent a vehicle that initiates social actions aimed at contesting state arbitrary measures by means of a performative female collective action. Graciela Di Marco, "Ciudadanía femenina”, en Relaciones de Genero y Exclusión en la Argentina de los 90, ADEUEM Editorial Espacios, Argentina, 1998.
In addition, Mirta’s testimony shows her anger with the government’s social planning. In her view, the “partnership” between the state’s actions and the beneficiaries’ collaboration is an abuse to their integrity. Under this system, she feels she has no choice. Given that in the past she experienced a relative freedom of choice, the outline of the plan does not suit her needs:

“I think that when they demand too much --and they do demand too much-- it’s like they forget that you are also a person, do you understand? It’s like it’s not hard to be like that. That is what I don’t like, the hard demand, and I can’t give any more…”

Finally, Mirta’s narrative shows discomfort with the little amount of money of the subsidy, she feels it is unthinkable to expect people to work for such a spurious subsidy. Minimal monetary assistance and compulsory community work do not seem to add up in her experience of poverty:

“…you are never sure, until you have the money in your hands. But, in any case, one hundred and fifty pesos is not much anyway, it is nothing. One hundred and fifty pesos is (good enough) for getting by, nothing else…”

Mirta has experienced the Plan Jefes y Jefas as a closure to her identity, an identity that is not embedded in the mother-spouse roles but more in her professional prospects. Private and social motherhood do not define her. Her testimony reflects deep skepticism with the government’s social policies. Yet, she is a hard worker and believes that one has to earn the subsidy received with effort and merit. Her standpoint reflects the culture of work that persists in Argentina. However, Mirta believes so much in that only working one can find dignity, that she shows discomfort and shame that the only definition of her identity today is related to her poverty, and to her being a “beneficiary.”
On the opposite end of the satisfaction scale with the plan is María del Carmen. For her, the plan materializes an *opening*: it grants her the opportunity to help her kid to go to school, and to buy her needed medicines. Her introduction to the program and to the community center where she works (the same center where Mirta used to work) has represented a positive rupture in her life.

“…I am very glad, because I work, I study. I am here. I have been here for the last five years. I am very happy because I use the money for my son that goes to school, (and) for my medicines. I suffer from asthma.”

“It helps me a lot, I still really need it. I wish one day I grow and don’t need it any more. And well, that depends on God’s help.”

In the past, she has collaborated in community clothing centers and worked as a housekeeper for a long period of time. Unlike her previous work experiences, she has now gained access to social networks and reciprocity with other individuals. Loyalty, mutual commitment, purpose and resolution\(^{223}\) are reflected in her view of the work she does at the center. Even though she recognizes that her work is not “creative,” she nevertheless appreciates her role as a contributor to the center’s actions. And she likes the changes in the image of herself that she sees today. She even feels that she is capable of learning and “teaching” others. She has added value to her life narrative, and seeks a better perspective for her life. In addition, working as a beneficiary in the community center has represented a source of security and affection, and the milestone

of future changes in her life: She is, in sum, a “merit-oriented idealist” whose identity is deeply entwined with socially-valuable work.

“Yes, I love the soup kitchen. When I don’t come it seems to me that something is missing. I love my co-workers; I miss them a lot when I don’t come.”

“…I would like to grow and teach someone. That is my plan. I like to learn and teach. Yes, I really like helping the people.”

“I want to study. I want to learn computer skills. I like it a lot. To be able to insert myself in something else, because I see that I will not be able to stay in the plan all my life. I want to be useful to other people, advance my work…”

*Delia* perceives herself as an uneducated hard-working person whose struggles have been focused around her children’s drug issues and her disadvantaged economic situation. Though not disregarding her children’s care, her engagement in the program grew out of necessity and out of desperation to feel useful and to have a routine outside her home.

“One day I came to her (the community project coordinator) and said: “well Angela, I need to work because I have a lot of problems,” I said: “at least doing voluntary work.” Although my goal was to get the plan one day… I then said (to the municipality), “I don’t come here to ask for anything, I come to offer my services (as a) cleaning (lady), because I have no studies.” And that is how they gave me (the plan).”

Her son’s drug problems have represented a huge test of character for *Delia*. Confronting her own sense of aimlessness, and even despised by her ex husband, she took the courage to act upon the wellbeing of her two sons and decided to turn them into the rehabilitation system. These decisions initially provoked her sons’ rejection of *Delia*. After some time, though they recognized her mother-like intention to protect them from their own behavior. For *Delia*, *Plan Jefes y Jefas* has represented a space

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225 Richard Sennet, The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism…
where she recharges the energy she needs in the exercise of her most significant role: being a good and respected mother. In short, the affection she receives from her coworkers—a sort of “new family”—has counterbalanced her conflicted and often contested motherhood.

“I have to be (here) four hours but sometimes I stay longer because it helps me. I… the schedule has no limits, because I like it, I love this place, I feel comfortable. And my coworkers are excellent people…I have no problem, cleaning, this or that. I do anything. I never stay quiet. Everything, I do everything…”

“…I found a new family, that my coworkers care for me, they talk to me a lot. They are very caring coworkers…we help each other.”

“When I took my son to the court (for drug abuse) he told me “heartless mother.” He told me the worst (things)…and now regrets himself…and tells (the other son) “Gastón, you don’t have to be angry at mom, because she is too brave…”

Finally, by being in contact with other children and other families’ realities, Delia reinforced her representation of a good mother and housekeeper. The “construction of herself” and her feeling of completeness are entirely related to her reproductive roles. Therefore, in the context of the center “Sagrado Corazón de Jesús” where she participates as a program beneficiary, Delia found new sources on which to compare herself and reevaluate her personal value. Her experience seems to indicate an often undervalued yet powerful exercise of motherhood.226

“…The influence of the children (changed me), and to be there for them. (Working here made me aware) of how much people need (help). And the impotence of seeing mothers that don’t worry about their kids. And I work, but I dedicate to them…”

“Sometimes I have to wake up at five-thirty seven in the morning, to clean everything…because I like, no matter how poor I may be, to have my house clean…”

226 The paradigms of the ‘female’ and the ‘mother’ that envision women as constrained, privatized and purposeless may also serve as vehicles for female authority…In fact, female power may be effective even when no specific behavior or action is perceptible. Women may display through more or less explicit tactics, an unofficial (thus “illegitimate”) form of power…” Jean Bethke Elshtain, “The Power and Powerlessness of Women,”…p.112
Regarding the learning involved in the activities undertaken by female beneficiaries, opinions diverged. Most of the interviewed women were not involved in the most creative activities offered by the community centers. On the contrary, they were in charge of the “female” tasks. Ethel seemed, however, particularly gratified by her participation in the workshops held at the community center where she worked. Her involvement represented a way to “reeducate” herself in practical skills while integrating a new sense of religious morality to her actions. Ethel perceived the crisis and her engagement in community labor as a “clarifying moment of change that illuminated the whole.”

“…here there are a lot of workshops, for example the “Group of Women of the West –the west of the Greater Buenos Aires region” come, so you learn a lot of things that maybe you knew but kept ‘archived,’ and here you keep them ‘out.’ So…yes. Besides, the fact that this is a motivating place, in this case, (because of) faith, right? Because the fact that it is a community house, eh, there is something else deep down, so you learn a lot of things.”

Since she started working for the community center in various tasks related to child care, cleaning and cooking, María del Carmen feels she has changed. Even though she acknowledged she had bigger projects for her life, such as finishing her studies, she found a sense of direction through her work as a beneficiary. It helped her redefine her distinctiveness:

“I see myself more attached to people. I can take decisions more than before…for my age, and for experience…”

A clear-cut experience with extreme material and moral destitution has marked Estela’s life ever since she emigrated from Paraguay. She has had several partners

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228 Ibid.
along her life, with whom she had three daughters. She has only worked as a domestic worker. Her activities in the soup kitchen haven’t represented a big challenge for her in terms of learning (with the exception of an arts and crafts course she took there). Nonetheless they have helped her catch sight her self-value. When she started cooking at the soup kitchen she learned that other people trusted her. That trust helped her see that she could contribute to the community project just like any other participant. Furthermore, she gained faith in herself as an individual and found a new “sense of integrity”\textsuperscript{229} out of her work. She felt dignified.

“…since I started here, it totally changed for me…from what I was, when I knocked on doors to see if (people) let me clean their front patio to be able to feed (my children), but since I started getting the money of the plan, that helped me…”

When she started working at the center, her social horizons amplified. It was then that she became aware of the fact that she had been entirely submerged in her family’s sphere. It is clear to her now that she cannot live any longer in isolation. Additionally, the image and representation of the community resembles “home” to Estela. She has found “coherency” in her life. After so much disruption, there is some sense of “completeness” in her life narrative:

“…I was too secluded to my kids, to my home. And there was something missing for me, right? And well, afterwards, when I came here and worked, that changed…”

“… when I started to work (in the soup kitchen), I felt more loved, that people related to me…I was a woman that was alone. I didn’t go out. I didn’t know what friendship was, or who to talk with, who to drink some mates, nothing… Here I feel as if it were my own home…”

4.4.2 The Meaning of Work: Pride in what they DO, Pride in what they ARE

In this section I examine the meanings assigned by the beneficiaries to their choices regarding their work under the Plan Jefes y Jefas, and to the new sense of purpose attributed to their lives. Even though most of these women have assumed socioeconomic exclusion from the world of opportunities associated to better educational and labor trajectories as a granted reality, their lives are meaningful for them. They are not drifting aimlessly despite the hard conditions of existence they face every day. On the contrary, a fight for survival has provided a “project” by which regardless of the hard material circumstances, they have come to terms with their realities by making something of themselves. Except for very few cases – examined below – the majority expressed optimistic views of their work. Mastery of poor community-related work, in addition to great will and determination, have reshaped some of these women’s self-perceptions. Pride lies at the heart of these changes.

