DEKADA ’70 AND ACTIVIST MOTHERS: A NEW LOOK AT MOTHERING, MILITARISM, AND PHILIPPINE MARTIAL LAW

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to women who have mothered through adversity and have gone far and beyond their call to duty in mothering not only their children, but also their communities and their nations in times of societal instability. Through sheer strength, courage and necessity, women have picked up the shattered pieces of society, have fought social justice, and have become beacons of peace and hope. For that, women deserve an immeasurable amount of gratitude. This project is also for my mother, grandmother, and great-aunts, who have given me my history and sense of self through their unwavering love and support. These women in my family have taught me to never back down from challenges and to face them with my head held high.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Dekada ’70 and Activist Mothers: A New Look at Mothering, Militarism, and Philippine Martial Law
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This thesis is an examination of women re-conceptualizing and re-appropriating motherhood in times of war and conflict to develop new ways of thinking regarding their traditional roles as wives, mothers, women, and national citizens. Through an intensive analysis of the Filipino film, Dekada ’70, I situate my discussion on women’s complex relationship to militarism and motherhood with Philippine martial law (1972-1981). Under the regime of former president, Ferdinand E. Marcos, the Philippines experienced one of the darkest moments of its history. With state sanctioned militarized violence, political corruption, and numerous human rights violations, civil society and public/private institutions became unstable and chaotic.

To analyze the instability and fluctuating societal institutions, most notably gender and motherhood, I use the film’s main protagonist as a case study for the progression of identities for women. Amanda Bartolome, the main female character, reaches her feminist and nationalist consciousness living through the personal hardships of Philippine martial law. Instead of silently succumbing to the various oppressions in her life, such as martial law and being a dependent housewife and mother, she takes control of her traditional identities and turns them into transgressive ones to help bring down the Marcos regime. As a case study, Amanda Bartolome represents women and mothers who have openly questioned their nationalism to oppressive states, and have used their identities as mothers to fight for social justice and peace.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locating the Researcher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Purpose and Significance</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Organization</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Background</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippine Martial Law (1972 – 1981)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of Filipino Women (Pre-Spanish Colonization before 1542 to 1986)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity, War and Conflict</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and Militarism</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Remarks</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 FILM ANALYSIS OF DEKADA ’70</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Summary</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalism and Cinema: Creating Communities and National Identity</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dekada ’70</em> as a Nationalist Project</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Film Theory</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendering <em>Dekada ’70</em></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising Amanda’s Nationalist and Feminist Consciousness</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Next for Amanda Bartolome?</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 MOTHERING AND MILITARISM: FORGING A NEW FEMINIST AND NATIONALIST CONSCIOUSNESS</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructing the Filipino Mother</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalized Mothering</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is a “gun culture” (Hilsdon, 1995). Visiting the Philippines in 2005, then again in 2007 and 2008, I found it unsettling at first to see armed security guards at shopping malls, banks, restaurants, museums, business buildings, etc. – whether a public or private building, an armed individual was ready to defend their post. With instances of militarization, such as the constant presences of the United States military even after they were banned in 1992 and, of course, martial law (1972 – 1981) under former President Ferdinand Marcos, militarism has touched the lives of Filipino citizens. Ongoing domestic conflicts still occur between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the militant wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) known as the New People’s Army (NPA), the Abu Sayyaf Islamic militant organization, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). With many lives lost and communities displaced, the fight for peace seems like a never-ending battle. These regular visuals of armed men and military activities permeate the public domain to the point of becoming part of people’s daily lives. Militarization, though, does not remain in the public – it seeps into the private sphere as well, affecting the household and the family units within these homes.

Although I am interested in several periods of militarization in the Philippines, I focus my thesis primarily on the martial law years (1972 – 1981) under President Marcos. The most obvious effects of martial law happened in the public sphere, particularly in (re)shaping the government, military, media, and civil society in general. When Marcos declared martial law, he closed down both houses of Congress, expanded and generously funded the military to maintain their support of his policies, imposed media censorship to silence journalists that critiqued him, and turned society into a police state. Philippine martial law is infamously associated with a downward economic spiral, human rights violations, extreme government corruption, and the lavish lifestyle of the Marcoses. Yet, other nations did not openly intervene. For example, the United States did not criticize President Marcos for declaring martial law since the Philippine leader did so under the guise of saving democracy from

When martial law trickled into the domestic sphere, it complicated the relationships of the family unit. For example, men showed their sense of nationalism in public by openly supporting Marcos and his policies. At home, men solidified their roles as fathers and heads of the household by keeping their families in order. Men took their role as the dominant gender in public and brought it to the private space to highlight the gendered hierarchy. Unless the woman was first lady, Imelda Marcos, or had a spouse close to the president, women in general did not benefit from living under martial law. In both public and private spheres, a common belief amongst Filipinos is that a woman and her womanhood are contingent upon her traditional roles as wife and mother. Women could participate in public, but their essential goal was to be “queens” of the household that managed the family’s affairs and kept the family unit together (Aguilar, 1988, 1998). When martial law happened, women not only continued performing their traditional roles like good Filipino citizens, but had to adapt their duties as wives and mothers vis-à-vis the militarization of their households.

I concentrate on how martial law affected Filipino mothers in my thesis because of their ascribed duty of keeping the family intact even amongst the chaos of conflict happening in society. Due to the unusual circumstances taking place Philippine civil society, mothers found themselves dealing with the damages of martial law, especially when it involved their families. When children went missing or were imprisoned for being suspected subversives, mothers had to reevaluate their relationship to the government since it was the state that was responsible for harming their children. They had to ask themselves difficult questions like, “Do we continue to be good ‘citizens’ and let the Marcos regime carry on? Or, are we going to be good mothers and tell the government that we have had enough of their oppressive ways?” Women found ways to be both good mothers and citizens to fight back against the Marcos regime by re-defining the meanings of nationalist and mother. Instead
compartmentalizing these parts of their Filipino identities, women blended them to create a new political agent – a maternal nationalist. A mother stood up to the corrupt and oppressive state on behalf of her country and children and this made her a good Filipino mother.

**LOCATING THE RESEARCHER**

As a researcher, my approach to my subject should be straightforward and without any complications due to the historical nature of the subject. Traditional research requires me to disassociate myself from the topic of study in order to have an ‘objective lens’ (Deutch, 2004). No personal feelings should interfere with research because that raises questions about objectivity towards my subject. However, as a feminist, I am inclined to define my relationship with my subject to gain an understanding of my approach to the research material. Since I study a particular part of my cultural past and its affects on members of my gender, my sense of objectivity towards my topic cannot conform to traditional, positivist methods of research. When a researcher is conscious of their location, they recognize their limited sense of objectivity (Deutch, 2004, p. 889). For example, I cannot completely detach myself from the subject of martial law due to my location as a Filipino-American researcher studying a past event in the Philippines. According to feminist researchers, awareness of positionality is of great importance because one’s position determines how the research is conducted, what questions are asked, how results are recorded and reported, and what sort of relationship is formed between the researcher and subject (Collins, 1997; Darling-Wolf, 2004; Deutch, 2004).

My position as a Filipina-American feminist researcher is compounded by the fact that I occupy the position of being an “outsider from within” (Collins, 1986; Creef, 2000). I am aware of my marginalized status in relation to my topic because I have no experience living under martial law as a woman, nor am I a mother. Yet, at the same time, I am relatively close to subject because it is an important part of my cultural and familial history – my mother and both grandmothers experienced living under the Marcos regime. My situation is similar to that of scholar Elena Tajima Creef (2000). In her article on Japanese war brides, she positioned herself as an outsider because she was not a Japanese war bride; however, her mother was one. Due to the close relationship Creef (2000) developed with her
mother and research, her notions of objectivity from the standpoint of an outsider broke
down.

Learning from Creef (2000), I find that studying a subject relatively close to me changes my perceptions of objectivity as well. After listening to my mother’s experiences of living under martial law and how the period affected her family, I recognize the impossibility of being completely objective and separate from my topic. As a feminist occupying the insider/outsider location, there is “power in claiming a theoretical position constructed somewhere between the center and the margins” (Creef, 2000, p. 449). I have access to insider information about martial law from my mother, and at the same time, my sense of separation allows me to deconstruct that information with an outsider’s interpretation of events. The position of being a feminist researcher and bending the lines of objectivity brings a different approach to martial law discourse by focusing on the gendered aspects of the period.

Being an outsider from within may be advantageous in some respect, but there are also drawbacks. One of those drawbacks is being labeled a ‘native informant,’ the body that becomes representative and, apparently, speaks for a particular culture (Darling-Wolf, 2004). My position as a Filipino apparently legitimizes the work I present in my thesis because my membership in my ethnic community supposedly grants me access to privileged or personal knowledge of events that may be absent from official historical texts. The knowledge that I produce based on the information I have gathered about my community’s history becomes authentic within the academic space situated in the West because of my native informant status. After all, knowledge is situational (Darling-Wolf, 2004; Hennessy, 1993; O’Leary, 1998). The knowledge I possess about and the research I conduct on the subject are contingent upon my social location – my cultural engagements and community membership influence the level of objectivity I apply to my work on martial law. As a Filipino writing about martial law and women, I run the risk of having members of the dominant group in academia (i.e. white, European, male, etc.) label my work as a “major cultural voice,” thus, tokenizing my contribution(s) to martial law discourse produced after the period and myself as a researcher (Darling-Wolf, 2004).

However, my position as a native informant is in itself complex in that I am a Filipino-American living in the U.S. doing work on the Philippines. I may be a Filipino
feminist researcher, but I am situated in a place of privilege – the West. My cultural and ethnic membership does not negate the fact that my point of reference in examining martial law and Filipino women originates from Western feminist thought. If I had grown up in the Philippines, my point of reference would be from that particular social environment. Coming from a privileged Western location and speaking about an oppressive situation that happened in the non-Western world may be problematic and dangerous (Alcoff, 1995). There is a possibility of me being complicit in the oppression of third-world knowledge by applying U.S. based feminist frameworks onto a subject like martial law, and (un)intentionally privileging my Western position over scholarship produced in the third-world (Mohanty, 1988). I need to be aware that although my intent is to simply highlight the gendered aspects of martial law as it pertains to Filipino women, I may also be othering or disempowering the texts that have already discussed the matter simply by situating myself in the West. My identity and status as a Filipino-American feminist researcher draws attention to the complexities of situational knowledge and a researcher’s social position in complicating one’s work. Occupying the space of an outsider from within or being a native informant reveals the multiplicities of consciousness due to having more than one social position (Darling-Wolf, 2004). My various positions – Filipino-American, feminist and female – allow me to retrieve knowledge about martial law and Filipino women from various sources and adding another perspective to an already established historical discourse.

**METHODOLOGY**

Film is a powerful tool to get messages across to large audiences. Whether a film is shown for entertainment or educational purposes, it nevertheless provides a platform for those working behind a film to present their political or national agenda. In my thesis, I critically look at and conduct an intensive film analysis on the Filipino mainstream film, *Dekada ’70* (Roño, 2002), as a primary source to study martial law and its relationship to nationalism and mothering. The film’s protagonist is an upper-middle class Filipina trying to locate herself and her sense of maternalism under the Marcos dictatorship. The film’s audience witnesses the unstable period through the perspective of a mother coming into a new nationalist and feminist consciousness. Through the film’s narrative and the perspective in which martial law unfolds, I get an idea of how militarization affects the domestic space
along with the gendered familial relationships in the home. Even though the family and the main protagonist, Amanda Bartolome, are fictional persons, their experiences are not. The film’s narrative and essentially Amanda’s life narrative, represent many people’s stories during martial law.

To further contextualize the film, I consulted secondary sources consisting of historical texts and scholarly articles that discuss Filipino history and then more specific texts on martial law and Filipino women. For example, to get another ‘insider’s point of view’ of martial law, I read Ferdinand Marcos’ (1978) text, *Revolution from the Center: How the Philippines is Using Martial Law to Build a New Society*. Who better to explain declaring martial law and its intentions over the Philippines than the leader who enacted the proclamation in the first place? Then, to get an opposing viewpoint of the events, I consulted Albert Celoza’s text (1997), *Ferdinand Marcos and the Philippines: the Political Economy of Authoritarianism*. Although both texts prove to be informative regarding the varying reasons for martial law, both lack any gender related or personal discussions on the period. That is to be expected considering both texts are not feminist in nature, but lean heavily on the politics, economics, and public discourses of martial law. To research Filipino women from a feminist perspective, I turn to the works of Filipina feminists writers like Delia Aguilar (1988, 1998) to locate women in the gender system present in Philippine society.

Merely watching *Dekada ‘70* (Roño, 2002) and taking extensive notes is not enough to completely understand the impact and purpose of the film. As a feminist researcher, I need to watch the film with a feminist lens. Considering there really is not a set feminist research method (Harding, 1987), I have to find a way to apply theoretical feminist concepts to the film. One of the advantages of not having distinctive feminist research methods is the possibility to explore the influences culture, location, class, and other various factors have on film analysis. Hence, I do not limit myself to strictly analyzing gender in the film, but focus more on how gender operates in social systems that control masculinity and femininity in a Filipino context, and how gender works to systematically oppress women during martial law (Harding, 1987, p. 29). Upon looking at texts written by well-known feminist film theorists such as Laura Mulvey (1999) and Ruby Rich (1999), I know what to pay closer attention to in the film. For example, I realize the importance of looking at how the characters perform their ascribed gender roles and how they adjust those roles under martial law. I particularly
analyze how the main subject of the film, Amanda Bartolome, renegotiates her gendered identities as a woman, wife, mother, and nationalist under militarization. By looking at Amanda’s gendered performances during martial law using a feminist film framework, I can delineate her development as a maternal nationalist and political agent.

Viewing the film on several occasions, with each time discovering something previously not noticed, I can develop research questions that pertain to the film and its themes on mothering under militarization. Such questions include:

- In the film, *Dekada ’70*, how would Amanda Bartolome have hypothetically located herself in the burgeoning Filipino women’s movement in the 1970s and 1980s?
- From the film and texts on conflict and gender, how did mothers negotiate motherhood and their sense of nationalism? In the Philippine context, what happened when nationalism under Marcos clashed with mothers’ traditional roles as exhibited in the film?
- What made mothers such as Amanda unthreatening figures to the state in Philippine public space and public political space for that matter?

I use the film as a case study to discuss motherhood and mothering as forms of activism and resistance during times of conflict. To expand my discussions on mothering, militarism and activist mothers, I pull from secondary sources regarding these particular themes. For example, I consult feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe’s texts (1989, 2000) on women and militarism to frame my references to articles on mothers using their maternal identities as locations for political activism. Reviewing other instances where women engage the political space and tap into their feelings of nationalism helps draw connections between different groups of women. By studying cases of women from such locations as Sri Lanka, Latin America, and Pakistan, I notice that women organizing around maternalism is quite a complicated concept that requires critical analysis from a gendered perspective. Thus, I come up with another set of research questions regarding mothers entering the politicized public space to challenge the government in times of domestic conflict:

- How do women, especially mothers, find agency through times of conflict?
- Women and mothers have been active in peace movements, while men have been active in making political decisions to declare war because of pervasive traditional gender roles. Does this essentialize women as peacemakers and men as warmongers?

I want to understand how mothers utilize traditional maternal roles as political tools in questioning the state’s corruption. Although I recognize the sense of empowerment
women find in using their status as mothers for political activism, I also need to be aware of the potential setbacks. One such danger is essentializing women as mothers if their only means of acceptable organizing and political engagement is within the framework of their traditional roles as mothers (Cooke, 2001; Enloe, 2000).

My work on martial law may not be new, but my feminist approach to the topic and maternal subjects/figures I focus on in my thesis adds another perspective. Many published texts primarily chronicle the human rights abuses, the collapse of democracy in the Philippines, the rampant crony capitalism, or the Marcoses abuse of power; yet, these narratives originate from an androcentric standpoint. As a researcher, I am interested in those parts of martial law, too; however, as a feminist, I primarily concern myself with how gender and locations of power operate within those parts. Having a feminist approach to a topic like martial law and Filipina women breaks the notion that all materials already produced on the matter are absolute truths. Feminist thought teaches about the impossibilities of accurate interpretations, translations, and representations (Harding & Norberg, 2005) especially in the area of history because only those in positions of power can interpret and record particular narratives while ignoring others. Shedding light on the gendered aspects of martial law and discussing the transformations of women’s roles in times of conflict reveals the importance and value of women’s narratives. Women’s voices must matter and be heard to end the cycle of essentializing the female gender as only being wives and mothers.