Ethel is one of the most revealing testimonies regarding this point. She is powerfully driven to interpret her work as reflecting upon herself as an individual, in her case, adding to her personal esteem. Her work identity seems to be intimately substantiated with her tasks in the community center “Sagrados Corazones”. Her daily life performing this work is marked by a deep-rooted identification with its mission, while it personally rewards her. She finds her work comprehensible both operationally

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and emotionally.\textsuperscript{232} In addition, as she works, Ethel becomes aware of her own capacities. By “publicizing” herself she reassures her self value, and feels proud of what she has become:

“...to put here what I know I am. Because actually the things I do or say are always a part of me, but here I was able to show them and they were valued, you see?”

Working outside her household and having other projects to fulfill besides being a mother provides her with a new sense of purpose, and determined her to do more for herself and other women. Mirroring herself in other women’s realities and problems helps her capture what needs to be changed. She feels that her experience in the center has personally empowered her:

“That’s what happened to me, see? That is the best: to have learnt to give myself to others, and not live isolated for myself. And it also benefited me to be there for others, and not just for them (referring to her children).”

“...What happens is now you (referring to herself) have a broader range (of resources) to help. Beforehand, eh, you had the basic instruments. Now it’s like you have more resources that I am learning here…from interacting with more people…”

“We would like to do some work like that (community-oriented)...related to women, to give support to battered women, workshops for women, (child care centers) for them to be able to work…”

“...It’s like you need to wake people up, because maybe you don’t know, but people stay back a lot, you see? Sometimes it’s not that they don’t want (to change), but that they stay back. Because you stayed back too…”

Finally, being able to decide how to participate with her time in the community center reassured her that she has a choice and she can determine the direction of her life:

“I...maybe it sounds a little selfish what I am going to say, right? But the best is that I gave my time, I could decide for myself…”

On the contrary, Mirta’s previous work experience laid the foundations of her representation of what work entails, such as having a fixed schedule, learning new

\textsuperscript{232} These analytical categories were previously elaborated by Richard Sennett in \textit{The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism}, WW Norton Press, NY, 1998.
things, and more than anything, having a workplace separated from home. However, that experience was marked by personal sacrifices and low wages. Still so, her construction of present-day reality is even worse. She is proud of having worked all of her life, and would rather work long hours with a low salary in a tailor’s workshop than in a community center where she does not know how her sacrifice contributes to the center’s mission:

“Well, I worked all my life; I worked since I was born!”

“I worked so much…and never had anything. That is, if I had to come on a Sunday, I did…I liked it because…when you get used to a routine it’s like you enjoy being outside of your home… I don’t like to do the housework because it’s like it’s always the same: washing, cooking, ironing, taking care of the children. But if I have to go out, I do it gladly. The only thing I don’t like are the children, because they are terrible. (she laughs). There comes a moment when you get tired. I like working in tailoring better than with kids. You feel more fulfilled because you learn new things that you could benefit from in the future. That, I learnt many things.”

*Mirta* feels different from unemployed people around her who do not look for a job. As a result of her involvement in local political affairs in the past--*Mirta* was a member of a social movement for as long as seven years--her discourse evinces a politicized idea of work. In her view, unemployed people incarnate “lowly misfits” who do not deserve respect because they are entirely to blame for their situation. In her perception, she feels proud of what she was before her experience at the community project through her membership in *Plan Jefes y Jefas*.

“...I used to be a rebel before, I didn’t relate to anybody. First of all I don’t like dirty people, people who are sitting all day with their legs crossed, and it’s like you notice them around you. But now, I say that I am like this…”

*Luisa’s* construction of the idea of work is more individual. She is pleased as long as she works with her sowing machine. Tailoring at home by herself is not the same as working with a group of people, though. In that sense, socializing the work she knew
how to do before she became a beneficiary granted continuity in her life, letting it flow. What is more, she feels useful, and that comforts her. In a way, she is proud of what she does, and feels she can do everything she sets her mind to. Her sowing machine in the social setting of the community clothing center where she works define what she does, and who she is:

“Maybe before coming here, I lived with my neighbors, and that was it. But coming here it’s like you meet more people…you feel more related to people…you feel more useful…”

“…In that sense I like it (tailoring). As long as I have fabric…sometimes I go get the subsidy and (when) I come from (downtown) Morón, I stop by the fabrics store, buy a piece of fabric, and I can do everything…”

Graciela’s account of her perception of work reveals a sense of self-government and determination. She believes in personal choice and has remained loyal to her life project by always working in soup kitchens. Additionally, she has pursued a stable work trajectory. Her representation of her work is that it is more “valuable” to her because it is a socially useful project. In that sense, she enjoys feeling a part of it, she feels proud:

“Working on whatever makes me feel good. And it makes me feel better…to be in contact with the kids…I like what I do, because it is different…”

4.4.3 Representations of The Self vs. the Other: how Opinions relate to Experience
Women’s Self-representation versus the Others is the axis of this section. I assume that the personal and social identity can only be defined as it compares to the others in the social world. Being a “beneficiary” means, for all the women interviewed, that they need to earn the subsidy with their work. They express a notion of “merit” and
“obligation” in relation to their non in-kind exchange. Their narratives reflect the notion of the “Self,” which represents the interviewed women who work hard at the community centers. The “Others” represent the “Piqueteros” who are deemed to ignore the program’s non in-kind exchange, and other recipients of the Plan who also ignore this rule.

During the interviews, women expressed negative opinions on the “Piqueteros.” This is a common attitude among middle-class and upper middle-class sectors. In the case of the women interviewed women, “Piqueteros” were primarily regarded as violent groups who do not represent these women’s interests or demands. Besides, women expressed that the Plan beneficiaries who do not comply with the labor requirement – the “contraprestación” -- were people who do not value community efforts, care for the welfare of the children, or deserve the government’s help.

These “free riders” pose a dilemma to many of these working women who often need to justify why they choose to participate. As they face these odds, however, they reaffirm their conviction to work at the community centers. Thus, their decision is

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233 The “Piqueteros” have been accused of mishandling social plans by granting them to their constituents violating the eligibility criteria of the plan. In the course of the last few years, the “Piqueteros” have aroused heated arguments on their credibility as valid interpreters of unemployed and poor people’s needs.

234 Vast middle sectors have historically looked down upon working-class mannerisms and lifestyles, fearing the “dangerous classes” through two negative stereotypes: the “violent piquetero” and the “piquetero plebeyo.” Maristella Svampa, “Ambivalencias y complejidades de las organizaciones piqueteras,” Prometeo, 2005.

not only related to their own sense of economic security, but also to their commitment
to community welfare. In this respect, the interviewed women represent the “idealist
meritocrats” given that they believe in the mission of the community center, and also
think that they need to “earn” the money of the subsidy.\textsuperscript{236}

In \textit{Graciela}'s perception, the organizations of unemployed workers and the
non-working “Jefes and Jefas” are not worthy of respect. Her deep-rooted notion of
work entails effort and merit, something these “Others” completely ignore. What is
more, they represent violence and disaster, two facts she prefers to exclude from her
lifestyle:

“…Regarding the “piqueteros” I don’t agree, I don’t agree with what they do. What can I say? I
don’t like what carries violence and all that. It bothers me that many people are, like, getting the
money (of the subsidy) to go and make those disasters. There are also “jefes” and “jefas” that
don’t work, because I know a lot of people. Eh…\textbf{I was always taught that you have to earn
your money, working,} (and) not get it because someone gives it to you, because then you
don’t value anything. I like what I do here…”

Like all of her coworkers, \textit{Graciela} is aware of other beneficiaries’ (the “Others”) less
committed choices. This situation actually reinforces her personal choice to participate
in community survival while getting the program’s subsidy:

“…sometimes I (talk) with many people, including my sisters (about) that you can choose, for
example, to stay at home, and (you would) go and get the money anyway, or (you could) work
two hours in a community thrift store, in one of those places, or like some people that go, sign
and don’t do anything, eh…on the other hand I don’t. I could also demand to work the four
hours but (I) don’t, because I know that the children have to eat…”

\textsuperscript{236} Carla Zibecchi elaborated the concepts “idealist meritocratic” and “sceptic meritocratic” to illustrate
the general patterns that define the beneficiaries’ representations of the work they do in the centers in
al género (Argentina 1992-2004). UN análisis centrado en las trayectorias y experiencias de los
beneficiarios y beneficiarias del Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar”, Maestría en Políticas Sociales, Facultad de
Ciencias Sociales– UBA, p. 177.
Luisa’s testimony reveals a relative identification with the ideals of the “Piqueteros.” In her view, they represent poor people’s demands and struggle. Nevertheless, she does not accept their methods of protest. She prefers not to be involved in what she considers to be violent actions that would eventually risk her position and her children’s security:

“I…sometimes…actually, they do “piquetes” (demonstrations, blockades, etc) for us, right? But I don’t agree with the piqueteros! I do not agree, and I believe that if I didn’t have the plan I would not get involved with the piqueteros. I think that because of my kids. It’s a risk, even though they are grown up, young, I don’t know, no, no…no…”

María del Carmen believes “Piqueteros”’ actions prove how their political gains only pamper the laziness of the people. The way she articulated what she and her coworkers talk about casts how common sense237 and concept formation are socially spontaneous operations. As she justifies why she still believes in the labor she does, she redefines her own position in the social world. She differentiates from the ‘Others’ by reassuring her own standing. For her, social plans have political content. She holds a meritocratic idea of the social plans. María del Carmen adopted a leading role in the definition of the common sense of the group: social plans should be earned with work:

“We are always gossiping, because there is always a topic of what you see on TV, or on the news show… Just this morning I was telling them (her coworkers) “did you see this (new) plan that they started?, didn’t the president have any other plan to start?...that plan is (good for) keeping the people lazy, because if he gives jobs, people are not sitting, and how many are sitting and don’t work? And we work.” And people always ask me, “but why are you always working?, we don’t work and still get the money”, “well, you are you. If I can, I keep floating”…”

“I don’t know…I always tell them that it keeps the people lazy. Like those who sign for school, that get paid two hundred pesos. I have a lot of acquaintances –I have lived in the neighborhood for a long time. And just last night, when my sister-in-law came to pick me up to make me sign up for School 71, because they are taking people to study there –I don’t know if they study

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because I don’t go there, but yesterday they signed up and came to pick me up and I told them:
“no, I am fine where I am.”

*Mirta’s* views on governmental “compensatory actions” for the poor are truly interesting. Showing a deeply skeptic perspective, she believes that the *Plan Jefes and Jefas* was just a political maneuver that benefited few people. For her, the ‘Self’ represents people who were “betrayed” by the government, and the ‘Others’ are the ones who actually profited from the state’s anti-poverty plans.

“Yes, look. Because actually the story of this plan is that there is supposedly one plan per family. And the person that doesn’t have a family shouldn’t be in the plan. And the truth (is) I know many people that have gotten (the plan) without having children, although I have never denounced anybody, not to expose anybody. (People) that without being the head (of the household), are getting the subsidy. He, and she (both) get the money, do you understand?...the son gets it, the brother gets it, an entire family gets it. People (declaring) other family’s children (as their own) that get it…and maybe people with seven children could never get it…”

*Mirta’s* more informed narrative suggests how she associates the organizations of unemployed workers with a discrestional distribution of social plans among families. Though she did not explicitly say so, the mental image that would best define this understanding of the distribution of the program’s subsidy is that of political “clientelism.” Nevertheless, she explained how her husband tried to become a member of “Piqueteros” if only they gave him a plan (as a survival strategy). The fact that he has not been successful in this respect nurtures her disenchantment with politically-involved groups.

“And that is my anger, because my husband has never been able to get in, do you see? Not even exchanging me for him. He couldn’t even get into the “piqueteros”, he tried five hundred times. Also, the other plan for piqueteros, he could never get into that one either. And more so after the surgery…”

It is clear that during her political participation –a time when she seems to have enjoyed labor stability and independence-, *Mirta* learnt to articulate eloquent opinions
on the state’s poverty management policies. She developed a capacity to speak a language of rights, although today her pessimism shows a recent memory of deep disappointment. The representations that influenced her views on political power became contradictory with the political clientelism that she witnessed especially in the years of economic recession followed by the crisis.

“No, no. I don’t like (to participate in politics) that much because actually some time ago, for four-five years, I was associated to something political, you see?, and it’s like it’s a lot of mess, a lot of lies, and I don’t …I don’t like those things. I was in a “welfare association” (“sociedad de fomento”), but that was seven-eight years ago, and I didn’t like it and I withdrew myself. It’s like those organizations, out of the majority, maybe a few actually help people, and there are others that use poor people to be ok themselves. They use them for their own well-being. Because through poor people you can do a lot of things! But you don’t help anybody. I, they don’t matter to me. I am already disassociated. That’s why I don’t trust anybody.”

Finally, Mirta feels humiliated by how she has been treated by the municipality. She feels her claims for more economic help have been ignored. Shifting her previous statements, she perceives the “rich” and the “politicians” as the ‘Others’ who use “Us,” namely the poor. In addition, Mirta has a lot of “enemies” that she cannot face: the old political allies that betrayed her, the indifferent state, and the rest of society who are not poor. She feels helpless. Having the plan makes her feel trapped in this logic where she sees herself as a poor and defenseless woman with no alternatives to survive other than accepting this reality.

“Do you know the (people in the) municipality?, I get foodstuff from them, I don’t complain about that. But they made a survey on Teacher’s Day, and I told them the truth. There are things that are not good for them, and less so for you. So I think that a help like that is no help. You can’t do anything with dry pasta. More than two years ago I asked for a tin sheet and they haven’t given it to me.”

“I think that they come to your house to make a survey, see the conditions in which you are, and is it so hard to give you some help? I got tired of the municipality. So politics and all that, you have experience. Politics is for the rich, who get places through poor people. I said it because it’s like that. And they say that they give out something to go to the (political) events, I
4.4.4 Developing more power within the family: Changes in Self-perception and Impacts on Housework, Childcare and Income

In poor families, resources other than the occasional work must be utilized in order to make ends meet, for example, resources drawn from existing social networks and welfare plans. As shown before, the women interviewed here live within this type of family. All the adult members of these families work in precarious jobs, and usually rely on community centers and other resources to survive. 238

Within the family sphere, conflict and power struggles are a part of normal life. They usually build upon two axes: the division of labor (inside and outside the domestic sphere) and the division of responsibilities (mainly monetary). These two orders set the rules of domestic organization. At the same time, they put forward complex processes in which affection and solidarity bonds mix with incentives to collaborate with the common welfare. 239

Even though most of the interviewed women are not the official “heads” of their households, some of them lead a de facto mono-parental family in the sense that they put on their shoulders a disproportionate amount of work in the household, in taking care of the children (and the elderly), while greatly contributing to the household’s finances. Patriarchal power relations vitiated with unfairness, inequality

and coercion have been present in their families. In the past, most of the interviewed women have not developed “labor identities,” given that they have been mostly confined to the private sphere. Most of them, however, have worked informally (as low-waged, low-status workers in sex-segregated occupations), contributing to the support of the household and family. In that sense, they perceive themselves as “working wives,” “working mothers,” and “supplemental earners.”²⁴⁰ Besides, they have persistently exercised the role of consumers, usually deciding how to spend their share of the family income. In this respect, the interviewed women have been proactive mothers, wives and administrators.

Some of the impacts of poor women’s labor participation in community centers are reflected in the alterations of the personal and family spheres. The Plan Jefes y Jefas opened new contexts of socialization in which poor women shared time, work and their life experiences with other individuals. Contact with similar realities, in turn, facilitated some transformations on the distribution of housework, the child care, the administration of the household income, and the rearrangements of time and leisure.²⁴¹ In this section we examine the daily life of the women studied in order to understand to what extent these changes occurred. Transformations in these areas of control might in time originate more significant changes related to gender equality and the democratization of the family.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 125
Housework and child care are and have been Ethel’s responsibility. She recently realized she wants to improve her chances of working outside her household. As a result of the personal growth related to the contact with other women, she decided to finish high-school. She sees herself as a dutiful mother, while recognizing her subordination. Ethel is also sensitive about gender issues. She identifies with women who suffer the same gender-related constraints in terms of self-realization and work.

She wants to show to her family that her life is valuable. She has learnt to express her needs and define her goals, whether her husband likes it or not. Outside of her household, she feels free to speak her mind without guilt. Additionally, she has begun to set limits to her husband, to demand his engagement in the household. Overall, Ethel seems to have gained consciousness of her autonomy and overtly disputes the role of head of household to her partner.

“Well…I do everything…the cleaning, the cooking, I take care of the children…except now that I study in the evening, he makes dinner. Except for that…yes, because otherwise he has to wait until I come back! (she laughs)…So, yes. It’s the survival law, he has no alternative!”

Ethel does not contest her relegated position when it comes to income administration and income distribution. Nevertheless, she glimpses discontent and resignation. It is expectable that if she manages to finish high school and starts working, she might in time demand a share of the household income for her needs.

I: And you? If you like something you saw, (do you buy it)…?
Ethel: “…The reality is we have five children!...If I have to walk barefoot to give them everything they need I will...for example the money that I get from the plan, I handle it. And...the money, he has expenses that for example, he has to pay for the electricity (bill). So, well, each one spends what one has.
I: And if for example one of the kids needs a coat, who (buys it)…?
E: “Me, me, I deal with it.”
What about power in the family? We should recall that power “allows to control the material resources of the family, to control the life of the other members of the family, but it does not necessarily imply the recognition of legitimacy, respect or prestige.”

Regarding the structure of authority in the household, a recent shift has occurred as a consequence of Ethel’s decision to take risks by exploring her opportunities outside the private sphere. These explorations have granted her a new awareness of her qualities, something that she is projecting to her marriage. In turn, she is now developing new areas beyond her motherhood, (which she has always assumed as a natural and rewarding function). There is no rupture, though. Given that she can see and hear herself among other women who work with her at the center, she wants to “realize something precious for herself” without resigning her mother-spouse role. She feels distinct, recognizes her own value and capabilities. At the same time, her attitude is defying and disputing her husband’s authority. He must learn to grow with her, such is her determination:

I: How did your partner see these changes?
Ethel: “Ay, that is quite a question! Eh…he is a little chauvinist; he wanted me to only stay at home…”
I: Did that attitude change?
Ethel: “Well, I don’t know if it changed. But he had to learn to live with my change, it was like that. Because now I study, for example, and he doesn’t like it either. But you know?! It makes me feel good…”

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Ethel has also learnt to cope with her imbalanced family responsibilities\(^\text{244}\), and is capable of sharing it with other people, to make sense of her choices.