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE**

In the introduction to a collection of texts written by Filipina feminists, Pennie Azarcon (1987) writes that “another hurdle that feminists (and feminist writers) have to face [was] our sense of self. Or the lack of it. Our identity, lost in the silence of history, has posted us as mere footnotes or amorous interests of otherwise celebrated heroes in our country’s past. How could we have surrendered knowledge of earth and skies for the paltry comforts of knowing our kitchens?” (p. vii). Women’s experiences and their points of view have not been recognized with the same reverence as men’s in official Philippine history. That needs to be rectified. Philippine martial law and militarization have been studied, discussed and written about using political and historical frameworks rooted in patriarchal
and androcentric points of view. Martial law discourse has been primarily analyzed through masculinist perspectives considering the period’s association with corrupt politics, conflict and militarization. Such topics are traditionally men’s issues, not women’s. Yet, these aspects of martial law touch women’s lives as well. That was why it is imperative to have conversations about women’s contributions to martial law discourse, particularly their role in bringing down the Marcos regime. Just like in the movement to bring down the dictator, women have been present in many important events in Philippine history, but that does not necessarily mean their voices are recorded or experiences included in ‘official’ historical accounts (Mangahas, 1987).

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

I organized my thesis into five chapters. Chapter 2 provides the historical background and context of Dekada ‘70 (Roño, 2002). An overview of Philippine history from pre-Spanish colonization before the 16th century through martial law (1972 – 1981) is covered, along with a separate section on the history of Filipina women’s status. The section on women’s status contains a brief discussion on the beginnings of the feminist movement in the Philippines, and women’s contributions to the fall of the Marcos dictatorship. Chapter 3 consists of a critical analysis of the film using both feminist and nationalist cinematic approaches. Sections on feminist film theory and nationalist cinema are included in the chapter in order to set up the discussions of how a feminist film and a nationalist film approach simultaneously work in tracing the main protagonist’s character development. Chapter 4 is on mothering, specifically mothering and motherhood under militarization. In the chapter, there are discussions regarding mothers politicizing their grief regarding the loss of their children, mothers organizing and uniting to seek social justice for their children, and mothers using their traditional gender roles to fight for peace. In the cases I bring up, women bypass barriers separating public and private spaces to have their voices heard while utilizing their new sense agency for societal transformative purposes.

The concluding chapter covers what martial law means to Filipina women, particularly after the fall of Marcos when women began to engage more with Philippine politics. What happened to women’s traditional identities as wives and mothers when they became political agents, such as career politicians? One of the positives of martial law is the
emergence of women’s political engagement, such as the Gabriela Network as both an umbrella organization of women’s groups and a women’s political party as well. Finally, I discuss the Philippine state post-Marcos. It is interesting to note that even though official Philippine history has vilified the Marcoses, especially Imelda Marcos, three members of the family (including Imelda Marcos herself) have recently been elected to political office in the May 2010 elections. Perhaps the next generation of Marcoses will not have such an infamous legacy as the former dictator. Although the Philippines has had corrupt leadership since re-democratization in 1986 (i.e. former presidents Joseph Estrada and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo), Filipinos this time make efforts to express their political dissent by speaking out against the state. After martial law and actively helping to bring down Marcos, women are conscious of their power in redefining their gender roles on their terms. They are no longer passive beings in the home, but citizens who participate openly in politics and society.

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1 In the May 2010 elections, two members of the Marcos clan were elected to both houses of congresses - Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. (the only son of President Marcos) was elected to the Philippine Senate, while his mother, Mrs. Imelda Marcos, was elected to the House representing the second district of the Ilocos Norte province. Mrs. Marcos’s oldest daughter, Imee Marcos, was elected governor of Ilocos Norte, a position previously held by her brother, Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. (Doronila, 2010).
CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Context is important. One can easily view a film or read a text without knowing the historical or social context of the work. However, not knowing the background of a film or text leaves gaps in the narrative and raises questions about the narrative’s creation. What was the author’s intention for the work? What was going on historically, politically, or socially when the work was created? What influenced the author to write or film particular events in history? Does the film or text have a specific message regarding certain events in time? To have a better understanding of a film or text, it is important to contextualize the work. Before delving into an in depth film analysis and discussion of *Dekada ’70* (Roño, 2002) in chapter two, it is imperative to place the work into historical and political context. By knowing the context of the film, the audience will form a deeper appreciation for the work, especially for its contribution to women’s roles in the discourse on the Philippine martial law period.

The following sections will provide a historical background briefly covering the Philippines from pre-Spanish colonization to the martial law period. Not only will the historical background cover national history, but it will also include a section on Filipino women’s history from pre-colonial Spain through their active role in bringing down the Marcos regime during the first People Power Revolution in 1986.2 By knowing the historical background of the Philippines and its tumultuous politics and culture, one could piece together the nationalistic implications of producing such a film as *Dekada ’70* (Roño, 2002) regarding militarization, political and feminist activism, and Filipina womanhood. Locating the film in Philippine revolutionary discourse allows for the recognition of its significance in

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2 The first People Power Revolution in the Philippines (aka EDSA Revolution) took place in 1986 on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) in Metro Manila, and consisted of mass non-violent demonstrations from citizens to make the corrupt President Ferdinand Marcos step down from power. Citizens came together for a peaceful revolution to restore democracy to their country and fight for social justice, especially for those who were victims of militarized and government sanctioned violence. Insurgent groups such as the NPA or MNLF did not play roles in EDSA. (Forest & Forest, 1988)
portraying an important aspect of women’s roles during times of political conflict and gives voice to their historical contributions.

In addition to providing a historical background to the film, there will be a section regarding militarism and its complex relationships to masculinity and femininity. Militarism as an institution has a strong link to hegemonic masculinity, and a tumultuous relationship to femininity. As a patriarchal institution, the military strongly favors masculinity and masculine traits such as strength, valor, aggression, and stoicism. When men enter the service, they become immersed in the militaristic culture of discipline and conformity. In times of conflict when society becomes militarized, characteristics of masculinity carry over into the public realm and become integrated into everyday lives of citizens. During this process, it becomes more apparent that masculinity is the ‘norm’ and femininity is not. Acts of emotion, compassion, or nurturance are labeled weak and feminine. What are usually labeled weak and feminine in a patriarchal and masculine society are women. Women do not have a place in the military institution, and must be dominated and oppressed. Yet, what is interesting to note about militarism is that it needs women and their femininity – the institution needs something to oppress and dominate for self-preservation. The military needs mothers, specifically their biological ability to give birth to (male) bodies that the military needs to keep going. Although militarism has a tendency to place women and femininity below masculinity, they require these things for survival and continued perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity. A background on militarism within this highly gendered institution adds a depth of understanding behind the gendering of martial law. Knowing that militarization and martial law were gendered will open up conversations as to how men and women experienced this period differently even though they were going through it together.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Philippines has a dynamic history. Prior to Western colonization (Spain from 1565 to 1898 and the United States from 1898 to 1946), the peoples of the archipelagic state had already engaged with various cultures in Southeast Asia since the area functioned as a trading hub. Although interactions were mainly the result of trading material goods, certain aspects of these encounters went beyond material items. The natives did not insulate
themselves from foreigners who came to trade in their barangays (small settlements) near waterways; instead, they conducted cultural exchanges as well. Non-natives left their mark on such socio-cultural aspects such as art, religious or spiritual practices, customs, and even language.

Colonization and creation by Spain along with the presence of the United States added to the diversity of the archipelagic state’s culture and influenced institutions such as religion, government, development, and education as well (gender relations also changed overtime, but that will be addressed later on in the chapter dealing with Filipino women). For example, in terms of religion, the Spaniards brought over Christianity (i.e. Catholicism) with the intent of converting the natives. The conversion of natives to Christianity affected many aspects of how Filipinos constructed their identity regarding their beliefs on spirituality, gender, society, culture, and even activism. During the fight for independence from the Spaniards in the late 19th century, Filipinos identified with Jesus Christ in their oppression and sufferings at the hands of the colonizers (Ileto, 1979). When the Americans came and acquired the Philippines after the Spanish-American war ended in 1898, Filipinos were actually more involved in government than they had been under the Spaniards. The country may have had American governor-generals from the United States that were officially in charge of the colony. However, the strong nationalist politicians running the U.S. established Philippine legislature such as Manuel L. Quezon and Sergio Osmeña, made it a point to push for the interests of Filipinos even if there was a clash with the Americans. Unlike the Spaniards, the United States did not intend to keep the Philippines as a colony for too long – in 1934, the U.S. passed the Philippine Independence Act (a.k.a. Tydings-McDuffie Act), stipulating that the Philippines would be free from the U. S. after a twelve-year span. In the meantime, the country became a U.S. Commonwealth from 1935 to 1946, with a brief stint under the Japanese during World War II (1941 – 1945).

The Philippines became an independent state in 1946. Recovering from World War II and the Japanese occupation, the newly independent nation and its upcoming heads of state had many challenges to face. For example, there was the Huk Rebellion (1946 – 1953), which was a Communist-led revolt of peasants demanding land reform. Peasants did not necessarily want a revolution against land-owning elites; instead, they wanted the government to develop land reform legislation that would make the land tenant system more
fair (Kerkvliet, 1977). Filipino political leadership after independence was elitist. For example, heads of state, such as Manuel Roxas (1946 – 1948), Elpido Quirino (1948 – 1953), Ramon Magsaysay (1953 – 1957), Carlos P. Garcia (1957 – 1961), and Diosdado Macapagal (1961 – 1965) either came from wealthy, well-connected, or political families. However, although these men were heads of state, they were not authoritarians that advocated for the centralization of government power. Not until Ferdinand Marcos (1965 – 1986) took power did the Philippines experience a dictatorship form of government.

**Philippine Martial Law (1972 – 1981)**

On September 23, 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos issued Proclamation 1801 declaring martial law in the Philippines under the guise of protecting the nation from radicals and political dissenters. However, protecting the country consisted of policing individuals and groups that posed a threat to government authority. Martial law is when the military’s services and presence becomes intertwined with state government affairs and functions. The nation becomes a militaristic state, where the military and other authoritative institutions go beyond their required duties to keep the nation in line. What was interesting to note was that when President Marcos declared martial law, he emphatically denied a military take-over of the government. Instead, the military functioned as a tool for the civilian president to use to maintain power.

Prior to the declaration, the country had been brewing with internal conflict. Leftist groups led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and Jose Maria Sison’s³ Kabataang Makabayan (KM, Nationalist Youth) had begun demonstrating in the urban areas and cities raising awareness about the economic disparities plaguing the nation. The demonstrations were not enough, though, and the CPP and its affiliate organizations went as far as supporting violent acts to get the attention of the government and general public. With slogans such as, “Democracy should be for the whole population, not for the elite alone!”

³ Jose Maria Sison is a Filipino writer, activist and academic who had been responsible for revitalizing the CPP with a mixture of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism philosophy, along with its youth groups to fight against U.S. imperialism and economic oppression. During martial law, members of the AFP captured and imprisoned him for almost a decade for his leftist political transgressions against the government. In 2002, the European Union declared him a “foreign terrorist” for his connections to the CPP and its militant wing, the New People’s Army (NPA). The U.S. State Department also blacklisted him as a terrorist in 2002. (Party for Socialism and Liberation, 2004)
they surely got the attention of the Marcos headed government. According to the CPP and their militant wing, the New People’s Army (NPA), violence was justifiable in “fighting feudalism (exemplified by land tenancy, social injustice, the too wide a gap between the poor and the rich), fascism (or the use of armed might to suppress civil liberties), and imperialism (the continued existence of US bases in the Philippines, among other things)” (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005, p. 201). Along with demonstrations in the cities, the NPA had gone into the countryside working with peasant farmers in fighting for more land rights against big land owners. The Marcos regime labeled them a threat to national security because of the CPPs active protests in the cities and on university campuses (primarily the main campus of the University of the Philippines at Diliman), along with the NPAs activities in the countryside.

The CPP and the NPA were not the only organizations dubbed as threats to the Philippine state – the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the southern islands of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan had started a movement against the Christian Philippine state that had been oppressing Muslim populations living on the southern islands. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Christian settlers began migrating to the southern islands in droves, resulting in tensions with the already settled Muslim population. The state sanctioned migrations as a way to deal with agrarian problems that had previously led up to the Huk Rebellion. There was a lack of “effective land registration system” that often resulted in “violent clashes over land ownership” and adding to the conflict was “state infrastructure projects increase[ing] feelings of encroachment” from the Marcos regime (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005, p. 216). Like other politicians in the Philippine state, representatives in the Muslim communities in the south felt their political power in the state government steadily decrease under Marcos. Due to their lessened opportunities to negotiate proper regulations regarding Muslim land and increased migrations from other parts of the Philippines, the tension and conflict in the south rose significantly. Younger generation Muslim students who had gone to religious schools in Egypt and Libya and then continued university studies in the Philippines, saw the encroachment of the state on their land as an aggressive act to oppress the Muslim way of life. In 1968, the Mindanao Independence Movement began with a strong belief in separatism, or something along the lines of Muslim nationalism (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005, p. 217). With increased violent clashes with Christian settlers and members of the AFP sent by the state to control the conflict, the Mindanao Independence
Movement headed by the MNLF turned militant. They received arms supplies from Libya and a training camp was provided for them in Malaysia to train militants, so that when the state initiated a militarized conflict with the MNLF, the group would be prepared to fight back.

President Marcos used the Philippine constitution as justification for imposing martial law and placing the country under a state of emergency, stating the intention of containing the insurgency groups such as the NPA and MNLF. What resulted, instead, was a suspension of civil liberties, abuse of political power, and socio-economic and political instability. There had been some foreshadowing that martial law was going to happen, considering Marcos suspended the writ of habeas corpus in 1971. After announcing martial law, thousands of anti-Marcos Filipino citizens were arrested and imprisoned. Abinales and Amoroso (2005) wrote that, “The declaration of martial law devastated Marcos’s opponents. Overnight, the entire network of anti-Marcos forces had disappeared from the public arena. Politicians were jailed (most well known one was Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, Jr.), their patronage machines adrift and private armies demobilized. Students, academics, journalists, businessmen, and labor and peasant organizers had also been arrested…” (p. 205). Not only were citizens jailed or had mysteriously disappeared, but the democratic political environment of the Philippines practically disappeared as well in the early years of martial law. With orders from the president, the AFP “raided and closed schools, religious establishments, newspapers, and radio and television stations. In Manila (the country’s capital), both houses of Congress were shut and deliberations of the constitutional convention suspended” (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005, p. 205). Throughout the country, curfews were imposed to keep people from gathering at night and starting any trouble with authorities. With one declaration, President Marcos placed the Philippines under lockdown, leaving Filipino citizens open to human rights abuses by the military and other authorities, until he deemed it was “safe enough” to lift martial law.

In the early years of martial law, Marcos issued various decrees, legislations and executive orders geared towards maintaining power. Filipino academic, Albert Celoza (1997), commented that although the dictator enacted public policies and altered public institutions for his benefit, he did so through legal means. Celoza (1997) remarked that,
Marcos had earned significant legal justification for his authoritarian regime… He pursued legitimacy through the constitution he claimed was the foundation of the structure of law, but that constitution would be selectively implemented, and further rethought through succeeding referendums and other political rituals. Rituals to justify the legitimacy of the authoritarian government were conducted from time to time and from crisis to crisis (p. 56).

This meant that if Marcos wanted to enact change, he would take the legal route to show citizens that he was not breaking the law; however, if his actions did not match up accordingly to the constitution, he would create referendums that people could ‘vote’ on to legitimize his actions.

In addition to using martial law as a means to stay in power, he used it to put forth his idea of creating a “new society” in the Philippines consisting of socio-economic developments on par to first world nations. By placing technocrats in various government posts not occupied by military officers, Marcos did manage to improve the Philippine economy by helping the rapid growth of the manufacturing and construction industries, and implementing agrarian reforms to try and boost agricultural exports in the coconut and sugar industries. Public spending also rose during martial law, with funds coming from foreign investors, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. However, the funds that were supposed to be used for public projects to improve infrastructure and social programs and help the economy, did not necessarily help the Philippines as a whole. The benefits of this brief economic growth did not go to average Filipino citizens to improve their living conditions, but rather to Marcos and his supporters. There was a consolidation of the country’s wealth in the hands of a few, notably friends and family of the president. One could see this shift of power as a creation of a new group of elites in Philippine society. For example, executives in the coconut and sugar industries along with other executives in various business sectors often paid government officials off for not subjecting them to regulations for fair business practices. Simply put, executives became wealthier monopolizing their respective industries because they were not being regulated, while government officials that were supposed to be regulating businesses were lining their pockets with kick-backs. As the gap between the rich and poor widened and unemployment rapidly rose, Marcos and his associates sat back and enjoyed the fruits of crony capitalism. One should not be surprised, then, that a society that has endured years of economic and political oppression and abuse would eventually fight back against its oppressor.
Scholar and political scientist Gretchen Casper (1995), who has conducted extensive research and has written on Philippine politics since the early 1980s, discussed the structural instability of authoritarian regimes with the Marcos regime as a case study in her book, *Fragile Democracies: The Legacies of Authoritarian Rule*. She emphasized that when authoritarian governments take over, they either alter or destroy the traditional roles of other public institutions such as the military or church (Casper, 1995, p. 4). For example, when Marcos first declared martial law, one of the first things he did was shut down both houses of congress. Within a Philippine context, Marcos did in fact change the role of the military directly and the role of the Catholic Church in society indirectly. Under martial law, he expanded the role of the armed forces to not only protect citizens on the domestic front, but to control certain aspects of public life. For example, in some areas, it became normal to see soldiers doing security sweeps at elementary schools and making it mandatory for young students to wear identification badges at all times. As for the church, it actually played an important role in the opposition movement against Marcos. Members of the clergy became politicized and actively participated in protests where they voiced their dissatisfaction with the state. Another point Casper (1995) made about authoritarian governments was their inability to sustain themselves for a long period. Even with a new slogan to justify his regime, “Isang Bansa, Isang Diwa” (One Nation, One Spirit), Marcos could not hold on to power because he did not have the support to maintain it (Casper, 1995, p. 45). Although he tried to create this “new society” with control and discipline via strong military support, his corruption and inability to deliver promises of social and economic development contributed to his downfall.

**Status of Filipino Women (Pre-Spanish Colonization before 1542 to 1986)**

Women have not been absent in Philippine national history. They may not have been at the center of martial law discourse or the other key moments of Philippine history, but that did not necessarily mean they did not partake in important historical events or revolutions. Women were pushed to the periphery and only placed in the spotlight when their images were controlled by patriarchal forces and institutions, but they certainly found ways to leave their mark on the country’s historical discourse. Filipino women have played important roles in Philippine history and society before and after periods of colonization by both Spain and
the U.S. Filipino scholar Myrna Feliciano (1994) wrote that because “the status of the Filipina...has undergone various transformations under the various foreign colonizers who brought their institutions and legislation to the Philippines” (p. 547), the Filipina’s sense of identity has always been in flux. Several factors that determined a woman’s place in society included “law, culture, tradition, attitudes, and government policies” (Feliciano, 1994, p. 547). For example, prior to Spanish colonization in the 16th century, the Filipina enjoyed a somewhat egalitarian position in society. Women could become chief of the barangay, hold property, and even name her own children (Feliciano, 1994, p. 548). In village spiritual ceremonies, women had key positions as baylans or priestesses that presided over birth and death rituals and helped heal the sick (Agustin, 1987).

However, when the Spaniards colonized the Philippines, their “[Spanish] laws diminished women’s standing by substituting [their] institutions for the indigenous practices” that had previously benefitted women (Feliciano, 1994, p. 548). When the Spanish friars and missionaries came with their Western patriarchal ideals of Catholicism, baylans or babaylans and women in general became subordinate to men. According to Brewer (2000), missionaries would learn the language of the region(s) for conversion purposes, and then train young indigenous boys to go against the female baylans and destroy their spiritual crafts. Through the systematic elimination of the baylan and what she represented to the native community, a gendered role reversal occurred that marginalized not only the priestess, but women in general. Overtime, the Catholic Church and the Spanish state gradually took power and authority away from the baylans because they saw them as threats to Western ideals of civilization and masculinity.

Although the Spanish heavily contributed to the marginalization of Filipina women under colonization, that did not necessarily mean women became completely absent from public political life. In fact, towards the end of Spanish colonization, women’s groups began forming under the frameworks of nationalist and anti-colonialist sentiments. For example, after her husband’s execution, revolutionary leader Gabriela Silang led Philippine soldiers in military skirmishes against the Spanish. Although she had a few successful campaigns, she was later captured and executed in 1763. In 1888, a group of twenty women from the city of Malolos petitioned their governor-general for permission to open a night school to learn Spanish. Even though the governor-general rejected their petition with the urging of the
local Spanish parish priest, the women did not give up their project. Then, in 1889, they received government approval of their educational project. The women of Malolos fighting to learn the language of their colonizer challenged not only Spanish authority and who had access to education, but they also questioned the patriarchal approach to women’s capacity to go beyond their ascribed gender roles. When the armed uprisings against the Spanish became more frequent in the 1890s, the secret society called Kataastaasan Kagalanggalang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan (The Highest and Most Honorable Society of the Sons of the Country) or simply the Katipunan organization, led the anti-colonial uprising against Spain (Ileto, 1979). Women may not have been active in the conflict zones fighting alongside their men, but they were nonetheless involved – women leaders in these rebellions for independence were “wives of revolutionary leaders, guiding women in humanitarian as well as military operations in their nationalistic struggles” (Kwiatkowski & West, 1997, p. 149). Filipino women suffered just as much oppression (perhaps even more because of their gender) than their male counterparts under Spanish colonization; however, they had to put aside their gender specific struggles to put the fight for independence above their own issues.

Women’s status, again, changed under the Americans. Under American rule, Filipina women could take some part in political public life through increased education and employment opportunities. For example, more professionals, both men and women, began working in the country’s capital of Manila. Some of the most common careers for women included teaching, nursing and pharmacology. Elite and upper-middle class families began investing more in their daughter’s education because they began to see the positive effects education had on women’s upward social mobility (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005, p. 158). Increased educational and job opportunities for middle and upper-class women resulted in participation in Philippine politics and exposure to international women’s movements. In the early 1900s, women began organizing around the issue of women’s suffrage. According to Kwiatkowski and West (1997), the first association to ever raise the issue of women voting was the Asociacion Feminist Ilonga in 1906. The organization argued that women had certain qualities and strengths (i.e. compassion, honesty, etc.) that men did not have which could better Philippine politics – women would provide a uniquely different voice as to how the government could run (Kwiatkowski & West, 1997). In 1933, women got the right to
vote and were made eligible to hold public office (Feliciano, 1994, p. 550). Just as what happened in the previous government structural changes, the Filipina experienced another alteration to her identity when the Philippine Republic was established in 1946. A newly independent Philippine state changed the relationship Filipino women had with their nation and concept of citizenship.

The stirrings of a women’s movement in the Philippines began within the tumultuous Marcos years in the late 1960s and through 1980s. One had to understand that the women’s movement grew out of the nationalist movement to overthrow the Marcos regime. Because political and economic structural changes negatively affected women, particularly working-class and landless peasant women, the country needed a movement to specifically address the issues directly dealing with women. For example, during the 1960s, “Makibaka (Fight Back), the first revolutionary women’s organization, was born” (Friesen, 1989, p. 677). According to scholar Dorothy Friesen (1989), the organization supported the communist led NPA, “but also recognized that women [suffered] from political, clan, religious, and male authorities which [were] expressions of a feudal-patriarchal ideology and system. In response, Makibaka’s organizational efforts were aimed at stimulating the formation of women’s associations in both rural and urban areas” (p. 677). Women began organizing in the later years of the Marcos dictatorship despite class and political differences as long as they were anti-Marcos. Peasant women organized to help protect their communities against military violence; middle-class women took up the cause of speaking out against prostitution, illegal trafficking of women abroad; and working class women became more active in union organizing in the factories they worked in (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005, p. 241; Roces, 2000). Women used their diverse social and economic locations to organize around issues that did not necessarily pertain to their gender exclusively, but to their larger communities as a whole. Women’s groups like Makibaka wanted to keep fighting exclusively for women’s rights; however, because the government had increased its militarized presence in the provinces, suppressing the activities of the NPA, the women of the organization put aside their issues and contributed to the larger cause of ousting President Marcos. Just like their foremothers during the anti-colonialist movements against the Spanish, the needs of the nation had to come before their gendered needs.
On August 21, 1983, Marcos’s political rival and outspoken member of the opposition, Benigno Aquino Jr., was assassinated de-boarding a plane in Manila. The death of Aquino marked the beginnings of the first People’s Power Movement to oust Marcos, and a re-awakening of Philippine democracy. After the assassination, there was an increase in protests and rallies, calling for the resignation of President Marcos and a restoration of a non-corrupt government. Instead of living in fear and allowing the government to continuously suppress their civil rights, more and more Filipinos came out to join the opposition movement against the dictator. The assassination of Aquino motivated Filipino citizens to take action against their corrupt state and fight for a more just one that actually served its people.

In 1984, one of the most prominent and well-known feminist women’s organizations was created – the General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership and Action (Gabriela) (Friesen, 1989). Gabriela consisted of different women’s groups made up of women across various social classes. There were associations of peasant women, urban poor, women workers, tribal women, religious women, professional women, and housewives from the middle and upper-middle class (Friesen, 1989, p. 678). Regardless of one’s social location, the women from Gabriela realized the necessity in forming cross-class coalitions in the overall nationalist movement to bring down the corrupt Marcos administration. In 1986, after Marcos left the Philippines, the country went through a transitional period from a dictatorship to democracy. Leading the nation in this transition was the new president of the Philippines, Corazon Aquino – the first female president in the Philippines and in Asia. One of the first projects under the administration was collectively creating a new constitution. Gabriela saw this as an opportunity to push their feminist agenda regarding women. The organization’s major concerns were: “recognition and promotion of the rights and welfare of women; promotion of the welfare of the family and the rights of children; and the guarantee of the general economic, political, and social conditions necessary for the meaningful exercise of women’s rights and for the full promotion of the welfare of women, the family, and children” (Friesen, 1989, p. 682). Learning from the extreme mishaps of the Marcos regime in relation to women’s social status, Gabriela understood that if they, as a collective of women, did not take an active role in shaping the new Philippine government, the ‘woman-issue’ would not be adequately
addressed. Friesen (1989) wrote that Gabriela’s national demands “[reflected] their understanding that without national political and economic changes, women’s specific situation [would] not change” (p. 682). Therefore, women knew the importance and necessity about being active participants in the development of the national agenda.

**MASCULINITY, WAR AND CONFLICT**

Usually during times of war and conflict, the nation required the support of its citizens to justify or legitimize the state of militarization. One of the ways in which citizens would show support for their nation was through the increased production and performance of traditional gender roles. Through this production and performance, men tended to dominate women in both the public and private spheres. In public, men were in positions of power or making decisions regarding politics or military. Women were not part of the decision making process to go to war nor did they participate in the discussions regarding domestic conflicts. In the private sphere, if men were not soldiers, they were home ensuring their leadership position as true heads of the household. Women needed to manage the household and adhere to their husbands’ choices concerning their family and how to engage with the government and military institutions. There needed to be clear gender roles to send the message that in times of war and conflict, the value of masculinity was greater than femininity. According to Nagel (2005), “through men and their interests, their notions of manliness, and the articulation of masculine micro (everyday) and macro (political) cultures” (p. 397), men could shape societal politics through their public and private leadership. True manhood was strongly linked to nationhood, while womanhood became synonymous with motherhood. Men had to perform normative masculinity, complete with characteristics such as honor, courage, discipline, competitiveness, stoicism, persistence, sexual virility with restraint, etc. (Nagel, 2005).

In addition to the aforementioned “masculine” qualities, men also had to strive for dominance – men were not “real men” unless they dominated weaker individuals regardless of gender. The military institution socialized men further with hegemonic masculinity with a focus on domination over femininity. The military provided a space where men built their phallocentric manhood and increased their social status by performing an accepted, valorized form of masculinity (Higate & Hopton, 2005). That is why there is such a strong linkage and
reciprocal relationship between militarism and masculinity – both militarism and masculinity need each other for survival and legitimization. Higate and Hopton (2005) add that traditional male attitudes such as heroism, aggression and strength are only legitimized if they are performed by state sanctioned military men, and not men who oppose the state authority who exhibit the same characteristics (p. 435). If men perform accordingly within a militarized context, they are showing the correct form of masculinity. Even if hegemonic masculinity makes its way into the public sphere through militarized forms of violence, it becomes acceptable, masculine behavior. Only through militarism do masculine ideologies concerning violence and domination over the feminine become eroticized and institutionalized (Higate & Hopton, 2005, p. 436). What makes hegemonic masculinity and military violence such a threat is its ability to transcend the boundaries of public and private spaces. In times of war and conflict, masculine ideologies regarding domination and violence penetrate the sanctity of the peaceful, feminized domestic space.

As scholars pointed out (Chenoy, 2002; Enloe, 1989, 2000; Hilsdon, 1995; Ruddick, 1989; Vickers, 1993), war and conflict were stereotypically men’s business, while peace and non-violence were women’s issues. Women viewed conflict as an arena where men’s masculinity would flourish, primarily through systematic war violence. During extreme times of conflict, men committed acts of violence to enhance their sense of masculinity and highlight their loyalty to the nation. The state sanctioned violence on behalf of the nation, and thus it was legitimate. However, at the receiving end of these acts of ‘acceptable violence’ were women, minorities, alleged subversives, and perhaps even other men that exhibited alternative forms of masculinity. The military institution considered weak and feminized these groups of individuals were because they were not part of and did not exhibit proper behaviors that aligned with hegemonic masculine ideology. Thus, these bodies needed to be disciplined and punished to let them know their proper place in a militarized and masculinized society.

**WOMEN AND MILITARISM**

Women and the military typically have an adversarial relationship. During times of war (and even during peacetime), women have been involved with the military in one way or another. They were either military wives, members of the military, military mothers,
civilians, refugees, or prostitutes (Enloe, 2000). One of the most important roles and aspects women embodied in relation to the military was their femininity. Traditionally, war was linked to masculinity and men, whereas peace was connected to femininity and women. Feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe (1989, 2000) writes extensively on the complicated relationships between gender, international politics, and militarization. In Enloe’s (2000) text, *Maneuvers: the International Politics of Women’s Lives*, she focuses on how militarization plays an important role in women’s lives, particularly on a personal level. Regardless of whether women is directly or indirectly involved with military, militarization finds its way into the everyday lives of women. In the opening chapter of *Maneuvers*, smartly titled “How Do They Militarize a Can of Soup?” Enloe (2000) details the ways in which militarization penetrates people’s lives through changes in culture, ideologies, institutions, and the economy. She brings up an interesting point that militarization enters daily routines without us becoming conscious of it; and because we are not aware, militarization becomes normalized and invisible.

Enloe (2000) used the example of a can of soup becoming militarized because it featured Star Wars noodles. When a wife or mother would do the grocery shopping for her family (since women traditionally do this task anyway), she would bring that can of militarized soup home (Enloe, 2000, p. 2). In addition to cans of soup, children’s toys could be militarized as well (i.e. plastic toy soldiers and guns); employees working for companies that produce weapons for war; films, television shows, and celebrities; and even religious institutions could also become militarized. Yet, because militarization seeped into objects or places so ingrained into our daily livelihoods or actions, there was not a need to analyze the effects. Therein lay the dangers of militarization. Enloe (2000) wrote that, “The more militarization transform[ed] an individual or a society, the more that individual or society comes to imagine military needs and militaristic presumptions to be not only valuable but also normal” (p. 3). Militarization could become deeply ingrained into a society’s daily activities that individuals would not even notice how militarized private spaces, such as the home, could become.

Scholar Anuradha M. Chenoy (2002) added to Enloe’s (1989, 2000) conversation about women and militarism. She mentioned that “militarization varied in time from region to region, and in different cultural contexts” (Chenoy, 2002, p. 22). True, but one common
thread among militarization that Enloe (2000) had also stated was the heightened traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. During times of conflict, in order for the masculinity of military operations to continue and perpetuate its military ideology, idealized femininity had to be constructed in order to be put down. What has to be understood is that women were not the ones constructing ‘idealized’ forms of femininity – it was the patriarchal institutions in power that designed and appropriated suitable forms of femininity. Men encouraged the performance of femininity, especially in times of war and conflict, to foster a hierarchal gender difference between men and women, and masculinity and femininity. Within this androcentric framework of constructing gender, men and masculinity end up being the ideal norm at a critical time in a militarized society. After all, if femininity is seen as weakness under militarism, it would not make sense to encourage feminine behavior and give women control in constructing femininity in their own terms. Hence, importance is placed on maintaining a strong sense of gender difference and hierarchy where men and masculinity would trump women and femininity. Since men rule and make important decisions in society, it was always acceptable for them to occupy a place in public while women stayed in the private space.

**Concluding Remarks**

As stated earlier, placing *Dekada ’70* (Roño, 2002) in its historical and socio-political context is imperative in having a deeper understanding of the thematic elements of the film. Spectators can watch the visual text without having any knowledge of the history of martial law, militarization, or how gender operates under militarism. However, they may not be able to grasp the impact the period had on Philippine society, particularly on women. The film analysis in chapter 3 will highlight the gendered aspects of martial law and militarism through a woman’s perspective. Historians did not give women’s perspectives on and participation in revolutionary events the same credit given to men. In areas considered to be traditionally men’s issues such as militarism and revolution, women’s voices and actions tended to be overshadowed by their male counterparts. Thus, when women began creating space within predominantly male sectors of society and voicing their concerns, it became a worthy topic for discussion, especially for feminists such as myself.
CHAPTER 3

FILM ANALYSIS OF DEKADA ’70

Film is a useful visual medium for expressing ideas, exhibiting cultures and histories, and bringing people together through creative means. In addition to the entertainment element of film, this form of visual media is also be a site for creating imagined communities (Anderson, 1991) – in other words, films have the power to generate a space where feelings of belonging (i.e. to a community) could manifest in the audience by evoking certain emotions or shared memories depending on the intentions of the filmmaker and audience reception. Whether the film intends to promote particular nationalist notions, certain ideologies, feminism, or reinforce dominant patriarchal notions, films act as an excellent way to spread messages and ideals to vast audiences. In the Philippines, an example of a film that brings audiences together along the lines of common historical discourse and shared memories, along with a feminist message embedded in the entertainment factor, is Chito Roño’s (2002) film, Dekada ’70. Although marketed as a piece for mainstream cinema, the film is not a typical mainstream Filipino film. Instead, it is an overtly politicized work that chronicles martial law under former President Marcos through the point of view of a upper-middle class Filipina housewife. It would be fair to describe Roño’s (2002) work as a fair mix of national cinema with feminist sensibilities because of the film’s subject matter, anti-dictatorship sentiment, and discussions regarding gender roles. The film’s main protagonist, Amanda Bartolome, develops a quasi-feminist consciousness that parallels her development of a nationalist consciousness through her experiences with institutionalized state violence, militarized violence, and domestic familial gendered relationships.