I: What do you talk about with your coworkers?

Ethel: “Well, (about) the household, the children, (about) how hard it is to have a partner… (she laughs). Now we also share the school (experience), you see? Because some of us go together…”

On the perception of personal change, Ethel highlighted how some of the women that worked with her developed attitudes and aspects of their characters that were hidden or undetected. Her discourse shows a clear distinction of the private and the public spheres as two separate areas where distinct skills [motherhood vs. other skills] could be channeled. This experience has awarded her freedom to express publicly.

“…in general you see a change in everyone. You realize that for example there is one (woman) that is like more a “leader.” She made herself noticed, (as) someone that can handle issues of leadership, to be a reference (for the rest). But what happens is that in your home you cannot be noticed, but in a group like that, you can. Because you are with your peers…”

Mirta represents the opposite experience relative to the rest of the women studied. Mirta’s testimony is important to comprehend how there was no such thing as a homogeneous female experience of the effects of Plan Jefes and Jefas, for she stated that the Plan had had no effects on her life. Indeed, Mirta embodies the most radical pessimist vision in relation to the changes the program brought about on her family and household responsibilities.

\(^{244}\) Although it is not the main focus of this study, it is important to briefly describe the categorization on the figure of the “head of the household” achieved by Graciela Di Marco in “La jefatura de hogar, feminización de la pobreza?,” in Beatriz Schmukler (coord.) “Familias y Relaciones de Género en Transformación, Cambios trascendentales en América Latina y el Caribe”, Population Council, 1998, which outlines two situations: the first, when a hierarchic order in the couple is established; the second is related to the demarcation of the provision of the household’s resources. Other dimensions such as who makes the decisions or who takes care of the children are also embedded in this concept.
A gender-sensitive reading of Mirta’s testimony is very significant given her distinct representation of her identity as a worker. It also contributes to understand the impacts of the economic dislocations suffered by poor families like hers and the sense of uncertainty that shapes her disjointed experience of time. Her husband’s health problems and the economic crisis have deteriorated the living standards of the family.

Currently, besides collaborating at the community center she does tailoring jobs at home and earns an additional income. In addition, she takes care of the children, of her husband, and does all the housework. Although the structure of responsibilities was always shared, nowadays her husband is unemployed and she takes the entire burden on her shoulders. Since she always worked, the “breadwinner” representation was always shared. Shortly before becoming a program beneficiary, she lost her job and her entire life structure changed. When she started participating in the community center “Sagrado Corazón de Jesús,” her self-representation deteriorated. Her past experience as a full-time worker is useful to understand her feeling of inadequacy at the community center. Working there, instead of granting her freedom to realize something valuable in herself, makes her feel trapped and postponed. She feels a deep urge to transcend the traditional reproductive role in which she visualizes herself today and to become economically active as a worker again. Her experience at the center did not affect the distribution of tasks at home. That had already changed to her disadvantage when her husband became sick.

“Since he had surgery, my husband doesn’t want to do anything, he thinks that everything is replaceable! (she laughs). Because when he was in the hospital for two months he couldn’t do anything. Beforehand, he used to do things, it was like a shared work. Not now, now I have to be after him, after the kids…I have to do everything in the house…it is a very hard routine for me, because I cook, I do everything. He doesn’t do anything; he can’t do anything because for example there is no cheese. And so maybe he doesn’t like cooked rice because it has nothing (else). I think that anyone eats cooked rice. He has a mentality to stay inside of his shell…So you get exhausted. That is why I want to go out of the house. First of all I think that no matter how poor you are, you have to be clean and decent.”

Regarding the family income, the case of Mirta differs a little from the common situation among the interviewed women. Unlike other women who only spend the
money of the subsidy, she administers the entire family income. However, even though she is in control, she consciously takes the family’s needs as a priority over herself, reinforcing her subordination:

“Eh…all the money he makes, he (her husband) gives to me, and I am a person that when I have like a little amount of money I buy something mostly for him, for her (her baby), for them (her kids), and NOT for me, do you understand? So it’s like “why for all the rest and not for you? Because I don’t think about myself, I think about them.”

As stated before, the structure of authority in the household seems to favor Mirta. Given the fact that she leads a ‘de facto’ mono-parental family, her husband does not seem to exert any influence in the family decisions. Mirta seems to have a broader sense of authority than her husband in the decision-making, the household administration, and child rearing. She is a self-determined strong woman. In this case, thus, the plan only reinforced the situation of vulnerability that Mirta was experiencing when the crisis erupted. She displays a multi-tasking personality, a position she regrets. She experiences “conflict and contradiction by trying to do the impossible, namely, to juggle simultaneously the existing roles of child-rearer and worker…”245

“That is why if it were for me, I would keep working. And that is why we fight with my husband, we fight…because I want to work.”

“Sometimes I get so furious! because we don’t agree on things. And more so because I have a job. I don’t like people who don’t look for (opportunities), who do not get in contact with people to find (a job). Now I bug him so much…I try not to bother him not to overwhelm him. But I do talk to him, and I talk well to him. I am a lot older than him. He is 27 and I am 31. So I have “shouldered” many things that he hasn’t yet been through. That is a bit hard.”

4.5 Recognition and Respect

In the new structures of power of the modern societies, some groups count on less material and symbolic resources to cope with life than others. Poor women who participated in the study have experienced the effects of maldistribution\(^{246}\) and misrecognition\(^{247}\) in their lives. In understanding how the search for recognition gave a sense of distinction to some of these women, we will see that regardless of their economic standing, they found new meanings for their life. Recovering the voice of those who are usually “left behind” is significant for understanding how even under tremendous economic and social dislocations, life experiences can reshape character while advocating for social recognition.

The women studied here improved their social standing in their families. Female participation in community projects facilitated mechanisms for social recognition for some of these women. Overall, they expressed a sense of “escape” from isolation and anonymity, and experienced more value for their personal capacities. The identification with poverty and destitution gave them a sense of reciprocity. Given that this reality is different for every one of these women, only the most enlightening testimonies were chosen for this section, and they will be presented separately.

Stressing a passage from inner-family affairs to community labor, Ethel grew into a socially integrated persona. Her self-perception experienced changes from the


\(^{247}\) Recognition is ingrained in the status order of society. It concerns the effects that the institutionalized norms and meanings exert on social agents. Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?*. ...
point before she started participating as a community worker to the present. The source of these changes is that today she enjoys public visibility. In her perception, this visibility gave way to social recognition:

I: How is your relationship with the local community and the neighborhood today?
Ethel: “No, yes. It’s like to me, personally, being here, makes you known on the streets, right? Even though for example, I developed another activity here as a religious teacher, so they also know me from the church-related activities, and so on. But, sure, now they see me more, see? Beforehand, I was like locked up in my house, see?, even though I took my kids to school. Now they see me!”

Ethel expressed her understanding of work as a space where both consensus and dissent are present. In it, the interaction with other women granted her passage from a demeaned self-being to a sense of recognition and respect. In addition, Ethel’s narrative articulates much more than simple chronicles of events. In her descriptions, she explains how her contact with her coworkers rebuilt her self-representation because she felt recognized and valued. In her narrative, she gave “shape to the forward movement of time, suggesting reasons why things happen, showing their consequences.”

Ethel is well aware of her authority with her children. However, the realm of the family does not represent a challenge, since there is no space for her opinions. The community she found at the center gives her a chance to speak out her mind without feeling ashamed. In this space, Ethel found reciprocity with her peers. Mutual respect for hers and other people’s ideas has been reassuring for her. In Ethel’s experience, the community center is a powerful space of opportunities for recognition.

“What I (learnt) here more than anything (is) to be with lots of people, right?, be it with the 
(people in the) soup kitchen, with the people here (who belong to) the community, too. Because 
when you work in a family home, you relate with the person in charge, and maybe you don’t 
see the rest of the members of the family. And at my home, it’s a reduced group that above all, 
I form. On the contrary, here this is different. That is, there are many people, that do not always 
agree, and that, right? So, relating to many people, stop feeling ashamed and being able to say 
what you think, right? That (is it). At home they listen to me because I am their mom and they 
don’t have an alternative. On the contrary, here I can say (anything), and I know (the people 
here) don’t laugh (at me), because they value my opinion and besides you learn to express and 
not feel ashamed. I am like this, and what I say is also what I am.”

Delia reinforced her value by handling her children’s problems. Motherhood was 
tacitly highlighted in her narrative. Fragmented and filled with dark episodes, her life 
story was among the hardest ones observed. In the absence of her ex husband, she 
earned other people’s respect through her assertion of her role of “mother and father.”

Becoming a program beneficiary and collaborating at the community center 
resulted in the most important source of socialization for Delia. Earning the admiration 
of her neighbors helped her pull through the worst times. Her neighbors and her 
coworkers represent her family. For that reason, their respect and recognition are key 
in Delia’s self-esteem and self-affirmation:

“(My neighbors) revalued me for what happened with my sons…because I had to be a mom 
and a dad…and I will have to keep fighting…”

“Eh…I think that I used to say “people stick their noses, neighbors do.” I am more admired by 
the neighbors, “good morning”, “good afternoon.” Because I don’t have time, I am not like 
those persons who gossip. And they admire me, and visit me, because they say “the courage 
that you had to fight for your children…To me (the neighborhood) is like my family…”

In addition, earning her children’s recognition for her courage and her hard work as a 
mother is fundamental for her life narrative.

“I told them (her children) I want them to be happy, and that I haven’t purchased a life, that I 
will die someday. And (my son) tells me: “Gorda, the day you are gone, I don’t know. I would 
not be able to stand it.”…And he cries, the only thing he says is: “Gorda, don’t leave me 
fallen…”...”
Even though she feels respected, in Graciela’s narrative, a sense of mistrust for peers is implicit. She feels safer by confiding her issues with a higher authority, the coordinator of the work program in the community center where she works.

“...I feel respected. Yes, obviously, like everywhere, not everything is great. There are always problems. There are things you maybe don’t like. But overall, we try not to disrespect each other.”

“...with some (of the coworkers) maybe there is a bit more of trust, and with others not. Eh, also, like everywhere else, maybe you tell someone something, and then, when you realize that whoever found out, that some other knows, you say, “well, here you can say some things, and some not.””

A stronger and more self-lifting recognition comes from her children. Being a single mother since she separated from her husband, she has continuously attempted to incarnate authority by setting the example to her children. She enjoys how they have grown to share her devotion for helping other people, while constructing an idea of effort. Her work is deeply intertwined with her sense of motherhood and maternal authority. In sum, Graciela, as many of the other women interviewed, incarnates a “merit-oriented idealist.”

“And...my children respect me. They never answer me back, the kid has 13 years old and the girl has 12. thank God they are both healthy kids.”

“Yes, that is, they like what I do.”

Graciela’s interpretation of recognition and respect is related to her participation and physical presence in communal or public spheres outside the soup kitchen. She feels gratified by being recognized by municipal people and by the community as she holds a firm standing in every social event organized in the barrio and in the immediate community. A rather hierarchical vision is outlined by her narrative:

“...I attend many meetings where I meet people from “Culture” (she refers to the Secretary of Culture of the Municipality), of the municipality, that is, you start to know people, and to see
others, who are, how can I say it?, more important that you are. So it makes you (feel) a little bit more important than the rest, by meeting certain people. That is, like recognition. A while ago I went to the municipality, and “hello Gra!” And before I used to go and nobody knew me…people that see me, from the municipality, say, always everything is ok, with respect.”

Maria del Carmen enjoys the recently gained respect. She feels the children at the food kitchen and her coworkers pay her respect. In her life experience, these two sources of respect are in sharp opposition to her domestic space, where she falls victim —in her narrative —of her children’s attacks on what she does for a living. Her perception is that they feel she is only working at the community center because she is a friend of Angela, the coordinator. To some degree, even she underestimates the work she performs, although she resists these contingent opinions while reaffirming her position. Still, she finds in other people’s contrasting opinions, a sense of energy and revelation of her life direction.

“…I see myself in (the process) of a change that many people admire. And sometimes they ask me: “why?”…”

“yes, (people respect me), because like this no one can run into us, like they say. Because beforehand I was nothing. The children here respect me a lot and appreciate me. The women too, all of them.”

Maria del Carmen feels that she is admired for her work. Her experience of recognition at the food kitchen in “Sagrado Corazón de Jesús” has helped her to reshape her identity. She has learnt to ignore the objections of her family who does not seem to understand her choice to work in the center.

“I sometimes clash with them (her family). I don’t know why, because sometimes they tell me “well, you go there because you are ‘settled’ with Angela.” “No, I am not settled with anybody”…there is always a disagreement. Well, when they attempt to shout at me I say “stop, you have gone this far, this is my limit, if you like it, good, if you don’t, you can leave.””

Maria del Carmen looks up on people like Angela —the project coordinator who has managed to get educated and represents an example to follow. As a consequence of her
work at the community center, she has the project to keep developing her professional capacities: in order to do so, she wants to finish high-school. Now that she feels recognized and capable, she is willing to make projects for her own life.

Finally, María del Carmen described her involvement with the problems in the neighborhood making emphasis on her full commitment. In doing so, she displayed a sense of civic consciousness for local issues and a need for personal recognition as well. She personally addressed Morón’s Mayor to demand for the improvement of roads, showing how she perceived herself as a valid interpreter of what needs to be done in the neighborhood:

“...a lot changed, because there are a lot of changes in the neighborhood. The emergency room that we always fought for, the streets that are not yet paved...a while ago I had the chance to talk to Sabatella, (Morón’s Mayor) and I say to him “what is going on that you haven’t paved the roads yet?”

“...I don’t like the plan that (president) Kirchner created. I never had the opportunity to tell him upfront. If I have the chance one day, I will…”

In this section we have seen that the women interviewed became involved in the provision of community services, which awarded them a new self-perception, entrenched with recognition. Personal gratification, personal choice and will, human dignity, narratives of work and its relatives such as cooperation and conflict all constituted the diverse visions these women embodied. To different degrees, self-reflection guided the women’s opinions and meanings. Given that they did not encompass a homogeneous body of experiences, each one added value to the idea of female citizenship. However, this idea stemmed not only from the acquisition of a
broader perception of rights, but mainly from their consciousness to different levels of subordination. In sum, by means of recognition and respect in their communities and families, the interviewed women learnt more about themselves and their needs. In time, this awareness might lead to a stronger demand for their rights.


Conclusions

This thesis has investigated poor women’s experience as they worked in community centers in exchange for a subsidy under the *Plan Jefes y Jefas* between May 2002 and early 2006. I have characterized the Plan within the broader menu of contemporary social policies. The Plan enunciates social inclusion as its main goal. Still, its design centered on the non in-kind exchange reproduces more linear contemporary thinking on poverty. In this respect, it reflects the notion by which “beneficiaries” are gathered as “deserving” as long as they fulfill their part of the “partnership.”

In spite of this clear shortcoming of the Plan, my study on female beneficiaries who carry out their “contraprestación” in community centers show a more complex picture, which runs counter to what could be expected to occur under the Plan’s narrow design. In fact, I have uncovered that their involvement in these communal spaces, which was initially aimed at collective survival in a time of crisis, may have set into motion profound subjective changes in women’s lives. I have shown how these changes relate to women’s self-esteem in the collective and private spheres, based on their own testimonies.

In the first chapter, I assessed the conditions of existence, which poor families experienced before the crisis, emphasizing how inequalities that structure these women’s lack of opportunities for personal development outside their families – i.e. their female poverty – led them to embrace the Plan as their main means of survival. Among their strategies to defend the common welfare of the family, poor women have
engaged in community projects. Women’s use of the resources provided by the Plan (the monetary subsidy) or promoted by the Plan (the work at the community centers) has helped them both as a survival strategy and also as a path for personal growth. This is an important finding because the Plan’s beneficiaries are, for the most part, women.

The second chapter focused on the Plan Jefes y Jefas, its main characteristics and orientation. Additionally, I analyzed the Plan in terms of contemporary social policymaking by highlighting its focalized, precarious and gender-neutral nature. Finally, the most important traits of the plan were advanced in order to assess the relevance of the study of the Plan’s subjective effects on women.

The third chapter provided the context information regarding Morón as the case study. It also developed a description of the community centers where the interviewed women work, their material and human resources, the cultural dynamics that operate in their realm, and how their particular origins, layout, networking and affiliations have had impacts on their outreach and development.

The fourth and main chapter explored the experience of participation of these women in solidarity projects outside their homes. This analysis allowed us to understand that their involvement in these projects affected their perceptions and representations of themselves, their work, and their families. An array of categories was presented in order to visualize these changes.

The most important finding of this research is that the interviewed beneficiaries’ participation at the community centers in larger social groups has broken
their isolation and enlarged their social networks of support, while offering them new spaces of socialization and reciprocity. In other words, I have found that women’s experiences have amplified their social horizons, while providing them with both material and symbolic resources.

As a consequence, poor women’s active involvement in projects of collective solidarity has put into motion important changes in their daily lives. This involvement has served to reaffirm women’s self-value. It has also broadened the women’s outlook on the meaning of their work, because they have gained pride in what they do and who they are. By virtue of their work representations, women have reappraised their lives, responsibilities and different roles as worthy and meaningful to them. Women have felt that their responsibilities at the community centers have given them an opportunity to change and to reeducate themselves and their children.

The women studied here see their exclusion in terms of gender, class and global inequalities as a normal and inevitable fact of life. They are aware of their poverty and admit that they cannot afford an independent living without the state and community help. In this sense, they are aware of their dependence on the resources offered by the centers and the Plan subsidy.

Still, the set-up of the Plan has offered these women an opportunity they had never experienced before. Poor female beneficiaries now have the possibility of working outside the home. Additionally, community work allows women and their families to benefit from the flexibility and resources offered by the community centers.
These women experience a new relative sense of independence, both economically and in terms of their use of time. Admittedly, I have not found consistent evidence of changes in their main orientation towards reproductive work. However, I have discovered how as they expand their activities into the social and communal spheres, they revalue their reproductive work in different terms.

Paradoxically, the community centers reproduce to some extent a gender order centered on state dependency, but also grant a new space for social recognition within their families and communities.