Before going into an in depth film analysis of Dekada ’70 (Roño, 2002), it is imperative to first discuss the cinematic frameworks I employ in the chapter. The first section of the chapter summarizes the film to contextualize the upcoming portions dealing with national cinema as a space for forming communities, and examining the film as a nationalistic project. Due to the imaginary nature of cinematic space, audiences and filmmakers alike can create and shape cinema to their liking – this particular space has
endless possibilities as to how it could be developed into a community in itself. Although Anderson’s (1991) work on the concepts of nation and nationalism as being ‘imagined communities’ deal primarily with print media as a space for fostering togetherness along nationalistic boundaries, later scholars add film as an imagined space where nationalistic communities can also thrive (Jarvie, 2000; Schlesinge, 2000; Smith, 2000). After the sections on nationalism and cinema is a discussion on feminist film critique, followed by a gendered and feminist analysis of the film. Instead of strictly analyzing Dekada ’70 (Roño, 2002) through a feminist or nationalist framework, I critically discuss the film using the two theoretical cinematic discourses. When I analyze the historical and political content of the film, I use a nationalist film framework; and later when I address issues regarding gender relations among the characters (i.e. Amanda and her familial relationships), I use a feminist framework. I intend to show that implementing these two specific frameworks together in critically looking at how traditional concepts of gender operate amidst socio-political instability ultimately highlight the film’s importance in contributing to the dialogue between feminism and nationalism within a Philippine context. In addition, using the two frameworks at the same time emphasize the way Amanda Bartolome’s national consciousness and feminist consciousness reinforce each other to create a nationalist, feminist activist (this is covered in more detail in Chapter 4).

**FILM SUMMARY**

In 2002, ABS-CBN Film Productions, Inc. (commonly known as Star Cinema) released the mainstream film adaption of Lualhati Bautista’s influential novel, Dekada 70 (1988). The film chronicles the story of a middle-class Filipino family, the Bartolomes, against the backdrop of the tumultuous martial law years in the Philippines. Amanda Bartolome is the film’s protagonist. Along with her husband, Julian, she tries to maintain a safe home environment to raise her five sons – Jules, Emmanuel (“Em”), Isagani (“Gani”), Jason, and Benjamin (“Bingo”). In a way, she considers herself and her family good Filipino citizens – both her and her husband respect the national government and their president; they

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4 ABS-CBN Film Productions, Inc., which is more commonly known as Star Cinema, is a subsidiary of the Philippine media giant ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation. For the rest of the paper, I will be referring to ABS-CBN Film Productions, Inc. by its common name, Star Cinema.
encourage their sons to speak their minds at home, yet instill the idea of keeping in line with Filipino society’s status quo; and actively perpetuate and practice hetero-patriarchal gender roles within their home space.

The early portions of the film are mostly spent getting to know the characters and locating them in Philippine society. In one of the very early scenes, we see the family mostly in the home space and around their urban, middle-class neighborhood. The home setting and its surrounding area indicate the socio-economic status of the family as upper-middle class, by the fact that they can afford to employ a maid, own a family car, and live in a fairly nice neighborhood in Manila. The Bartolomes are introduced as a nuclear family living a peaceful life in the suburbs. Amanda Bartolome appears to be the typical housewife and mother – she is mainly seen at home, caring for her children, and managing the household. She is responsible for maintaining the home’s order and disciplining the children. She is not expected to go beyond those roles. There are a few instances where she tries to step out of her traditional gender roles, such as expressing the desire to seek outside employment and gauging her husband’s opinion on couples separating; however, her husband dismisses her desires and thoughts. Amanda is the epitome of a woman that buys into the notion of institutionalized motherhood (Rich, 1995), where patriarchal structures (i.e. the Catholic Church and the state) have socialized her to believe that her full capacity as a person is limited to being a wife and mother.

Julian Bartolome heads the household with a somewhat iron fist. As the sole breadwinner at home, he works as an architect to support the family in maintaining their upper-middle class lifestyle. He does not allow his wife to work because having a job would keep his wife outside the home and threaten his sense of masculinity. In addition to being a traditionalist when it comes to gender roles, he is a staunch nationalist who supports President Marcos. Despite the questionable political choices Marcos makes, Julian backs his president. The oldest son, Jules, is a compassionate person that deeply cares about and is drawn to the plight of those less fortunate than his family. Early on, the viewer gets the sense that he is the kind of person to have strong, progressive principles and will stand by them no matter what happens. For example, there is one early scene where Amanda takes the boys out and gets caught in traffic because of demonstrators protesting Philippine involvement in the Vietnam War. Jules gets out of the jeep his mother and brothers are waiting in and
watches the demonstration with keen interest. Amanda tries pulling him back to keep him safe in case the police come, but the concern and interest Jules has on his face and the desire in his eyes to join the protestors, foreshadows later events in the film.

The next son, Gani, is not as politically or socially radical as his older brother, Jules. He joins the United States Navy because of the good benefits and pay the U.S. military provides. He is not interested in doing anything that sets him apart from the status quo. The only incident that shatters his image of a good Bartolome son is impregnating his girlfriend, Evelyn. In order for both Gani’s and Evelyn’s families to save face, the young couple weds before their child is born. The couple eventually breaks up when Gani leaves for military duty with the U.S. Navy.

The Bartolomes third son, Em, has similar political and social leanings as his eldest brother, Jules, but instead of becoming a revolutionary and activist, he chooses to express his beliefs through journalism. He writes articles on workers’ demonstrations, trade unions, political graft, etc. However, his stories rarely get published in mainstream print media because the state implemented media censorship during martial law. In addition to his articles, Em sometimes writes pieces for the leftist, underground newspapers that Jules would help put together and distribute. The fourth son, Jason, is a charming, mischievous teen. Although he gets in trouble with his parents for breaking curfews and getting bad grades, he is always their fun-loving and witty son. In Amanda’s eyes, no matter what childish antics Jason pulls, he is essentially a good son. It is Jason’s murder later in the film that becomes the catalyst for his mother’s nationalist and feminist awakening. Because authorities kill the teen for no legitimate reason, Amanda vows to get justice for him. The youngest of the Bartolome clan is Bingo. Compared to his brothers and their life experiences, his youthful innocence is a breath of fresh air for the family. As a child growing up during martial law, his parents, especially his mother, does a decent job in preventing the militarized violence from touching him directly. His mother wants to give him a normal childhood amidst the chaos of Philippine society. It is his brothers’ activities that brings martial law home and exposes him to the dangers of the authoritarian state.

As martial law progresses and the breakdown of Philippine civil society continues, the Bartolomes realize that they are no different from the rest of the country in that their upper-middle class, nuclear family status is not enough to protect them. When Jules first
becomes active in his university Communist organization and participates in student rallies ranging from criticizing the authoritative nature of the university to U.S. imperialism in the Philippines, his parents scold him and advise him to cease his activities. However, the deeper he gets into the movement, the more he brings the revolutionary ideas of the CPP and other leftist groups to the home space. His father, particularly, does not want leftist politics entering his household because it challenges his own political, conservative beliefs. When Jules finally leaves to become part of the revolution in the Philippine countryside, he does not realize his actions open his family to danger from the Marcos authoritative state. In later scenes, the audience and the Bartolome family discover that Jules has a high ranking position in the revolution. Because of his role in the movement, the Bartolome home is placed under surveillance by the authorities – they feel that the family is hiding Jules, who is now an enemy of the state. Towards the later part of the film, which is set in the year 1976, martial law officially enters the Bartolome home when armed guards invade the house in search of Jules. With an official search and arrest order for him, the armed men ransack the house, looking for any evidence of the revolutionary son along with any leftist materials the family might have. Luckily Jules warns his mother that something like the home invasion might happen because of him, so in order to protect his family, he advises Amanda to burn all materials related to the revolution and any other incriminating evidence they had (i.e. newspapers and newsletters like *Ang Bayan* and *Makibaka*). Unfortunately, Jules cannot hide from authorities forever; authorities capture, imprison and torture him later in the film.

After Jules’ arrest and imprisonment, Amanda thinks her family is no longer in danger. But the institutionalized violence of martial law does not end with her eldest – as mentioned earlier, her son Jason is picked up by authorities, too, and later killed and disposed of behind a dumpster. As the female head of the household, Amanda knows that martial law changes the family dynamic, especially with Jules’ and Em’s political and social views and their activities to support their principles; however, she does not realize that the authoritative

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5 *Ang Bayan* is the official news publication of the Communist Party of the Philippines, where they report on the party’s work and comment on current events. *Makibaka* was a newsletter put out by the leftist organization with the same name that also reported on their activities. They worked closely with the CPP and NPA in the Philippine countryside. Makibaka was one of the first grassroots feminist organizations in the Philippines, but had to set aside their gender interests for the national, socio-political interests of the anti-dictatorship movement in the 1970s to the mid 1980s (Aquino, 1994).
state would violently penetrate the safe haven and sense of normalcy she works so hard to maintain at home. No matter what she does, she cannot fully protect her family from the violence of martial law. Before she knows it, her household, like the rest of the Philippine state, also becomes a site for militarization. Yet, it is this militarized setting of the home and personal experience with violence that gives a woman like Amanda an opportunity to expand her consciousness as not only a citizen, but as a woman as well. The oppressive, authoritarian state pushes this good Filipina mother to challenge the status quo of her gender and her relationship to the state as an anti-dictatorship nationalist.

**NATIONALISM AND CINEMA: CREATING COMMUNITIES AND NATIONAL IDENTITY**

Films have various functions and meanings in societies and cultures – they can entertain, educate and raise awareness about certain social and political issues. They can also be historical and nationalistic tools for spreading information (or propaganda) for different purposes, depending on who is producing and distributing the film, and what sort of narrative the audience will be consuming. As visual mediums, films are definitely useful in contributing to discussions on specific discourses, whether they are political, historical, or nationalistic. Films allow citizens to see depictions of their nation-states through a particular lens (most often times positive) to create a sense of community and belonging. Anderson (1991) defines nations as “imagined political communities” (p. 6). What really makes nations imagined communities is that “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson, 1991, p. 7). All nation-states have histories and realities that are not always positive – some nations have instances of conflict such as Partition in India in 1947 after independence or oppressive military dictatorships such as Augusto Pinochet in Chile (1974 – 1990) – yet citizens find ways to confirm their nationalistic binds amidst adversity. Fostering commonalities can come in several forms such as religion, ethnicity, language, etc. Anderson (1991) refers specifically to language as a form of creating bonds between citizens, especially when expressed through print technology. Citizens of a nation can read each other’s texts or even historical texts to form connections with one another and to their state. However, what is problematic with Anderson’s (1991) assessment of using print language as a form of establishing nationalistic relationships is that not all citizens can easily access
certain texts or may not possess the ability to make sense of texts should they ever get a hold of them. With the usage of film, then, citizens do not necessarily need to have the skills of interpreting print language to understand nationalistic texts because they can watch their national narratives onscreen.

Adding film to Anderson’s (1991) work on nationalist discourse, later scholars go beyond print text as a communicative form for fostering nationalist sentiment to film. In the space of a movie theater or another public/private space designed to screen films, citizens of a nation are in an environment where they can actively engage with visual narratives intended to evoke some sort of emotion. Whether stated explicitly or not, films depicting historical and political events establish social communications between the audience and the visual material onscreen. In a manner of speaking, the relationship or social communication being played out in the controlled space of the public theater or private home, brings a culture together through the sharing of common visual memories and histories (Schlesinge, 2000). Echoing Anderson’s (1991) theory that media as a form of communication is imperative to cultural development, Schlesinge (2000) further emphasizes that film is another technological advancement that can be utilized to strengthen the boundaries of communities around common cultural histories. In the imagined space of film reality, nationalists can create and further foster imagined communities.

Although nationalist films have the ability and intention to bring the imagined community together, it should be noted that film as a form of social communication also has the element of exclusion, especially to foreigners who are not members of the nation. One of the basic tenets of national cinema is to have the audience consuming the nationalist films construct their national identities vis-à-vis the narrative onscreen (Schlesinge, 2000, p. 26). The way the nation is represented onscreen through the films’ sequence of events, character development, historical reconstructions, and the production of ethnoscapes, are all designed to evoke strong emotions among the audience. Take for example historical films like Richard Attenborough’s film Gandhi (1982) – the film’s narrative revolves around an important figure in India’s anti-colonial and independence movement and the realism of the historical events onscreen definitely provide a framework for the spectator “of the epic grandeur of the nation” (Smith, 2000, p. 52). The historical narrative of Gandhi (Attenborough, 1982) onscreen serves its purpose of being a visual medium that establishes a
relationship between the film’s imagined national community (i.e. Indians both within the homeland and worldwide diasporas) and their history. According to Smith (2000), even if the film is not an overt piece of propaganda, the work nonetheless provided a “historical map of the national past in order to bind the spectator more firmly to the present national identity” (p. 52). The audience educates themselves about their past via film to delineate and comprehend their present state of cultural and nationalistic identity. By understanding who the audience is in relation to the nation, it can be determined who has membership in the imagined community and who does not.

**DEKADA ’70 AS A NATIONALIST PROJECT**

Director Chito S. Roño’s (2002) film, *Dekada 70*, can certainly be described as a film with not only entertainment value, but historical and political merit as well. With scenes depicting student rallies, the singing of the Philippine national anthem and real news footage of President Marcos’ televised speeches, the film successfully captures the socio-political instability of 1970s Philippines. Critics reviewing the film agree that the director does good work on this historical piece of capturing certain events and scenes that define the era of martial law. A review from *Ang Bayan* states that, “*Dekada 70* well reflected conditions and events under the US-Marcos fascist regime – the widespread and intense suppression, brutality and human rights violations as well as the people’s fierce resistance. In a simple but clear manner, the film mirrored the social and political crisis during the dictatorship that gave rise to the surging mass movement and a burgeoning revolutionary movement” (Ang Bayan, 2003). In combination with various film techniques and spellbinding narratives, the director manages to recreate visual memories of a particular period in Philippine social and political history to bring about a sense of community and nationalistic pride amongst the viewers, whether they lived through the events or not.

One of the ways Roño (2002) creates community is having multiple scenes depicting demonstrations. The film opens and ends with scenes from one of the anti-Marcos demonstrations, implying that protest is a key political and social tool that government dissenters employ to make themselves heard amidst an environment of political and social oppression. The director shoots powerful scenes of citizens openly challenging their authoritative government to bring audiences together and make them feel as if they are
witnessing something historically important. The director does not just recreate past rallies, but evokes emotions such as pride in audiences watching the scenes unfold before their eyes. One of the first protests in the film occurs in 1971, where students rally and criticize the authoritativeness of the university institution. Students voice their concerns about issues such as increased tuition fees or cutting certain student services, and the university’s administrative sector would shut the students down. What is interesting about this particular scene is the student at the center of the rally holding the megaphone and saying aloud that the university is a space for truth and enlightenment instead of a place for profit, is Kris Aquino. Using a popular, contemporary personality such as Kris Aquino and placing her in a film where she channels the beliefs and principles of her famous father, allows the audience (i.e. audience members who did not experience martial law because they probably were not born yet) to establish a connection with the socio-political message playing out on the screen. Utilizing a current, recognizable public figure and putting her in a past context, younger and older audiences alike can find ways to relate to the protest scene onscreen.

The second protest scene also takes place in 1971 in front of what looks to be the presidential palace, Malacañang Palace; however, this time, there seems to be many more people involved. At one point, the camera does a panoramic shot to show the large number of protestors that come out to march. As the crowd shouts chants like, “Down with imperialism!” and “Down with feudalism!” the camera focuses on the protestors’ faces as they shout, especially Jules, and then follow up with lingering shots of the armed guards. The camera does not focus on the faces of the armed guards as with the protestors; instead, the shots focus on their weapons. It is as if the guards are merely tools the government uses to control political dissenters, so by only focusing on their weapons, the audience can disconnect the weapon from the person holding the weapon. In a way, only focusing on the weapons makes the audience distance themselves from the guards and identify more with the protestors because they are shown as real people. When it seems like the guards begin to get

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6 Kris Aquino is the daughter of well-known Philippine historical figures, Corazon and Ninoy Aquino. Ninoy Aquino was an outspoken politician and political rival of Ferdinand Marcos. Because he was such a threat to Marcos, Ninoy Aquino was one of the first political dissidents to be imprisoned upon the declaration of martial law. Corazon “Cory” Aquino was the figurehead that led the anti-Marcos demonstrations after the assassination of her husband, Ninoy. She would later become the first female president of the Philippines in 1986.
ready for a confrontation, with several officers preparing their riot gear, the camera pans to the protestors as they raise their right fists and sing the country’s national anthem. By doing so, the demonstrators want to let the armed guards know that they are rallying peacefully with no violent intentions. It is also a way to remind the guards, and audience as well, that they are all Filipino regardless of which side they stood on in relation to the Marcos regime. However, violence erupts anyway. When violence breaks out between the protestors and guards, the action appears in slow motion (most likely from the film’s editing) to enhance the expressive effects of the shots (Bordwell & Thompson, 2001). The singing of the national anthem prior to the violence is quite an intensive way to evoke feelings of nationalism and community. Yet, that sense of community being established works in several ways – the filmmaker intends to establish connections between the demonstrators and guards, and then with the audience and demonstrators. By continuing to shoot the scene in slow motion as the guards beat protestors with batons, the filmmaker wants the audience to feel the pain of struggle while simultaneously feel a sense of pride that their fellow Filipinos sacrifice their safety for a cause they believe in.