We should recall that most of the women studied here have had previous work experience, though in unstable informal activities. The new opportunity for communal work has been relevant for them. Among the most important findings, community participation has enhanced social space for poor women. Many women have voluntarily worked longer hours than the four required under the Plan because they enjoyed doing so. Most of them appreciate the experience of helping other people, and their sense of solidarity has expanded as they participate.

Interestingly, some women have commented that despite their partner’s disagreement, they wake up every morning with an important mission to accomplish, and are not willing to give up on it. Most of the interviewees have actually made new friends and become aware that staying at home doing the housework is just one part of their day.
Even though the subsidy is very low, it guarantees women an income every month. This money provides them with a more solid position in the household, and in front of their partners. The women I have interviewed actually decide how to spend the subsidy, and in some cases they even administer the total family’s income.

I have also found that the women’s use of time has changed. Now they have a routine outside of their households. All of the women interviewed cherish that opportunity, even if their partners disagree with this. In some cases, the family members have adopted new ways of cooperation with women’s roles. For example, some men have begun preparing meals when women are at work.

The mother-spouse roles have been, for the majority of these women, a “natural” task in their daily lives. Even though most of them are still in charge of the family reproductive functions and of the housework, most of them have reinforced a sense of authority in front of their children, and in some cases even in front of their partners. They feel responsible for teaching their children important lessons such as that participation in common welfare is dignifying. Being continually present in their lives granted them a permanent renewal of their identities as mothers. Most of the interviewed women now enjoy their motherhood both at the private and public levels. The boundaries of these two spheres have become fuzzy, adding to their value of motherhood as a whole.

Undoubtedly, the learning involved in community work is mostly limited to “traditional” or “female” activities. Some women express that they have acquired new
skills related to the social activities that their community centers offer, such as leading discussion groups. Others, however, feel that the community activities are not essentially different from their everyday housework. Nevertheless, they feel that because they are doing it as a group, the project is more than just feeding the children in the morning or sowing their clothes in the afternoon. In their own words, the project has given them much more than they are giving. The greatest incentive to participate is that they now count on a group of people – sometimes they even have made good friends – ready to help them. Hence, they have reinforced their social horizon, while amplifying their social networks of support.

Even though poor women act upon the structures that limit their personal and social development, their involvement in activities outside their households in the pursuit of their families’ welfare transcends their traditional role of care-givers on the private level of the family. Actively participating women collectivize their private needs by engaging in the public provision of social services, materializing a “social motherhood.” While they do not substantially change their roles and responsibilities, they nevertheless expand them to the extra-domestic world.

Regarding women’s self-perception, the experience of being a part of a collective survival project with the state’s sponsorship has generated a personal re-valuing process. The interaction involved in their daily tasks put them in contact with similar realities, providing them with new opportunities to reconstruct their own
images and self-value. In all likelihood, this might lead to long-term transformations in the realm of their personal and family lives.

As a consequence, the expansion of their social networks has allowed some of these women to build new projects that reflect new levels of awareness of their unequal standing in their family/domestic sphere and public arena.

Among other alternatives, poor women in Morón chose to participate in community services. Most of them evaluate the immediate community center agenda as a dignifying and useful social function. However, many viewed the subsidy as narrow, and some acknowledged that their labor activities have not provided them with new professional skills.

Women did not challenge the institutional setting where they deployed their “gender practical needs.” On the contrary, they strategically and consciously utilized the resources offered by the intervening organizations in order to fight for their families’ survival. These women have proven to be fully aware of their pressing circumstances, and they have shown a high level of social agency. Another level of awareness is evident in their assertions regarding social and family recognition. They are conscious of the fact that after they started participating, people could “see them.” This fact produced an innovative representation of themselves as “public persons.” In time, we can speculate that this process might have democratizing effects in their lives.

In general, I have found an inflection point between a “before” and an “after” they became involved in the community activities sponsored by the Plan. The past is
one of isolation and helplessness; the present is somehow more satisfying. Women have found new sense in their lives. As an example, they have realized that by helping other people they feel personally rewarded.

In the community projects where female beneficiaries develop the “non in-kind exchange” activities, women’s roles are mainly channeled towards typically “female tasks.” The “mother paradigm” and the “female paradigm” are both displayed in the public arena of the immediate community, renewing their scope and meanings to the participating women. Even though the context of the centers where women work reproduces a gender order centered on state dependency, it granted a new space for social recognition in front of their families and their communities. In gaining public visibility and self-confidence, they acquired unprecedented levels of recognition of their female and social identities.

The government’s priority was to promote an “occupation” in exchange for the subsidy, privileging the state of economic emergency, and disregarding the potential effects on gender categories. Differentiated effects necessarily affect men, women, children and the elderly in often diverse and opposite ways. This study has delved on some of the different dimensions that have affected poor women in Morón under the social policy set-up. The changes I have found transcend the temporary nature of state policies.
Depending on the social policy design and implementation, new realities can emerge that serve to construct citizenship.249 For example, the so-called “social economy” or “solidarity economy” that sprung up with collective projects where beneficiaries of Plan Jefes y Jefas worked not only promoted their communities’ survival but expanded people’s sense of self-value, particularly for poor women. In turn, this might activate some of these women’s pursuit of better opportunities for their lives, thus expanding their social citizenship. This conclusion, though, cannot necessarily indicate a “new trend.” It portrays a potential opening for some of the poor urban women that participated in this social plan. Future studies on social policies should take into account this possibility.

Methodological Appendix

1) The Research Plan
This project is a case study. I examine the women working at the community centers existing in the shantytowns of Morón, a section of the urban conglomerate GBA. I assumed that contextual conditions created by the implementation of *Plan Jefes y Jefas* are relevant to understand the experiences and representations of the women who are beneficiaries of the Plan. The main purpose of this study is to provide the explanations that link the implementation of the program with its effects on poor women over time.

This project does not claim to be representative of the entire universe of social plans nor is Morón representative of the GBA aggregate. Moreover, the highlights of this social program were unique and unprecedented. Hence, the conclusions of this work can only contribute to the discussion about the contemporary understanding of social plans and their unintended effects on especially vulnerable populations.

The *substance* of this study lies in the search for the subjective dimensions of a social policy that provided women with new opportunities for socialization and thus operated changes in their self-representations and social recognition.

In order to gather information about the experiences of female beneficiaries at community centers in the Municipality of Morón, I conducted qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews to female and male beneficiaries. So as to gain a realistic knowledge of the context in which labor activities promoted by *Plan Jefes y Jefas*

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operate, a few interviews of the same nature were conducted with leaders/key informants of community projects.

A total of no more than twenty (20) subjects were interviewed for the purpose of this study. The interviews lasted up to two hours and were tape-recoded. Other conversations which took place during the visits to the community centers were not at all times recorded given their spontaneous nature. Nonetheless, the entire experience of visiting community projects and interacting as well as observing their work was very enriching for this study. An interview conducted by a member of the UNSAM research team of the project *Evaluation of the Implementation of the Plan Jefes y Jefas* to the Director of Employment of the municipality of Morón was sensibly incorporated in the understanding of the centers’ operation and their coordination with the municipality. Finally, fellow researchers’ advice was sensibly incorporated in the final draft of conclusions.

Through the in-depth interviews to beneficiaries and community center coordinators, I attempted to elucidate and reconstruct the meanings and motives that lie behind the decisions and actions taken by the beneficiaries’ since they became program recipients. Through the labor of interpretation, the variables selected were analyzed in order to assess the initial propositions of this study.

The *units of analysis* are poor women inhabiting a specific section of the Greater Buenos Aires region –Morón-, who in 2002 became beneficiaries of *Plan Jefes y Jefas*. 
Given the heterogeneity of the community organizations observed, this analysis aims at looking at a differentiated set of dimensions in order to explore the effects of Plan Jefes y Jefas on poor women from a micro social and gendered optic. Self-perception of the female beneficiaries is the axis on which the interpretative analysis was constructed. Besides elucidating poor women’s representations of their work and their lives, this study describes the context in which these representations were produced and the convictions that lie under it. Analyzed from the subjective perspective of the interviewees, the following variables and indicators delineated the interviews:

- **Social Recognition/Respect**

  - *Increase in self-value:*

    Ex. “I attend many meetings…so it makes you (feel) a little bit more important than the rest” (Graciela)

  - *Increase in respect from family members:*

    Ex. “My children respect me….they like what I do” (Graciela)

  - *Expansion of social networks:*

    “Now they (other people) can see me” (Ethel)

  - *Increase in neighbors’ (local community) and co-workers’ respect/recognition:*

    Ex. “I see myself in a change that people admire” (María del Carmen)
Self-Representations and Perceptions

- Changes in representations of family roles:

Ex. “He (her husband) had to learn to live with my change” (Ethel)

- Changes in perceptions of labor: pride

Ex. “I like what I do because it is different…” (Graciela)

- Changes in representations of the motherhood role:

Ex. “I started to love kids more” (Estela)

- Changes in perception of time:

Ex. “The schedule has no limits” (Delia)

- Changes in representations of social relations:

Ex. “Beforehand I didn’t know what friendship was” (Estela)

- Changes in representations of “Oneself” versus the “Other” (non-working beneficiaries and “Piqueteros”):

Ex. “They do “Piquetes” for ‘us,’ right?…but I don’t agree with the “Piqueteros”!” (Sonia)

Specific context information was needed in order for the beneficiaries’ testimony to make sense within the case strategy. The following topics structured this information:

a) Family and household structure (composition, ages); marital status
b) Highest level of education attained

c) Labor trajectory before Plan Jefes y Jefas

d) Distribution of family-care work responsibilities

e) Decision-making in the household’s expenses

f) Relation to movements of unemployed workers such as “Piqueteros”

g) Type of work undertaken in community project

h) Degree of flexibility in workplace (in timetables, labor activities, etc.)

i) Learning involved in work activities

j) Ratio of men/women at workplace (community center)

k) Time spent in Domestic/Public spheres

l) Personal experience with Plan Jefes y Jefas: general assessment

m) Social interaction with workmates, neighbors and immediate community

n) Association to public institutions (clubs, committees, etc.)

In addition, my methodology included a review of the existing literature on Plan Jefes, ranging from public documents from the national, provincial, and municipal governments to academic analyses, reports, etc. The main topics that informed the general literature review underlying the conclusions of the research project are: “women, work and family”, “the feminization of poverty,” “Plan Jefes y Jefas and
contemporary social policies,” “Plan Jefes y Jefas’ gendered impacts on poverty and employment”.

The final product of this research project is a narrative-style paper using both inductive and deductive reasoning. Conclusions stemming from the literature review were combined with the qualitative findings of the fieldwork based on the research questions that guided my interviews.

2) Selection of Case: The District of Morón

This project casts light on the findings stemming from the qualitative interviews conducted in the municipality of Morón during the research period, the first semester of 2006. The selection of this district obeyed several factors. On the one hand, its location within the Greater Buenos Aires –GBA- region made it especially adequate for a study which focuses on particularly poor urban regions of Argentina. On the other hand, the connections already established by my Thesis Director in the Universidad de San Martín with the local authorities in Morón made my choice all the more evident.

Among the urban conglomerates in Argentina, the GBA region was chosen for this project given its demographic and economic weight in relation to the Interior –the rest of the country, including the larger province of Buenos Aires. The GBA region

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251 As a part of the province of Buenos Aires, the “partidos” (which altogether comprise the GBA urban conglomerate) represent the smallest territorial subdivision. Municipalities are the smallest administrative subdivisions to have their own democratically elected representative leadership. In Argentina, “partidos” and municipalities refer to the same territorial units. In these terms, Morón is a “partido” and a municipality. Local governments in many countries are called districts, departments or communes. From now onwards, we will refer to Morón both as a municipality and as a “district.”

252 Overall, the GBA Region extends for 3.600 square kilometers.
comprises the City of Buenos Aires together with 24 districts which are located in the most densely populated urban sections adjacent to the city.\textsuperscript{253}

The City of Buenos Aires alone, which became an autonomous district with the 1994’s constitutional reforms, has almost 3 million residents. The entire metropolitan area (the GBA together with the City of Buenos Aires) has over 13 million residents,\textsuperscript{254} concentrating 31 percent of the country’s population. Revealing its economic importance, the GBA region accumulates 40 percent of the country’s Gross National Product. Moreover, 45 percent of the manufacturing activities are developed in its territory, and it concentrates 38 percent of the total commerce, 44 percent of the total services, and 34 percent of the total finances. The annual average income of the GBA is about 30 percent bigger than the national median.

*Plan Jefes y Jefas* covered 4.7 of the total population of the country (approximately 1.8 million beneficiaries in its highest peak, October 2002). Out of the total beneficiaries, GBA amounted to almost 430 thousand recipients. In turn, this urban region amounted to 24.6 percent of the total program recipients. In addition,

\textsuperscript{253} In the past, the Federal District of Buenos Aires together with the suburban adjacent section of the city –today the GBA- was called the “metropolitan area.”
almost 38 percent of the total unemployed reside in the GBA area. Furthermore, this region is inhabited by almost 30 percent of the total poor populations in Argentina.\footnote{255} 

The GBA region is a complex and heterogeneous space in which different socioeconomic realities coexist. Regarding poverty, 15.2 percent of its residents are extremely poor while 42.7 percent are poor. The levels of poverty increase the further away from the center of the metropolitan area.

The district of Morón is located within the first suburban peripheral ring of the City of Buenos Aires. This area is called “GBA1.”\footnote{256} Within the GBA1 area, 13.6 percent of its households are extremely poor, while in the GBA2 (the next peripheral area) the figure more than doubles up to 28.3 percent. These numbers prove that while the region where Morón is located suffers acutely high levels of poverty, it represents one of the few sections that are not so poor. For instance, in October 2001, 24.5 percent of the households and 33.2 of the residents in the GBA1 region were under the “poverty line,”\footnote{257} while these figures amounted to 41.7 and 51.7 percent in the GBA2 region. Meanwhile, 7 percent of the households and 10.6 of the residents of the GBA1 were under the “extreme poverty line,”\footnote{258} thus suffering “basic unsatisfied needs.”\footnote{259}


\footnote{256} GBA1 is today comprised by the districts of Morón, Avellaneda, San Martín, north of Matanza, Lanús, Lomas de Zamora, Ituzaingó and Hurlingham

\footnote{257} The “Poverty Line” (línea de pobreza”) is the national method utilized to measure poverty. It calculates if the overall income of the household is enough to cover a set of nutritional needs and other kinds of necessities deemed essential, through the purchase of goods and services. For more information see INDEC, \url{http://www.indec.mecon.gov.ar}.

\footnote{258} The “Extreme Poverty Line” (línea de indigencia”) is a similar method used to measure extreme poverty. It consists of calculating if the overall income of the household is enough to buy a “basic food
Comparatively, in the GBA2 region these numbers increased to 14.9 and 19.2 percent respectively.\textsuperscript{260}

Chart 1 further illustrates the relatively better socio-economic conditions experienced by both the residents and the households of Morón, in comparison with the rest of the Greater Buenos Aires area. Revealingly, the district which suffers the highest percentage of Unmet Basic Needs (Florencio Varela) amounts to almost 27 percent of the households. In contrast, Vicente López has the lowest percentage of UBN at the household level -4.3 percent-. Morón, in turn, is closest to the lowest figure, with almost 7 percent of its households suffering UBN. Similar figures are evident with respect to the residents’ situation.

\textsuperscript{259} “Extreme poverty” is characterized by an “absolute” lack of resources to cover basic needs. It is usually suffered by populations that have basic unsatisfied needs (“necesidades básicas insatisfechas”). “Relative poverty” is present when individuals fall under the poverty line. Some of the populations who became poor most recently have been catalogued as “new poor.” Both types of poverty coexist in the GBA urban context. Floreal H. Forni, “Caracterización dinámica de situaciones de pobreza en la Argentina”, Pobreza Urbana en la Argentina, Departamento de Investigación Institucional: Área Sociológica, UCA, 2002.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partido (District)</th>
<th>Households (1)</th>
<th>Population (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>With UBN (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,921,455</td>
<td>508,671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Partidos of the Province of Buenos Aires</td>
<td>2,384,948</td>
<td>346,613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almirante Brown</td>
<td>133,787</td>
<td>21,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avellaneda</td>
<td>100,853</td>
<td>9,341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berazategui</td>
<td>75,603</td>
<td>12,568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteban Echeverría</td>
<td>62,937</td>
<td>10,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezeiza</td>
<td>29,574</td>
<td>6,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florencio Varela</td>
<td>84,958</td>
<td>22,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General San Martín</td>
<td>119,111</td>
<td>13,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurlingham</td>
<td>47,906</td>
<td>5,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ituzaingó</td>
<td>44,409</td>
<td>4,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José C. Paz</td>
<td>56,007</td>
<td>12,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Matanza</td>
<td>333,916</td>
<td>56,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanús</td>
<td>135,447</td>
<td>13,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomas de Zamora</td>
<td>164,430</td>
<td>23,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malvinas Argentinas</td>
<td>72,956</td>
<td>14,413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merlo</td>
<td>119,624</td>
<td>23,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreno</td>
<td>95,538</td>
<td>21,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morón</td>
<td>93,980</td>
<td>6,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quilmes</td>
<td>144,671</td>
<td>21,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Fernando</td>
<td>42,054</td>
<td>5,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Isidro</td>
<td>88,054</td>
<td>6,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Miguel</td>
<td>65,694</td>
<td>9,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tigre</td>
<td>79,807</td>
<td>14,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tres de Febrero</td>
<td>102,212</td>
<td>7,805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicente López</td>
<td>91,415</td>
<td>3,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of the Province of Buenos Aires</td>
<td>1,536,507</td>
<td>162,058</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: INDEC: "Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2001."


(1) households and population surveyed in the streets are included.

(2) Unmet Basic Needs (Necesidades Básicas Insatisfechas-NBI) were defined in the methodology applied in "La pobreza en la Argentina"

(Serie Estudios INDEC. N° 1, Buenos Aires, 1984).

Households with Unmet Basic Needs should advance at least one of the following indicators of hardship:

1- Overcrowding: households in which more than three individuals share a room.

2- Housing: households with unsuitable housing arrangements/conditions (tenant room, precarious or other similar housing, which excludes house, apartment and ranch).

3- Sanitary Conditions: households without any toilet facilities.

4- School Attendance: households with one (or more) school-aged child (6 to 12 years old) that does not attend school.
5- Subsistence Capability: households with four or more dependants for every employed individual, also, whose head has not completed third grade of elementary school.

(3) Percentage of households with UBN over the total households in each district.