Aside from showing particular events in Philippine history, such as demonstrations, to forge ties of community and national pride, the film serves another purpose – being a piece of nationalistic cinema. This means that the film is not just another mainstream, blockbuster release by Star Cinema; it is a historical text to conjure up emotions and memories for those viewing the narrative onscreen. One of the ways national cinema brings out emotion in audiences is through the visual development of creating an ethnic atmosphere, sort of like a montage of nationalistic moving pictures (Smith, 2000). For example, the scene introducing the year 1972 opens with actual television footage of President Marcos declaring martial law. As the Bartolomes gather in the family room, all eyes and ears tune into the television as the president makes the important announcement. With tension rising in the room, each family member has a look of worry and fear etched on their faces.

Following the announcement, the next segment of the scene consists of the family burning all of Jules’ leftist paraphernalia and his parents closely monitoring his activities. Amanda and Julian know that the declaration of martial law heightens the risk of their activist son being taken by authorities. Throughout the next few segments of the scene, President Marcos’ voice plays in the background as he states what exactly will happen to the
country under martial law. A montage of images consisting of Filipinos trying to carry on their daily lives ensues. Although the president reassures the country that martial law is for protection and there is no military takeover, a strong sense of uneasiness becomes apparent among the citizens. Schools temporarily close, jeep drivers only take passengers up until the state enforced curfew, and the police patrol at night to enforce curfew and bring in truants. Juxtaposing these images of changes in Philippine society with the voice of President Marcos brings the audience back to that particular place in time to view the historic event. The audience hears the real declaration at the same time the Bartolomes do because the filmmaker wants them to feel just as fearful as those that actually experienced the event. For audience members that experienced martial law, seeing and hearing the footage again allows them to relive that particular collective memory in their nation’s history, along with the strong emotions that memory comes with. Seeing the footage of Marcos stirs various emotions – nostalgia for Marcos supporters, or perhaps anger among those that experienced the harsh realities of living under the militarized state. Regardless of where each audience member stands in relation to the scene, and the project as a whole, they consume a piece of history by watching this piece of national cinema.

Amidst a politically charged atmosphere, the audience is supposed to develop a connection between the imagery onscreen and their own understanding of national identity by being able to relate to the characters’ struggles. The experience of struggle can be considered universal, but the context varies. One way in which the film constructs shared memories of struggle is the recounting of violence. After Jules is captured and tortured in prison, authorities finally allow him to visit with his family. While visiting with his parents and brothers, Jules proudly recounts his experience of militarized violence. As he speaks about the violence, alternating flashbacks of the incident appear – Jules talks in one shot and the next shot is of the violence, with the pattern of shots continuing until the end of the visit. The imagery consists of Jules being beaten while questioned by authorities, being restrained to a metal bed frame before electrocution, and lying naked on huge slabs of ice with electric fans to heighten the freezing sensation. The torture is meant to punish him for challenging the government; however, the difficult struggles do not break him. Jules survives. He survives the torture through years of mental conditioning and faith that what he is doing is for his fellow, oppressed Filipinos. Even if members of the audience do not know firsthand what
it feels like to be exposed to such violence, they can at least relate to experiences of struggle. Seeing another Filipino onscreen struggle and overcome the struggle brings out feelings of pride and accomplishment. If we go back to anti-colonial movements and anti-U.S. imperialism rallies, we see that facing struggles has been a big part of Philippine history and the shaping of national identity.

Another scene that depicted the act of shaping national identity is the one where victims and their families record their experiences with militarized violence under martial law. After the scene described in the previous paragraph with the Bartolomes visiting Jules in prison, the film transitions into a sort of history making scene. At first, the audience sees only one person writing with a voice in the background reciting what is being written. Then the camera pans out to reveal several others writers, and with more writers come more voices. The voices and the shots of people writing blend into each other, and create a web of shared traumatic memories. The audience does not know whether those telling their stories are victims of violence or family members of victims – it is mainly a sea of voices. In a way, the director does that to show that martial law violence affects everyone. It does not matter whether you are a direct victim or a family member of those victimized, because violence touches the lives of so many people. By having these individuals write out their stories, they not only make those experiences tangible memories that can be read by others, but they also add their unique perspectives to national history. Recording the violence and making sure it stays in the national memory not only contributes to the discourse on the martial law period in contemporary times, but allows people to shape their national identity. The government tries to do it for the citizens through authoritarianism, but only causes oppression. Thus, citizens having the control to write their memories allow them to share the power in shaping national identity through the building and preservation of collective national memory through the creation of archives. Future generations, such as those in the audience watching the film, can read those stories of trauma, and have those experiences affect their perspectives as to what it means to be Filipino in the past and present. This connection done through the consumption of the film then enables the spectator to develop and further understand their nationalistic identity vis-à-vis the national cinema, which becomes another form of historical archiving (Schlesinge, 2000; Smith, 2000).
In order to fulfill a nationalistic agenda, the filmmaker employs several techniques to intensify the film’s narrative while forging common histories and memories of the past. If members of a nation find commonalities with each other, including with those onscreen, and not focus on their differences (i.e. class, educational level, sex, gender, etc.), they can create a common national identity that may be called upon at some point for political and/or social mobilizations. Good examples of this in the film are the scenes of protest and the collective action of creating and preserving traumatic memories through writing and voice. Hayward (2000) echoes the importance of a common history for nationalism, where she writes: “Nationalism’s investment in history to create its nation and its identity means that the modern nation is built on shared memories of some past or pasts that can mobilize and unite its members. Memory is then very much bound to the notion of place, to a homeland and therefore an identity. Memory… is crucial to identity” (p. 90). It is this memory and history of common struggle depicted in the film that brings together individuals to form a common Filipino national identity regardless of their historical, social, political, or physical location. By witnessing history, seeing historical figures, and listening to voices of the past, audiences that watch the film can make connections between themselves and the narrative. They do not simply watch another mainstream film; instead, they consume a nationalistic project chronicling an important event in Philippine history that shaped the way they conceptualize their Filipino identities.

**Feminist Film Theory**

The realm of cinematic space has many possibilities for various subjectivities – the individual watching the narrative onscreen can be female, male, heterosexual, homosexual, Asian, Black, etc. Yet, the subject or spectator in traditional film discourse is been male, white and heterosexual. Since traditional film discourse characterizes the normalized spectator as such, traditional film theory teaches us to watch film from the dominant point of view regardless of the subjects’ varying identities. Realistically, though, one’s background, life experiences, and different identities influence how one watches and interprets a film. Feminist film theorists such as Claire Johnston (1999), Laura Mulvey (1999), and B. Ruby Rich (1999) point out the necessity in deconstructing film subjectivities and critically looking at gendered relations not just between sexes on screen, but also between the spectator and
screen object. In Mulvey’s (1999) essay, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” she discusses how traditional film discourse does not consider women as ‘true’ spectators in that they do not possess the power of gazing. Apparently, only males can gaze and take pleasure in looking at objects onscreen (Mulvey, 1999). When women watch the same films as men, there is an understanding that the way they watch the film and relate to the visual narrative as men do. Even if there is a woman onscreen, traditional film discourse prevents the female spectator from identifying with her theoretically. Women onscreen have two functions – to be the erotic object of the (male) character in the film’s narrative and to, also, be the erotic object of the (male) spectator watching the film (Mulvey, 1999, p. 63). Thus, if a woman watches another woman onscreen, she cannot necessarily relate to her as an equal, but more so like a (male) subject exerting their power of gazing at the female object.

Johnston (1999) reiterates Mulvey’s (1999) assessment of women’s connection to film and notes that women in cinema do not necessarily signify women themselves, but instead signify objects rooted in the male gaze (Johnston, 1999, p. 33). Women watching other women onscreen find commonalities between themselves and their visual counterparts; however, due to the prevalence of the male gaze, the women onscreen are relegated to simple objects of desire without consideration for further character development in the film narrative. Simply put, spectators cannot identify with onscreen women since they are not protagonists. Rich (1999) adds that women in film (and to a certain extent the female spectator), are repeatedly “‘seduced into femininity’ by cinematic narratives that reinforce their positioning as passive/object” (p. 56). Although acknowledging the dominant androcentric ideology in film aesthetics, feminist film theorists like Johnston (1999) and Rich (1999) see film as an opportunity to question the male gaze and bring to light women’s oppression both on and off-screen. Film, either avant-garde alternative cinema or mainstream cinema, can be used to shed light on women’s oppression in addition to being used as a means to interrogate traditional male gaze and ideology (Johnston, 1999, p. 37). Feminist film theory provides an alternative paradigm for examining film and discussing the relationship(s) between women as object onscreen and the possibility of women as spectators. Creating a space in film discourse for feminist perspectives produces different narratives and realities for looking at women’s realities on and off-screen. Feminist film
critique interrupts and deconstructs the male gaze, and forces traditional film theory to open up the space of spectatorship to be more inclusive.

Feminist film theory may be beneficial to film discourse in dialoguing about women’s relationship to film; however, it has its limitations. A particular limitation of feminist film theory and traditional cinematic discourse in general is its focus on Western, mainstream cinema and the contextual meanings behind the subject/object frameworks of looking from this perspective. The production of dominant film theory and feminist film theory comes primarily from writers located in the West with a Hollywood bias. However, international film, particularly third world cinema, does not ascribe to Western film narratives. For example, third world cinematic themes often consist of anti-imperialist narratives, revolts and revolutions, national pride, and even critiquing nationalism itself. Third world cinema theory actually comes from Latin America as a response to worldwide liberation struggles and decolonization movements (Guneratne, 2003, p. 3). This alternative cinematic theory provides a paradigm for non-Western film theorists to make sense of and develop discourse around filmmakers recording the social and political upheavals occurring in their countries, while simultaneously challenging Euro-American imperialist epistemologies regarding film theory. Simply applying a theoretical film framework based on Western ideologies is somewhat incompatible to critically analyzing third world cinema – Western film theory (even feminist film theory) concepts do not necessarily have the ability to be transnational. In fact, Guneratne (2003), quoting scholar Robert Stam, calls the application of Western film theory on third world cinema “critical imperialism” (p. 10). Because of the limitations of traditional film theory and marginalization of third world cinema, third world cinema theory is developed to provide the language and framework to look at non-Western film.

Although third world cinema theory can be used to analyze third world film, that does not necessarily mean that this alternative film theory is more open to gender equality than Western tradition. Guneratne (2003) mentions that third world cinema usually favors male filmmakers over women filmmakers, and addressing the ‘gender question’ is not a priority for film theorists (p. 17). Negating the question of gender and women’s subjectivity in third world cinema requires the same interrogation Western feminists bring to traditional film theory. However, third world feminist film critiques cannot look at third cinema with the same framework as Western feminists because of histories regarding colonialism,
imperialism, and Euro-centrism. Third world feminists develop feminist frameworks that consciously refused a “Eurocentric universalizing of ‘womanhood’ and even feminism” (Shohat, 2003, p. 52). According to Shohat (2003), third world feminist discourse is not based on a concept of global sisterhood, but rather epistemologies contextualized within anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles. It is quite difficult to engage in any kind of discourse, particularly third cinema theory, without taking into account the intersections of nation, race and gender. Having third world feminist film theory, then, becomes beneficial in analyzing third world films that are not necessarily nationalistic or anti-imperialist, but rather critical of a nation’s failure in adequately addressing gender inequality and adverse effects of patriarchal institutions on women. Shohat (2003) comments that, “The view of the nation as unitary muffles the ‘polyphony’ of social and ethnic voices within heteroglot cultures. Third-world feminists, especially, have highlighted the ways in which the subject of the third-world nationalist revolution has been covertly posited as masculine and heterosexual” (p. 57).

Although women in nations that have had recent revolutions and successful decolonization struggles are told by (male) nationalist leaders to put the state first and wait their turn regarding gender struggles, third world feminists find that not addressing gender inequality and not critically interrogating the state is counterproductive in post-colonial or post-revolution nation building projects. Women’s subjectivities and perspectives must be included in not just film theory in the Western context, but in third world cinema theory as well, because women’s point of view tends to provide a more gendered approach to nationalist and racial aspects in both onscreen and off-screen realities.

**Gendering Dekada ’70**

As previously mentioned, film is a tool used for evoking powerful feelings of nationalism through historical imagery and narratives while encouraging audiences to reflect on their own sense of nationalist identities. *Dekada ’70* (Roño, 2002) captures the Philippines during the 1970s when politics and society are active and unstable. In addition to the historical and political aspects of the film, gender is another key concept featured onscreen. Although the audience sees a fair amount of the violence, protests and activisms occurring in that particular period, spectators also see how characters negotiate their gender roles amidst all the chaos around them. Not only do public institutions change during martial
law, such as education, government offices, the military, and even the church, but also private institutions like marriage and motherhood. The audience witnesses the changes in the private sphere through the evolving familial and gendered relationships between the Bartolomes. If we examine the course of the relationship between Amanda and Julian from the beginning of the film to the end, we notice the shift of gender roles in their marriage. For example, in the beginning of the film, Julian clearly defines his role as the male head of the his upper-middle class household. He sits at the head of the table during family dinners to signify his place at home, decides what his wife can and cannot do (i.e. working outside the home), and sets the tone between gender relations at home. Amanda, too, has her gender role at home defined as well. She cares for her children like a good mother, makes sure the household runs smoothly with the help of the family maid, and plays the part of the ‘perfect’ wife for Julian. After experiencing martial law and the infiltration of militarism into their home, their concepts of gender change. Julian feels his influence over the family slip, while Amanda experiences an awakening that causes her to question her place at home and in Philippine society.

The early scenes of the film set the tone for gender hierarchy in the Bartolome home – Julian is the man of the house and his wife is the subordinate spouse. In one early scene, the family hosts a dinner and barbeque for their friends. The scene shows Amanda being a good host, where she brings out food, makes sure the guests are comfortable, and converses lightly with the other wives. Julian, on the other hand, sits at the table with the other men discussing politics. As the men discuss President Marcos, the Vietnam War, and other politicians, Amanda stops being a hostess for a moment to participate in the men’s conversation. However, her attempt at engaging the men in conversation about traditionally masculine topics such as war and politics fails. The men barely acknowledge her comment and try to politely disengage her from the conversation. Her husband sits beside her with an annoyed expression on his face, never attempting to include his wife in the dinner conversation. When the other men change the subject, Julian turns away from his wife and begings conversing with the men again. Not only does he openly dismiss her from the conversation, but marginalizes her as well. The scene ends with Amanda looking awkward and uncomfortable at her own dinner party. She looks embarrassed for having been politely ignored by the men, but she cannot do anything because she has to save face and continue
being the good wife. The scene is not just about keeping women like Amanda away from conversing about ‘manly topics’ like politics; rather, it is a scene that lets the audience and Amanda know her place in Julian’s eyes and in patriarchal Philippine society. Just as Rich (1999) mentions about women’s roles in film, she is the passive object for the lead male character to control and oppress.

In another scene that takes place at the family dinner table, the seating arrangement hints at the status of the family members in the home. At the head of the table sits Julian to symbolize that he was the head of the family. To his right sits Amanda, to symbolize her role as his companion and lifelong assistant. To his left is his oldest son, Jules. The rest of the boys fill out the rest of the table, with the youngest son, Bingo, sitting next to his mother. The scene depicts a nuclear family having a normal dinner – the boys converse amongst themselves and Amanda help her youngest feed himself. However, when Jules brings up the topic of the neighborhood teenage girls going after him and Gani because the girls wanted to ‘do it’ with them, Amanda does not know how to respond. Her sons want her to talk to the girls’ mothers about intervening, but before Amanda can finish gathering more information about what it means to ‘do it,’ Julian takes over the situation. He stands up and informs his family about his opinion on the matter: “It won’t be long and they’ll be officially part of this world [looking towards Jules and Gani]. A world where you women are like leaves withering away, waiting for a smile or to be noticed by us [men]. Until we take pity on you and bring you along to our world of happiness and joy. There’s nothing you can do. That’s the way things are. It’s a man’s world (Roño, 2002)!" As he finishes his last statement, he raises his glass, indicating that his sons follow his lead, and cheers. In that dialogue, Julian basically states that women are sexual objects of men. Women onscreen and off are simply there to be consumed by the male gaze and male desire (Mulvey, 1999). Because it was a man’s world, according to Julian, women serve as objects to bring pleasure to men. Amanda cannot stand up and challenge her husband because of her gendered location in Philippine patriarchal society. Challenging her husband at the dinner table, especially, means challenging the status quo regarding gender hierarchy. She is in no position to question her husband, so she keeps quiet and resigns herself to being the only woman in her home. She has no voice amongst the men. As the scene ends, the camera briefly focuses on the lost look on Amanda’s face before focusing on Julian and boys clinking their glasses, celebrating their
masculinity. Just like the men in the scene, the camera marginalizes Amanda by no longer focusing on her to emphasize the gender difference and highlight the hierarchy in the private sphere.