(4) Percentage of population in households with UBN over the total population in each district.

A Short Note on History
Historically, the GBA region where Morón stands today originated as the national industrialization process took shape. It continued to populate as the city’s residents migrated to peripheral urban territories searching for better residential conditions. In the context of an ascending social mobility process, these residents looked for an own residency. This process materialized through the division of large territories into smaller parcels. Pioneer urbanization took form with the neighbors’ own efforts.

Focusing on the historical trajectory of Morón, unlike many other sections of the GBA area, this region started out as a suburban locality in colonial days where prominent families residing in the metropolitan city had their summer cottages. Throughout the twentieth century, however, the area became an important settlement for a growing working-class population. During the “ISI period” (industrialization through substitution of imports) beginning in the 1930s, a massive internal migration took shape in search of labor in capital-intensive industrial or informal services. This process led to a growing demand for land and housing in bigger peripheral areas of the metropolitan city like Morón. After the deindustrialization period beginning in the

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261 For more information on the history of the District of Morón, check the website: http://www.hcdmoron.gov.ar/portadahistoria.htm

1970s, this area became one of the many mid-sized cities that embody the GBA today.

Morón was founded in 1865 and until 1945 was called “Seis de Setiembre.” In 1994, it gave up part of its territory to the municipalities of Hurlingham and Ituzaingó. Today, Morón has 309,380 residents.

At present, the district of Morón is unique in that it is politically and institutionally different from the rest of the Greater Buenos Aires area. The district currently holds 7,500 program beneficiaries. At its highest peak, 14,000 recipients were signed up by the municipality, and 4,000 additional individuals became beneficiaries through other means. Unlike other districts, Morón has pursued a transparent administration since the last mayor was elected –Sabatella, the mayor of Morón is not a member of the official party-. This trait is reflected in the way Plan Jefes y Jefas and other social programs were distributed and administered by the municipal authorities. An important contribution is the effort that this administration has made to incorporate discursively the notion of gender and the construction of citizenship, from a perspective that highlights social inclusion. However, the authorities recognize that participating in community projects does not by itself lead to

265 The municipality of Morón has especially attempted to avoid clientelistic patterns of program distribution, and to handle public funds less arbitrarily and more transparently.
their social integration of the beneficiaries in public and productive long-term projects and to the construction of social citizenship.  

3) The Women Interviewed: Profiles and Trajectories
This section will describe the profiles of the interviewed women and their trajectories regarding their marital status, education and labor. It is important to notice that they share a common trajectory of unprotected labor both in unqualified and technically qualified labor. In addition, their educational profiles are representative of the general beneficiaries’ population.

On average, the interviewed women are 40 years old and have 3-4 children. Three quarters of the female beneficiaries who were interviewed have a couple, while the rest are separated/divorced. Half of them did not finish elementary school, while the other half finished elementary school but has not finished secondary school. A little less than half of the interviewees had labor experience in domestic work, while 40 percent of them had experience in informal tailoring, (except for one of them who in the past had a formal stable job in a tailor’s workshop). The rest had participated in remunerated work within community centers.

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266 These conclusions were narrated by Ana Laura Rodríguez Gustá at Congreso
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>B. *1/ C.C. *2</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th># Children</th>
<th>Labor Experience</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graciela (Argentine)</td>
<td>“Sagrado Corazón de Jesús”</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Worked – formally- 8 years in government-sponsored food kitchen. Now works in CC helping in food kitchen and cleaning</td>
<td>High school not finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>María del Carmen (Argentine)</td>
<td>“Sagrado Corazón de Jesús”</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Married for 25 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Worked – formally/informally- for many years in “Community Closets,” Now works in CC helping in food kitchen and cleaning</td>
<td>Only completed first year of high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirta (Argentine)</td>
<td>“Sagrado Corazón de Jesús”</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Has a recent partner</td>
<td>3 (from two different partners)</td>
<td>Worked – informally- 7-8 years in a tailor’s workshop. Currently is on maternity leave. Used to work in CC helping in food kitchen and cleaning</td>
<td>Elementary school almost finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delia (Argentine)</td>
<td>“Sagrado Corazón de Jesús”</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Separated after a long marriage</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Worked - informally- 39 years doing domestic work, baby-sitting. Now works in CC helping in food kitchen and cleaning</td>
<td>No studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonia</td>
<td>“Junta Vecinal Barrio San Juan”</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Has a stable partner</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Worked – informally- 5 years in family tailor’s workshops. Now works in CC tailoring clothes and does free-lance tailoring jobs at home</td>
<td>Only 2 years of elementary school completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luisa (second generation in Argentina, Paraguayan background)</td>
<td>“Junta Vecinal Barrio San Juan”</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Has a stable partner</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Worked – formally- in private tailor’s workshop Stopped working when got pregnant of first child. Now works at CC tailoring clothes.</td>
<td>High school almost finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethel</td>
<td>“Sagrados”</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Has a stable</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Worked - informally- 22 years doing domestic</td>
<td>Is finishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name</strong></td>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td><strong>Work History</strong></td>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estela</td>
<td>“Sagrados Corazones”</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Worked -formally- in health center as stretcher (“camillero”); in military base as janitor; in private enterprise as security person. Now works in CC in front door security</td>
<td>Completed Elementary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorge</td>
<td>“Sagrados Corazones”</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Worked –in/formally- in construction, maintenance, Janitor, Security.</td>
<td>High school almost completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos</td>
<td>“Caritas Felices”</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Always worked –since the age of 13- in gastronomy: in a big pastry shop in the city; in restaurants as a chef; in a bakery.</td>
<td>Elementary school finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julio</td>
<td>“Caritas Felices”</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Worked –in/formally- in construction, maintenance, Janitor, Security.</td>
<td>Elementary school not finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raúl</td>
<td>“Caritas Felices”</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Self-employed as painter; construction, maintenance.</td>
<td>High school almost finished</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1 B. stands for Beneficiary
*2 C.C. stands for Community Center

The interviews with the above beneficiaries were completed within the first semester 2006. Every interview was carried out with the full consent of the interviewees and their awareness that the information collected would embody this thesis study. The rapport was excellent: all the beneficiaries involved in the project were not only willing but also enthusiastic to participate and elaborate their views on the questions asked. More importantly, the questions that embody this research proved to be adequate tools for qualitative analysis.
# Statistical Appendix

## Chart 1

Province of Buenos Aires: "Partido" Morón. Heads of Households by Condition of Economic Activity according to Gender. Year 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Condition of Economic Activity</th>
<th>Economically Active</th>
<th>Economically Inactive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
<td>74.9%</td>
<td>61.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Does not receive retirement benefits or pension.
(2) Could be attending an educational institution.

The higher unemployment rates seen in the survey are due to the low capacity of this source to grasp as employed the populations with precarious or unstable jobs, particularly in times of economic crisis.

The differences are noticed more precisely in the groups most vulnerable to low-quality labor (women, youth and the elderly) and in both the employed and inactive populations who look for a employment.

Population by gender according to age groups. Year 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>309,380</td>
<td>147,030</td>
<td>162,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>19,715</td>
<td>10,171</td>
<td>9,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>20,443</td>
<td>10,488</td>
<td>9,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>23,390</td>
<td>11,898</td>
<td>11,492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>23,605</td>
<td>12,102</td>
<td>11,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>26,632</td>
<td>13,548</td>
<td>13,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>22,784</td>
<td>11,349</td>
<td>11,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>19,780</td>
<td>9,739</td>
<td>10,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>19,112</td>
<td>9,160</td>
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<td>45-49</td>
<td>18,924</td>
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<tr>
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<td>16,116</td>
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<td>7,502</td>
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<td>13,153</td>
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<td>7,824</td>
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<td>75-79</td>
<td>9,953</td>
<td>3,849</td>
<td>6,104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5,783</td>
<td>2,010</td>
<td>3,773</td>
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<td>85-89</td>
<td>2,784</td>
<td>880</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-94</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95-99</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 y más</td>
<td>20</td>
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Source: INDEC. "Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2001"
Chart 7.8.17 Province of Buenos Aires: “Partido” Morón. Population 15 years or older by maximum education attained according to gender and age groups. Year 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender and Age Groups</th>
<th>Population 15 Years or Older</th>
<th>Maximum education attained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Without Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completes</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Superior Educ. Non-Univ.</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
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<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>110.0%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110.0%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender and Age Groups</th>
<th>Population 14 Years or Older</th>
<th>Employed Population</th>
<th>Economically Inactive Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Only works</td>
<td>Works and Studies (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-19</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 y más</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-19</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 y más</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-19</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
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<td>3.4%</td>
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<td>3.3%</td>
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<td>45-64</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 y más</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Does not receive any pension.
(2) Could be attending an educational institution.

Source: INDEC. "Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2001."  
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60. “Incorporación de la dimensión de género en las políticas de la erradicación de la pobreza y generación de empleo en América Latina”, Proyecto MUPRO: Máquina elaboradora de jugo de soja, Oficina Regional para América Latina y el Caribe OIT, Provincia de El Chaco, Argentina.


64. Informal Interview with the Coordinator of Community Projects in the Municipality of Morón, whose name is not to be disclosed for the purposes of this investigation.

65. Interview with the Director of the Secretary of Economic and Social Development in the Municipality of Morón.


118. Website of the “Plan Más Vida”: http://www.mdhyt.gba.gov.ar/documentos/01_manzaneras/nota03.htm