The dinner scene transitions into the breakfast scene where we find just Amanda and Julian at the table. Without their children, it seems that the couple can converse amiably. That is how the scene starts anyway. As Julian reads the daily paper, Amanda brightly brings up the idea of her getting a paid position outside their home. Not paying attention to his wife, Julian gives her a noncommittal response when she begins to describe the job she want to apply for. However, when she reveals that she had discussed the matter already with one of his friends, Julian puts the paper down to actually process his wife’s words. While Amanda tries giving her reasons for wanting to work, her husband cannot get over the fact that she consulted a friend of his regarding her employment desires. Instead of looking at his wife’s desire to work as an added income to the family or an opportunity for her to have some sort of economic independence, he sees it as an attack on his masculinity. Julian reacts combatively towards Amanda. Trying to calmly explain why she wants to work, Julian continues to be angry with her. He shuts down and stops listening. He then cuts Amanda off and yells, “Tell me, am I not earning enough? What is it that I can’t give you? You will never take a job as long as I am the man of this house! And that’s final (Roño, 2002)!” He gets up from the table and slams the morning paper down, indicating that the conversation is officially over. He does not want Amanda actively participating in the public sphere; instead, he wants her to stay home. By staying home and relying on him for her financial well-being and sense of worth, Amanda is trapped in the institution of marriage where she will always be stationed beneath her husband. The fact that Julian feels he has the right to close the communication lines between himself and his wife reveal that he does not see her as an equal or value her as an independent person. Amanda is just his wife and the mother of his sons, nothing more.

When martial law happens, the traditional gender roles at the Bartolome home become more pronounced – Julian tightens his grip on his family to maintain some semblance of control and order, while Amanda continues to be the ideal Filipina wife and mother. An ironic aspect about the way Julian confronts the chaos in the political and social structures in the public sphere is that he institutes his own form of militarism into the
household. He tries to prevent state sanctioned militarism from coming into his personal territory, but fails. For example, after burning all of Jules’ leftist reading materials and propaganda, Julian guards the doors and front gate himself to prevent his son from meeting with other activists. In addition, he closely monitors his son’s phone calls to make sure Jules does not talk to his Communist comrades. His quasi-militaristic behavior is to protect his domain. The heightening of traditional gender roles is not a surprise. Enloe (2000) mentions that in times of conflict, men become more masculinized while women become more feminized. That way hierarchies are established where masculinity dominates femininity (Chenoy, 2002; Enloe, 2000). When war and conflict break out, men have to be strong and fight. It is imperative for a man to adopt hyper-masculinized practices (i.e. violence) and shed all weak, feminized traits (i.e. peacefulness and compassion) (Enloe, 2000).

Even though Amanda plays the role of wife and mother accordingly at the outset of martial law, she also begins posing subtle challenges to her husband and their gender roles at home. As Julian works to maintain control, his wife starts opening her mind to alternative ways of conceptualizing traditional roles for men and women. This is in due part to her exposure to Jules’ politics and having another woman in the house when Gani’s wife, Evelyn, moves in. Watching Gani and Evelyn’s marriage struggle makes Amanda feel sorry for her daughter in-law for marrying and becoming a mother at a young age. When Gani leaves for the United States, Evelyn goes back to her natal home. Amanda says to her, “It’s not easy being a mother. It’s not easy to be a woman” (Roño, 2002). Instead of agreeing with her, Evelyn replies, “No, Mom. We chose to make our lives difficult. The choice is really ours” (Roño, 2002). In the exchange, the audience sees the generational difference in the approach to marriage and motherhood. While Amanda was conditioned to believe that she had no choice but to submit herself in perpetuating the traditional roles ascribed to women, Evelyn believes she has other options such as outside employment and ending an unfulfilling marriage.

After the scene between Amanda and Evelyn, we see how the conversation affects Amanda when she broaches the topic of couples separating to Julian. The conversation takes place while the family enjoys a beach outing. The Philippines is still under martial law, but the Bartolomes still live as much of a normal life as possible. The following is the transcript of the dialogue between Amanda and Julian:
Amanda: Julian, what do you think about couples who separate?  
Julian: Who’s separating? Who wants to separate from whom?  
Amanda: Let’s say it’s the woman.  
Julian: Is the man jobless? Is he irresponsible? Does he hurt her?  
Amanda: There’s nothing wrong with the husband. He’s nice.  
Julian: Then why? Does he have a mistress? Is he a drunkard? A gambler?  
Amanda: No.  
Julian: She must be crazy to leave her husband for no reason.  
Amanda: Sometimes a woman just falls out of love.  
Julian: I thought there’s nothing wrong with the husband. Why would she lose her affection?  
Amanda: Sometimes a woman wants to do other things, besides being a wife.  
Julian: Like what?  
Amanda: Like having a job.  
Julian: I thought the man has a job.  
Amanda: Having a job is not always about the money.  
Julian: What else could it be about?  
Amanda: It’s also about a sense of being, of self-worth.  
Julian: This conversation is going nowhere. Why don’t you just tell us who is leaving who.  
Amanda: Evelyn. She’s sorry but she and Gani have separated. They’ve already decided on it before Gani left. (Roño, 2002)

In the entire exchange, Julian thinks Amanda may hypothetically leave him and provides ‘logical’ reasons as to why a woman cannot leave a good man such as himself. He thinks that if there is nothing wrong with the husband, then the wife should not have any problems either. Amanda tries to explain to him that relationships sometimes run their course and are not so simple – they are quite complicated. Not all wives have to stay married to their husbands if they are not satisfied. When she brings up the job issue, again he shut down, thinking his masculinity is being threatened. He cannot quite grasp that a job is not just about money, but a necessity for feeling like a productive member of society regardless of gender. However, because of Julian’s set ways in upholding traditional values and roles regarding gender and marriage, he cannot see the situation through Amanda’s eyes. He is also not willing to look at relationships between men and women beyond the traditional scope of marriage, because it questions the beliefs Philippine society has ingrained into him and he cannot accept that.
RAISING AMANDA’S NATIONALIST AND FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS

The progression of martial law brings along with it the development of Amanda Bartolome’s consciousness as a nationalist and, to some degree, a feminist. Witnessing civil society go into an authoritarian lockdown, hearing about the violence inflicted on Filipino citizens by military personnel, and personally experiencing the tragedy of state sanctioned abuse on her children takes its toll on Amanda. When she sees how easily the state can violate the rights of citizens under the guise of protection against domestic threats, she realizes that she can no longer give her full support to an authoritative government. Her son, Jules, plays a role in awakening her nationalist consciousness because he brings an alternative viewpoint to the political discussions at home. Because of him freely expressing his leftist politics, his mother hears a different political voice than the conservative, nationalistic views of her husband, Julian.

Following the scene taking place in 1976 when a truckload of armed guards show up to the Bartolome home with a search and arrest order for Jules, Amanda has a deep conversation with her son Em about Jules. As Em types away at another article, Amanda says to him, “You know, when the soldier said that your brother holds a key position in the rebel movement, I felt so proud. Imagine… Jules is a political officer! He really excels in everything he does, just like you” (Roño, 2002). Although her son is participating in a dangerous conflict against the Philippine government, Amanda is still a proud mother because she has a son who fights for a noble cause. What is interesting to note about this particular scene is that as Em and Amanda talk, the audience hears bits and pieces of a news radio broadcast about the political relations between the Philippines and United States. As with the original footage of President Marcos’ televised speeches, the radio news broadcast adds another element of authenticity to the film and adds more to the nationalistic tensions brewing in the Bartolome home. After a moment of silence, Amanda gets Em’s attention and makes a profound, consciousness raising statement about the socialist cause Jules fights for. She says to him, “I realize that your brother could be right after all… in saying that if people don’t take action… who will? If not now, when?” (Roño, 2002). Em grins at his mother’s epiphany about the state of things in Philippine society. Amanda is surprised at her own words and tries to pass it off as her working through jumbled thoughts in her head, but she
cannot take back her opinion. In a way, it is somewhat awkward hearing her voice express a thought or opinion differing from her husband’s. Yet, here she is talking to her son and saying aloud that people need to fight against the injustices the government has done to its own citizens. What she does not know then is that she will be one of those citizens openly challenging the government.

After Jason’s brutal murder, the relationship between Julian and Amanda becomes filled with more tension and conflict than before. Some of that tension stems from the loss of their son, but most of it has been growing for years in the way Julian has treated his wife. Since Amanda is merely his wife and mother to his children, he can control her and her sexuality (Rich, 1995). When Amanda informs her husband that she intends to take action by trying to bring their son’s death to the attention of the Philippine Defense Minister, he scoffs at her idea. He angrily yells at her, “Goddamn it Amanda! It’s just not your son! Thousands are being killed! They are tortured, murdered, evicted, prostituted… People are being killed every day. Fathers, mothers, children are being killed in a thousand and one ways, Amanda (Roño, 2002)!” Julian does not want to pursue the matter to the extent Amanda does because it challenges his faith in the justness of the state and he believes that the state will not do much anyway because their son is just a civilian. He does not want his wife openly accusing government authorities over Jason’s death because it is almost the norm under the militarized state for citizens to mysteriously disappear or die. However, Amanda is hurt and disappointed with her husband’s response. She needs to fight for not only Jason, but for those who have suffered the same tragic fate.

The segment that follows is of Amanda and her daughters-in-law, Evelyn and Mara7, sitting by Jason’s grave, having an enlightened discussion about the violence and injustice going on around them. Amanda questions what kind of men torture and kill their fellow citizens, what kind of police officers and soldiers turn against the countrymen that they have vowed to protect. Mara informs her mother-in-law that men are programmed to violence by

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7 Mara is Jules’ wife. According to clues in the film, they apparently met during his time in the countryside fighting with the CPP. Mara is also an activist and has dedicated her life to the same political and social causes as Jules. She is a revolutionary mother, literally and figuratively, in that she is actively participating in the leftist movement to raise awareness and fight against political, economic and social oppression.
their cultures; and Amanda retorts that women are programmed to be helpless (Chenoy, 2002; Enloe, 2000; Ruddick, 1989). Just as she did with Em, Amanda has another conscious-raising moment regarding her status as a wife and mother as she reflects on the situation with Jason and how Julian seems to not care about her feelings on the matter. Amanda says to Mara and Evelyn:

All my life, I’ve been told there’s nothing I can do. This is what your husband wants. There’s nothing you can do. This is your fate. You can do nothing about it because… Damn it! It shouldn’t be like that. Then your dad tells me that my son wasn’t the only one killed, the only one abducted. I get frustrated and angry. Because if you’re really a mother, you don’t just bear children. You have to defend them, too. You have to be able to protect them. All I want to know is why they killed my son! My son is a good boy! (Roño, 2002)

In the monologue, Amanda has a revelation about her status as a woman and role as a mother in society. Because of her female gender, she has been groomed and taught that her place in life will always be subordinate to men. She has to shape her behavior, beliefs and attitude to please the men around her, especially her husband. Amanda is conditioned to live not for herself, but for others in her life, particularly men. In that moment of clarity, she realizes that she is tired of living up to the expectations society has placed on her sex. She is fed up and angry with Julian for not treating her like an equal, for not treating her with the respect she deserves. As a mother, she feels responsible for not doing enough to save her son. Amanda tries to be the ideal mother through constant love and support of her children, but even her hard work cannot prevent her son’s violent death. Regardless of how much she sacrifices herself into being the perfect wife and mother, she is still not good enough.

With the realization of how much she has lost of herself in her marriage and what the state has taken from her, Amanda thinks it is time to take matters into her own hands and be in a place of control. Thus, she thinks it is imperative to leave her husband and fight against the government that has harmed her and her family. However, she knows that leaving Julian will be a challenge. Their confrontation in the kitchen when she tells him of her plans is an indication that leaving is not going to be easy, but necessary for her survival. The following is the dialogue that occurs between Amanda and Julian when she informs him of her intentions to leave:

Julian: What is it you want to talk about? Do you have complaints about me? Or your other sons? Tell me. What is it? What do you want?
Amanda: I want a separation.
Julian: What? Will you say it again? Did I hear you right? My God, Amanda! What’s with you? Are you sick or something? Come on, Mom! If a wife wants to leave her husband, she doesn’t tell him. She just leaves.

Amanda: If she simply leaves, she is not really serious. She wants to shock him. Cajole her to come back. She just wants attention.

Julian: Ok. You did it. You’ve got my attention. You even shocked me. Now, let’s sit down and talk about it, ok? [Uses an angry voice] What is it that you want? Your birthday is coming up. What do you want? Do you want a party? You want jewelry? Take you out to a hotel. Take you abroad? You know I hate playing games! If you want to tell me something, why not just tell me without this childish act! [Julian throws his glass to the ground and Amanda sternly looks at him]

Amanda: Your problem is you think everything can be bought. You’ve never understood me, because to you, I’m just a mother. And I’m not even a good mother! I know. I can read it all over you. Now what? You want to tell it to my face that if I were a good mother, I should have been up all night waiting for my other son? That I should have felt something was wrong with Jason the way I felt it when something happened to Jules? Why don’t you say it to my face that I did not love my sons equally the way I loved my first born! So I can tell you it’s not true! It’s not true! [Amanda is yelling at her husband as she says these things to him, which is powerful because she has never raised her voice to him before.] I just thought my first born needed me most because he always made me worry. That’s all there is to it. No, you’ll never understand that. Because all our lives, your only concern was whether I was doing it right or wrong and behaving according to your own rules and standards. Whether I was exactly the way you wanted me to be.

Julian: Wait a minute…” [Amanda interrupts him before he can finish; she has also never interrupted her husband before now]

Amanda: You wait a minute! I have had enough, Julian! You can just stop being proud of me! I’m tired of all that. This time I want to be proud of myself.” (Roño, 2002)

In the entire heated exchange, Amanda silences her husband for the first time. His anger is clearly visible when she speaks out against him, but he is shocked, too, hearing the forcefulness in her voice as she declares her desire to separate. Julian does not think his wife has the backbone to stand up for herself and demand to leave him. He does not take her seriously at first, but the seriousness in Amanda’s tone causes him to panic. For Amanda, her declaration to leave is a clear sign of her new found quasi-feminist consciousness. She no longer wants to feel the weight of oppression that years of being under the patriarchal institution of marriage has placed on her shoulders. She wants to be her own person and not just Julian Bartolome’s wife. She knows that staying in the marriage under Julian’s control
will cause her to lose more of herself in the relationship. Thus, in order to find her own voice and her own sense of self, she has to physically remove herself from the watchful eyes of her husband. This means that she has to leave home. Amanda has her own opinions, desires, and beliefs; and she finally feels that she has every right to pursue her interests freely.

**WHAT IS NEXT FOR AMANDA BARTOLOME?**

The film portrays Amanda Bartolome as a woman locating herself amidst the socio-political struggles of martial law, while coming to the realization of her own personal gendered oppression at home. Because of the instability and militarized environment in civil society, both men and women reevaluate their relationship to the state and to each other. Although Julian and Amanda’s relationship does not universally reflect gender relations in the Philippines during this time, it does provide an example of how one couple deals with the changes to both public and private institutions. The nationalistic overtones of the film ignite feelings of pride amongst the audience for having survived such a fearful time in Philippine civil society. Through certain film techniques – flashbacks, controlled speed of action, and real historical footage – mixed in with a strong narrative, the audience experiences a part of Philippine history. Not only do they see history, but Amanda’s journey toward a nationalist and feminist consciousness. By witnessing how a wife and mother come to the understanding of state oppression and inevitably her own, the audience experiences how the changes of traditional concepts of gender can come about during times of conflict. In intense situations, such as living under an authoritarian regime both in the public and domestic spheres, individuals like Amanda must reexamine their life and relationships in order to survive. The realization of their oppression comes with a new kind of knowledge and motivation to take control of their lives. Although Amanda lives a materially comfortable life with her husband, she is not truly living because she is not free. Her livelihood and existence depend on her husband and sons. Upon coming to terms with this new knowledge, she realizes that in order to start living her own life, she has to take action and become an active member of society on her own terms. Amanda coming into her nationalist and feminist awakening is not the conclusion of her story. Rather, it is just the beginning. In the upcoming chapter, I will discuss how Amanda and other mothers use their traditional roles for entrance into the politicized public space for societal change.
CHAPTER 4
MOTHERING AND MILITARISM: FORGING A NEW FEMINIST AND NATIONALIST CONSCIOUSNESS

Dekada ’70 (Roño, 2002) opens with a scene that depicted a mass demonstration – hordes of people pumping their fists in the air, holding signs and yellow banners, and chanting. However, the viewers cannot hear what the protestors are yelling or any of the chanting. Instead, the spectators listen to a monologue given by the film’s main protagonist, Amanda Bartolome, before actually meeting her. As the camera slowly pans across the screen, capturing the images of passionate anti-Marcos protestors, Amanda’s poetic, yet powerful, voice can be heard. In a calm tone, she says to the audience,

They say the hand that rocks the cradle, is the hand that rears a newborn infant into childhood, that teaches the child to explore, question and reason, until he becomes a citizen of his country. But, she who rocks the cradle is also a citizen. She shouldn’t be confined to her small room for she also belongs to the world. She shouldn’t only rock the cradle, but row the boat along the sea of change.

(Roño, 2002)

As the viewer got their initial glimpse of Amanda in this historical narrative, one does not assume that such a simple looking woman would have the makings of an outspoken nationalist or perhaps even a feminist. Based on the camera’s initial shot of Amanda, she merely blended in with the thousands of the demonstrators. However, if the viewer listened intently to the words of her monologue, the spectator could determine that there was more to this woman than meets the eye. As discussed in the previous chapter, Amanda was a woman with various identities that made up her whole person – she was a woman, wife, mother, nationalist, and one could even argue, a feminist. Although it took personal tragedy to come to her nationalist and feminist consciousness, she nonetheless developed them. For a fair portion of the film, Amanda bought into the cult of domesticity and played the role of wife and mother to fulfill prescribed gender roles. Yet, the more the audience got to know her and witness how she adapted to the changes of both her public and private lives, the more her
subtle fortitude was respected and appreciated. She may have played the good wife and mother to fulfill familial and social duties, but also did them as a duty to her nation. To be recognized as a good citizen of the Philippine state, she had to raise her children and maintain the domestic sphere to strengthen the nation. However, when the nation was filled with political and social strife during the martial law years that contributed to unraveling her family’s stability, she needed to take action.

Amanda Bartolome may have been a fictional character in a film, however, real women like her have existed. There have been instances in Philippine history where women have gone beyond their prescribed gender roles as wives and mothers to challenge public institutions, such as the state, during critical times in the country’s socio-political history. Instead of staying silent like “ideal” women and ignoring the systematic oppression around them, women like Amanda made the conscious decision to utilize their roles and identities as women, wives and mothers for positive change. For example, Melchora Aquino (more commonly known as Tandang Sora) helped the Katipunans8 in their revolutionary movement against Spain in the 1890s, Gabriela Silang took over rebel forces from her husband upon his death fighting against the Spaniards, and Felipa Culala (also known as Kumander Dayang-Dayang) led anti-Japanese guerrilla movements during the Japanese occupation (1941-1944) (“Mothers of History,” 2006). Under the Marcos regime, women from Cordillera had stopped government bulldozers and armed soldiers from constructing the Chico River Dam that would have done major damage to their towns, by going topless while creating a human barricade in 1981 (“Mothers of History,” 2006).

In other parts of the world, women’s groups such as Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and the Mothers of the Association of Families of Detained-Disappeared in Chile during the 1970s and 1980s formed to question their authoritarian governments regarding the disappearances of their children and family members during political unrest. In the United States, anti-war activist and mother, Cindy Sheehan, protested the War on Terror after her

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8 The Kataastaasan Kagalanggalang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan (The Highest and Most Honorable Society of the Sons of the Country), or the Katipunans, were a secret society that played an important role in sparking the armed uprising against the Spaniards in 1896. By spreading revolutionary ideals to other chapters of the society and organizing with other groups, they were able to help the masses turn against the Spaniards in an anti-colonial movement (Ileto, 1979).
son was killed in Iraq in 2004. Then, in Sri Lanka, a group of mothers created the Mother’s Front in the late 1980s to raise awareness of their disappeared sons during the civil war. In each of the aforementioned examples, a common theme among the women was that they all developed their political agency through their traditional roles as mothers. They did not push for reforming gender relations in which women would be equal to men or blatantly challenged their patriarchal societies through feminist frameworks. Instead, they framed their political activities around their identities as women, wives and mothers that demanded social justice. As good citizens in their respective countries, they decided that fighting for their communities and families as women would benefit the nation immensely. Even with differences in their social locations, these women turned their oppressive situations into a transformative ones where they could push for positive changes in their societies.

The following chapter will focus primarily on mothers and how they have utilized their traditional maternalist roles to enter the highly gendered public political space. I will discuss on the social construction of the Filipino mother and how certain socio-political conditions (i.e. martial law) transformed her maternal identity to a nationalist feminist identity as exhibited in Dekada ’70 (Roño, 2002). In addition to discussing how the Filipino mother has been shaped by her history with colonialism and the Catholic Church, I will also use the film as a means to trace how conflict altered women’s roles, especially for mothers. Historically, women have not been completely silent during times of war and conflict. Instead, they have been proactive in pushing for peace and seeking justice for lives that have been affected by institutionalized and militarized violence. Within the chapter, there will be discussions surrounding such topics as the institution of motherhood, patriotic mothering, the politicization of a mother’s grief, and mothers banding together to fight for peace and social justice. After critically examining the film in the previous chapter and then looking at real life cases where mothers became more politically and socially active, we see how they have developed their traditional role(s) into more transgressive ones. With various patriarchal institutions, customs, or religion shaping women’s lives, sometimes it takes drastic events like war and conflict to tease out the nationalist feminist activist lurking beneath the prescribed gender role of mother. It is at pivotal times like militarization that mothers went above and beyond the call of their duties.
CONSTRUCTING THE FILIPINO MOTHER

Just as in other cultures, the family unit has always been an important part of Philippine society. Social gatherings, holidays, or religious activities have tended to center around the family unit. Family has also not been limited to members of one’s immediate family – family included extended family members and close friends. At the heart of the family unit has tended to be the mother or mother figure. Sometimes if the mother of a family was absent, perhaps due to working elsewhere as a migrant laborer, another female member of the family took over the household. As the female head of the household, the mother has been responsible for keeping the family unit together and insuring each member’s well-being. Although pre-colonial Philippine communities or barangays were egalitarian in that males and females were equally valued, there was still an explicit gendered division of labor. While men hunted, fought, tilled the land, and governed, women did the weaving, harvested crops, planted, and cared for the children (Mangahas, 1987, p. 11). Filipino feminist writer Fe Mangahas (1987) emphasized that although Philippine historians valorized women during pre-colonial Spanish times in their role as babaylans or spiritual leaders in their communities, that did not necessarily mean equality for the female gender. Since women had the ability to give life because of biology, their physiology made them the weaker sex. The barangays almost had an essentialist view of women – because they were givers of life, they were automatically maternalistic and did not have the ability to destroy life (Andaya, 2001).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, when the Spaniards came in the 16th century, they brought with them with their Christian faith and Western conceptions of gender. The introduction of Christianity and Spanish patriarchal gender codes harmed women. Instead of living in an egalitarian society, women became subsumed under men. Women’s subjugation was not only practiced in the private domestic sphere, but also institutionalized in the public legal arena. Feliciano (1994) wrote that, “Among the existing family laws at the close of Spanish rule were the Codigo Civil [of] 1889 and the Marriage Law of 1870. The Roman doctrines of patria potestas and pater familias as absolute ruler and the wife’s subordination to the authority of her husband were seen in the several provisions of the Spanish Marriage Law of 1870, the Spanish Code of Commerce of 1845, and the Spanish Civil Law of 1885” (p. 549). The state laws under the Spaniards were not only patriarchal in nature, but blended
in the rules or doctrines of the Catholic Church. Under the marriage laws, once women married their husbands, they legally could not own property and would have to get permission from their husbands if they wanted to work outside the home. By having marriage laws that favored men, both the church and state made the gender hierarchy clear – men ranked higher than women. With support from the church, men could create and enforce gender biased laws. Institutionalizing such laws only reiterated the concept that men belonged in the public sphere where they could appropriate their power in shaping society, and women ought to remain in the private domestic sphere as wives and mothers.

A method of keeping women in their subjugated place under Spanish colonial rule was creating idealized female figures that women had to live up to in order to be labeled “good women.” One of those figures that patriarchal society created was the Maria Clara icon. Originally developed by nationalist writer, Jose Rizal (2006) in his text, *Noli Me Tangere*, the Maria Clara icon became the symbol of ideal Filipina femininity particularly during the revolution against Spain and subsequently thereafter. Hilsdon (1995) described the Maria Clara caricature as a woman who was religious, socially graceful, possessed a sweet disposition, and was innocent, docile, meek, and submissive. Women, especially women of social and economic means, who performed accordingly using the Maria Clara icon as their ideal, were good women. Men developed their version(s) of ideal Filipina femininity as a show of masculine power for controlling women’s images in the public and private spheres. For men to appropriate women’s images was not a sign that they were intending to uplift the female sex; instead, it was done to keep women in their place below the men.

After Spanish colonization ended at the turn of the 20th century, women’s status in Philippine society improved somewhat. For example, under the Americans, women got the right to vote in 1933 and the government passed policies that protected women in the work force. However, these policies resulted in restricting women’s employment opportunities, especially after marriage. The stigma that women belonged at home still permeated

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9 Rizal not only wrote an influential piece of literature in 1887 that raised nationalistic consciousness in the fight for independence against Spain in the late 19th century, but he also developed an idealized image of Filipina femininity in the revolutionary process. The Maria Clara icon, however, applied to upper-middle class and upper class women who had the financial means of being ‘Maria Claras.’
Philippine society. Feliciano (1994) wrote that, “Special protection [policies] was based on the relative physical weakness of the average woman and on her childbearing and maternal functions. Despite the seeming improvement in the status of women, then, the stereotype of women as wives and mothers remained” (p. 550). Women may have been allowed to have careers outside the home, but their primary occupation in life was not to be a doctor or a lawyer – it was to be a wife and mother. Filipino women were socialized to believe that their main objective in their lives was marriage and children (Mangahas, 1987). Going beyond the traditional scope was not widely accepted.

The state has not been the only institution invested in shaping women’s identities, but the Catholic Church as well. Under the Spaniards, the Spanish friars were unnerved about the reverence surrounding the babaylans in native communities and the authority they had presiding over sacred rituals. Coming from a Western patriarchal society, Spanish friars did not see women in high spiritual or religious positions as the ‘norm.’ They viewed the babaylans as obstacles to their mission of Christian conversion, and as threats to their patriarchal conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Once the Spanish took over, the friars and clergy began a campaign of changing native gender norms, where the pre-colonial egalitarian society was transformed into a gender hierarchal one. One method of doing this was demonizing the babaylans and what she represented to the natives. During sermons, friars would label these older women as witches and accuse them of practicing the dark arts. In addition, they would burn amulets, images, or artifacts important to the babaylans in church yards. In some cases, the friars whipped the women that fought back in public to emphasize the power they had over the native babaylan (Mangahas, 1987). Through this sort of gender and religious policing, patriarchal institutions gave women the message that if they strayed from these new gender norms, they would be punished in one form or another.

To replace the babaylan and what she stood for in regards to spirituality and the challenge to androcentric religious institutions, Catholic friars introduced the image of the Virgin Mary or the Madonna. As the Mother of God in the Christian faith, she possessed certain qualities such as kindness, piousness, obedience, care and affection, and virtue. She was also seen as a sacrificial being that put God’s will above her own needs. The Catholic Church used the Virgin Mary/ Madonna image and persona as another example of what women (both Filipino and Spanish) needed follow in order to be characterized as “good
women.” The Virgin Mary not only represented the ideal woman, but more importantly, she represented the ideal mother. Hilsdon (1995) mentioned that the Madonna “designated women’s realm as home, hearth and heaven. She represented women’s informal control over domestic decision making… moral guardianship of husbands, and strong adherence to Catholicism” (p. 38). There was no mention of women’s presence in the public sphere, only the private domestic space. Good women and mothers stayed at home to care for their families, and did not desire to go beyond their designated position in society according to the Catholic Church.

Gebara and Bingemer (1989) have chronicled Marian dogma and her special role in the Catholic conception of maternalism. Labeled a virtuous woman by the Christian religious institution, she was ordained by God to carry Christ in her womb of purity. When she was called upon to carry the child of God, she did not shy away from the command and did all she could to protect the child in her womb. When she eventually gave birth to Christ, she became a symbol of idealized motherhood in the Christian faith. The Virgin Mary was “the mother [that was] an all-embracing symbol that almost always [sent] out positive energy, affection, warmth, understanding, life… This great maternal symbol [had] a name: Mary” (Gebara & Bingemer, 1989, p. 125). The church had canonized the Virgin Mary as what normal, everyday women ought to aspire to become. They created this symbol and “whole tradition of devotion to Mary, emphasizing in particular her role as a virgin, mother par excellence and role model for Catholic women through her exercise of quiet obedience” to male authority (Spencer-Arsenault, 2000, p. 481). Yet, what should be noted was that even the image of the Virgin Mary had been shaped and appropriated by male members of the church to maintain a gender hierarchy to place men above women. Men from the church developed religious doctrine and maternal symbolism to control and shape women’s lives. Apparently, religious men knew more about ideal women and mothers than actual women did.

With the Maria Clara and Virgin Mary/ Madonna icons as templates for motherhood and the state creating laws regarding family and marriage norms, Filipino mothers had institutional and social guides showing them how to be acceptable women, especially ‘good mothers.’ As a result of the gendered socialization through religious and state institutions, most Filipino women internalized patriarchal societal beliefs regarding their roles as wives.
and mothers. For generations, women have been bombarded with images and lectures about women’s proper roles in society. Women have come to see these gender roles as natural and not as a product of socialization.

Filipino feminist and academic Delia Aguilar (1998) conducted a study in the 1980s regarding Filipino women and the work of mothering. Although Aguilar (1998) interviewed nineteen women from various social locations in the Philippines, she found that all the mothers interviewed believed in the conventional role for women as wives and mothers. When women fulfilled their first role of becoming a wife, the second role of mother would naturally follow. These Filipino women shared the belief that once a woman got married, she would automatically want children. The women also shared the belief of what the ideal mother was. According to Aguilar’s (1998) results, the women thought the ideal mother was one who sacrificed herself for her children and family. This belief tied back into how the Virgin Mary was used in perpetuating the ‘ideal mother,’ in that she sacrificed herself to bring Christ into the world. Even if a mother was a squatter that lived in poverty, or an upper-middle class woman (like Amanda Bartolome) who resided in a suburban neighborhood, they had ‘man-made’ ideals of motherhood that they had to live up to. If they did not perform ideal maternal qualities – such as not providing for their children or putting themselves or career ahead of family life – then the women would be considered failures and bad mothers.

What had to be taken into account was that, realistically, mothers could not meet these ideals all the time. Not all mothers had the financial means of staying home to care for their children full-time. Some mothers have even sought employment outside the country to work as nurses or domestic workers in order to support their children in the Philippines. Also, what about mothers living in conflict and militarized zones such as present day Mindanao, and in the past, during the martial law period under Marcos? These women lived with the danger of knowing that their children could be harmed by militarized violence. Although the state and church have created these maternal and feminine ideals for mothers to follow, women could not always follow them because their circumstances might have prevented them from being that ‘good mother.’ As long as men defined ‘ideal motherhood’ and constructed the image of the ‘good mother’ to perpetuate patriarchal institutions (i.e. the
church and state), women could not control this aspect of their identity and could not go beyond their traditional gender roles.

**INSTITUTIONALIZED MOTHERING**

Throughout history and in most societies worldwide, women have primarily been caregivers, especially to their children. Motherhood and mothering has been one of the most daunting tasks women (and sometimes men) have been responsible for. Mothers are responsible for birthing and raising children – they must provide their children with nourishment, shelter, clothing, and care. In addition to being responsible for their children’s well-being, mothers must also ensure their children’s social and emotional development so that they become productive members of their society. Feminist writer and poet Adrienne Rich (1995) heavily discussed the concept of mothering as a socio-cultural construct that has been institutionalized in order for patriarchal systems to exert further control over women. In her influential text on mothering, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Rich (1995) went into depth as to how women’s identities were based on their roles as mothers and to a certain extent, wives (p. 30). Patriarchal societies and cultures conditioned women to believe that their life goal was to become both wives and mothers. Since women could carry children in their wombs, give birth and nurse children, they were biologically inclined to be the main caregivers of children. Due to biological explanations and societal and cultural conditioning about the importance of women’s roles as mothers and wives, women internalized these beliefs and performed these roles accordingly. Although women did not necessarily recognize these beliefs and assigned gender roles as institutionalized mothering, they did understand the fact that if they did not conform to the expectations of becoming mothers and wives, they would not be real women and proper members of their society.

As mentioned by Rich (1995), societies and cultures institutionalized motherhood to not necessarily uplift women’s status, but more to control women and their sexuality. The institution of motherhood only glorified women as mothers for the purpose of insuring the continuance of patriarchal systems – patriarchy privileged men to define women within masculinist structures of domination. According to Rich (1995), “The experience of maternity and the experience of [women’s] sexuality have both been channeled to serve male
interests…” (p. 42). Patriarchal societies created institutions of motherhood, and even marriage, to keep men in power – women just became entangled within these institutions because they were categorized as the subordinate sex. Rich (1995) brought up a good point when she stated, “Patriarchy could not survive without motherhood and heterosexuality in their institutional forms…” (p. 43). Generation after generation, both men and women were informed of their assigned gender roles and instructed not to stray from them. After much repetition of teaching and performing gender roles, they became accepted as natural and, thus, unquestionable. Yet, women were not developing and shaping these roles; instead, it was men. Although both men and women were invested in mothering and children, the reasons behind such investments were different. For example, men needed their wives to have children (sons preferably) to enhance their position in society and to show the powerful role they played in reproduction (Rich, 1995, p. 119). Women needed to be mothers to solidify their place in society. The very notion of motherhood was idealized and often times represented as an identity women ought to take pride in; however, one could not negate the stressful reality motherhood created for women (i.e. during times of war and conflict when traditional gender roles were more pronounced). Women, regardless of whether they were mothers or not, were affected by the institution of motherhood and kept them subordinate to men.

Scholar Sara Ruddick (1989) has also written extensively on motherhood and mothering. In her text, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, Ruddick echoed similar themes regarding institutionalized motherhood found in Rich’s (1995) text discussed above. Like Rich (1995), Ruddick (1989) also emphasized how a woman’s place in society was dependent upon her status as a mother, especially as a good mother. A good mother was not only one that devoted her life to her children and ensured the children’s well-being and safety, but also raised her children in such a way that adhered to societal definitions of ‘normalcy’ and ‘acceptability.’ What counted as acceptable and normal varies from culture to culture, but nonetheless, mothers were still responsible for raising children with acceptable behavior (Ruddick, 1989, p. 21). If a child turned out well and became a productive member of society, the mother was praised for fulfilling her duties. If the woman’s mothering skills resulted in a child that was not acceptable to the community at large, the child was not to blame, but the mother was (Ruddick, 1989, p. 110). A mother’s characterization of whether
she was a good mother or not was contingent upon her children’s behavior. Ruddick (1989) wrote that, “The more personally invested a mother [was] in her children’s acceptable behavior, and therefore the more rewards she expect[ed] from her maternal work, the more angry and ashamed she [would] be when her influence [did not] have the desirable effects” (p. 106). Because a woman’s identity depended on her children’s acceptability in the community at large, it was essential that she devote her time to raising her children the correct way to ensure her a proper place in society.

Another interesting theme that both Ruddick (1989) and Rich (1995) discussed was the strong link between maternal work and femininity. Even though Ruddick (1989) brought up the notion that men could be mothers as well and partake in the action of mothering, in most cultures, “the womanly and the maternal [were] conceptually and politically linked” (p. 41). Again, the theme of a woman’s identity being tied to maternalism emerged because of women’s biological ability to give birth to and nurse children. However, what Ruddick (1989) emphasized that was quite feminist, was that women (and even men) were not born mothers (p. 52). Women had to learn how to be mothers from their societies, particularly from other mothers from older generations. Just like gender, mothering was socially constructed. Even though women were the only sex biologically capable of giving birth, yet still had to learn how to be mothers, the notion of a natural and inherent link between motherhood and women ought to be questioned. However, because institutionalized mothering has been prevalent in the lives of women, the link remains.

**Patriotic Motherhood – Sacrificing Sons for the Cause**

Military and motherhood may seem like incompatible partners, yet a deeper analysis on the complicated relationship revealed how the military often relied on mothers to continue their operations at home or foreign bases during both peacetime and war. Mothers were an important factor in the masculinized military institution because they produced and supplied the bodies needed to keep militaries going during times of conflict and peacetime. Enloe (2000) stated that “Militarized mothering often starts with the conceptualizing the womb as a recruiting station” (p. 248); and throughout childhood, the mother would do her patriotic duty in instilling nationalistic ideals into her child. A nationalist mother’s most basic duty to her country was to give birth to children, especially sons. Her children, ideally male, would
grow into good citizens with intentions of serving their country as soldiers or in other capacities as long as they performed the correct masculinist nationalism. In order for a woman to raise acceptable citizens of the nation, she had to remain in the domestic sphere and not trouble herself with the public sphere.

Chenoy (2002) added that although women were oftentimes relegated to the private, domestic sphere during conflict, the state would oftentimes bring them out into the public by projecting and promoting an idealized image of nationalistic motherhood. The state constructed and appropriated an image of patriotic motherhood suitable to their militaristic policies. Working in tandem with the military institution, the state produced an image of the nationalist or patriotic mother to stir patriotism among citizens during wartime, and to encourage mothers to influence their children (especially sons) to enter the military. As long as patriarchal and masculinist institutions controlled the image of the patriotic mother, the nationalist maternal figure could cross the boundaries of the public/private spheres. State manufactured patriotic mothers did not threaten the militaristic institution – they supported it by giving birth to future soldiers and good citizens.

Ruddick (1989) set up an interesting gender binary where maleness was associated with war, military, and nationalism, whereas femaleness was tied to victimization and peace. Although women could be as patriotic as men could, their patriotism was defined for them by the state. Thus, when women lost their children or had to endure the harsh realities of war, the state still called on them to be patriotic and keep supporting the conflict because it was their nationalistic duty to do so. The mater dolorosa (‘mother of sorrows’) was a woman “Scrounging for food to keep her children alive, weeping over the body of her son, nursing survivors, sadly rebuilding her home, reweaving the connections that war has destroyed – as she grieves over her particular loss, she mourns war itself” (Ruddick, 1989, p. 142). Amidst the sorrow and sadness war and conflict elicit, it is at these critical times that mothers must show their patriotism as true citizens of their states. Although Ruddick (1989) intended the mater dolorosa icon to represent women’s victimization in war at the hands of state sanctioned violence, the image could hypothetically be manipulated by the state to garner support for the war and the military institution.

Depending on social, cultural or political contexts, militarized mothers could either be compliant towards their national government by succumbing to the patriarchal ideology their
military body promotes; or, the mothers could put up a resistance and go against their country’s military operations. Political anthropologist Julie Peteet (1997) has written on the Palestinian conflict and women. In her article on mothering in conflict zones, she discussed how the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) acted as a site for women (i.e. mothers) to contribute to the Palestinian cause by using their wombs to give birth to a new generation of Palestinians (Peteet, 1997). Although the PLO called the women to action, they were not necessarily encouraged to be active beyond the scope of their femininity. Women’s capacity to participate in the Palestinian liberation movement was determined by their male political and military leaders. To maintain and emphasize traditional gender roles, women’s “political participation was defined in a highly domestic manner” (Peteet, 1997, p. 112). The chairman of the PLO, Yasir Arafat, “often declared that mothering was the equivalent to participation in national struggle and was enough to ask women” (Peteet, 1997, p. 112). To put a positive spin on militarized mothering within the Palestinian context, Peteet (1997) described how the category, “Mothers of martyrs,” was highly valued within the community. Mothers who had sacrificed a child to the liberation movement needed to be recognized and honored for their contributions. Even though these women who had lost children to the cause were respected, they still had to adhere to their traditional roles as mothers and take care of the domestic sphere. After all, doing the housework diligently without questioning the dominant gender ideology was a form of acceptable nationalism for women.

The predicament of wanting to protect children from conflict violence and maintaining the image of the patriotic mother that loves her country is not new. Many mothers during times of war and conflict had to negotiate their roles as mothers and nationalists. Mothers had asked themselves difficult questions such as, “How do I continue being a good citizen if my country is responsible for creating a violent environment that could harm my children? Do I put my motherly duty before my civic duty? Will I still be a good mother if I put my country before my children?” Although there was much tension between the harshness of war and conflict and motherhood, mothers would still be pressured by the state to be patriotic. As Slattery and Garner (2007) commented,

The symbol of the good mother [was] consistent with another important cultural symbol, the patriotic mother. The archetype of the patriotic mother [was] a supporting and caring mother who [was] also stoic, silent, and brave in the face of war. She unfailingly support[ed] the nation’s war effort and her child’s
participation in it, despite the threat of death to her child. This cultural assumption about the patriotic mother, then, appeared to conflict with the assumption routinely made about the archetypical good mother; the latter [tried] to protect her child from death (p. 430).

As good citizens of the state, women were expected to be the biological producers of future generations (Enloe, 2000; Nagel, 2005). They had the responsibility of birthing a nation, then raising her children to become productive members of society. This meant socializing their children to adhere to traditional gender, cultural, or social codes, and encouraging their active participation in civic activities (i.e. boys needed to be imparted with hegemonic masculinity so that they could either go into politics or the military, and girls needed to become good wives and mothers). Before producing the next generation, women had to understand that their wombs were already a politicized and even militarized space (Enloe, 2000). Thus, to be characterized as true patriotic mothers, women had to willingly allow state the state and military to manipulate the institution of motherhood for militaristic and political goals. This meant that as good citizens for the state, mothers needed to do their patriotic duty and willingly sacrifice their sons for the national cause. Her sons did not necessarily belong to her, but to the state and the military.

**MOTHERS AND THE POLITICIZATION OF GRIEF**

When the state and military institutions developed the image of the patriotic mother sacrificing her sons for the nation and then appropriating that image to garner support for conflict efforts, they inadvertently created a space in public for women. In this newly created space, women (as mothers) had the potential to go against masculinist war ideology, and, instead resist the very act of militarization without actually going beyond their traditional gender roles. After all, the state and military were responsible for placing their maternal image in the public in the first place. Although mothers had been taught to believe that their maternalist representations were for the nation and not themselves, that did not necessarily mean they had to succumb to this ideology all the time. For example, when a woman’s children or family members were harmed by war or conflict, her maternal reaction to the violence could be the motivating factor to re-conceptualize her presence in the public space. When a mother grieved in public during war and conflict, her grief was not just an emotional response, but a political act. Through the loss of family members, women’s grief could, then, be crafted into a political weapon for any group that was anti-war to criticize the actions of
the military. Anti-war groups, especially women’s and mothers groups, would not necessarily have to utilize a feminist framework to justify their organizing in public space; instead, their anti-war and peace messages would be framed around their loss of loved ones.

Mothers losing their children during wartime has always been a bleak reality, whether their child was a soldier fighting or a victim of militarized violence. Depending on a nation’s political goals with conflict, states have used a mother’s loss for political purposes. A legitimate nation state has not been the only one to take advantage of mothers’ grief, but so have paramilitary groups. Take for example the jihadi group, Lashkar-i-Tayyabia (LT), which was started in Afghanistan but has operated in Pakistan. The group’s intention was to create an Islamist state in South Asia and free Muslims in Indian Kashmir. To help achieve their goals, the group had resorted to violence and terrorist acts. What stood out for this particular jihadi group was their use of women’s support. Instead of completely eliminating women from the masculinist space of conflict, the group had actually recruited women into their fold. However, LT did not recruit women to advance women’s position in a highly gendered Islamist organization; instead, they recruited women as an indirect way to recruit their sons to fight for the cause (Haq, 2008).

According to Haq (2008), women in organizations like LT primarily served as props within the organization’s religious mission. The women did not actually participate in the organization’s decision making processes or have a voice in how their sons would be used in the conflict over Kashmir. Instead, the women (especially the mothers) were expected to stay true and faithful to traditional ideals of womanhood to become “effective soldiers for their community” (Haq, 2008, p. 317). Even though women technically had a space in LT, they were still controlled by the masculinist and patriarchal nature of the organization. By controlling the women – and essentially their sons – within the organization, male leaders could use their sons for politically militaristic purposes without inciting rebellion amongst the mothers. Instead of the mothers using their grief to stop the LT in their missions, their grief had been manipulated by the LT as a political tool to have the mothers encourage their sons to join in the struggle and to make sense of their loss (Haq, 2008, p. 321). LT had re-appropriated the image of the *mater dolorosa* (the mother of sorrows) (Ruddick, 1989) to incite more conflict instead of its original intention of advocating for peace. It provided a sense of empowerment for proud mothers of jihadis even if they were losing their sons.
The politicization of grief and the act of mourning outside the familial home space have complexities in their appearance into the masculinized public sphere during war and conflict. However, when women, especially mothers, partake in these activities, they are doing their expected “women’s work” – mothering, providing shelter and food, maintaining kinship relations, caring for the children and elderly, showing emotional support, or nursing the sick (Ruddick, 1998). Women are expected to show emotion and express feelings of loss and sadness because it is part of their ascribed feminine performance. When women show emotion such as grief or mourning in the private space, they are simply being women and doing what they are supposed to. However, when women take their sorrow into the public realm, their grief and gender performance take on a new meaning. Grief is no longer to be expressed silently in the privacy of these women’s homes; instead, their grief becomes part of public discourse to be viewed and consumed by others.

As the public takes note of the women’s grief, the women utilize the space they have created for political purposes. Whether the women protest the war and the loss of their children or use the public space to support conflict, women have politicized the public domain with their grief. Their grief becomes even more powerful when women control how it is being used as opposed to the state and military manipulating the grief to fulfill institutionalized interests. According to Ruddick (1998), “Women who act as women in public spaces transform the passions of attachment and loss into political action, transform the women of sorrow from icon to agent” (pp. 216 – 217). Women, particularly mothers, add a new dimension to their suffering and the mourning of their children. Through their expression of emotion, women have found a means to actively engage the public and political arena strictly using their traditional gender roles. Grief, loss and sorrow were no longer feminized emotions relegated to the private sphere. They became political tools for women to utilize to gain entrance into the masculine, patriarchal public sphere. Women became political agents through their strategic public displays of emotion.

Sometimes, when their children died for the cause of the state as soldiers or were victims of militarized violence, mothers could not grieve on their own terms. Instead, their grief became a political tool for the state and military to use for their own purposes. According to Haq (2008), “The political space for grieving mothers to challenge the state or to turn their grief into a plea for protection and human rights [disappeared] quickly, however,
if the nation [was] at war” (p. 328). Due to these harsh conditions, mothers oftentimes had to prioritize their nationalistic duty and submit themselves and their children to militarized politics of their state. Mothers may not have agreed with their government’s practices regarding conflict, but in some instances, they did not have the space or means to object. Accordingly, because they did not have the means to speak out against the violence, their children and maternalism became casualties of war.

In times of war and conflict, mothers oftentimes have found themselves between a rock and a hard place. Under peaceful circumstances, mothers were expected to practice “preservative love” where their main objective was to constantly look out for danger and keep their children from harm’s way at all costs (Ruddick, 1989, p. 72). A good mother was one who protected her children and raised them in a safe environment where they could thrive. However, under militaristic states and times of conflict, mothers have had to adjust their maternalistic roles to adapt to the socio-political instabilities in their communities. Aside from further adhering to traditional gender roles and prioritizing masculinity over femininity in both public and private spaces, mothers have also had to decide how to view their children under a conflict driven environment. Do they protect their children or offer them up to the military institution to be used as soldiers? If their children lose their lives because of military service or militarized violence, what then?

**NATIONALISM AND MATERNALISM: THE NEW ICONOGRAPHY OF THE POLITICALLY ACTIVE MOTHER**

When mothers have lost their children to war violence, they have either grieved in private with their families, continued to be patriotic and supported the war effort, or have gone publically to push for peace. Regardless of which route they chose, these women have had to balance their nationalistic and maternal identities. What made the balancing act so complicated was that these two identities were intertwined with each other. As previously discussed, being a good mother meant being a patriotic mother that raised her children for the nation. However, being a good mother also meant protecting one’s children from violence and death, and not putting them in situations where they could be harmed. The mothers that will be discussed in this section were those that managed to maintain their sense of nationalism and fulfill their mothering duties at the same time by re-interpreting what it meant to be a nationalist and a mother. In circumstances where the nation turned against its
citizens, where authoritarian regimes ruled by violating citizens’ human rights violently, citizens felt that it was their nationalistic duty to fight back. Regimes that hurt their own people did not deserve loyalty from the very citizens they were oppressing. Thus, citizens had to re-conceptualize the meanings behind nationalism to use as a starting point for change. Women, especially mothers, have played an important role in this change. Spurred on from the tragedy of losing their children under state sanctioned militarized violence, mothers stepped out of their traditional roles in the private sphere and into the public to question the government. Instead of grieving in private, they took their grief to the public space as a means to protest authoritarian regimes and push for peace.

One example of mothers seeking social justice for their children and members of their family was that of the Mothers’ Front in Sri Lanka. Between 1988 and 1990, the Sri Lankan state had been responsible for disappearing government subversives such as activists, playwrights, lawyers, and journalists (De Alwis, 1998b, p. 183). In response, a grassroots organization called Mothers’ Front formed in order to protest the disappearances of young and middle-aged men (De Alwis, 1998b). The organization did not explicitly push for the collapse of the authoritarian state, or bring charges against the state for being politically oppressive. Instead, the women justified their organizing and protesting by wanting to restore their traditional gender role as mothers. As mentioned in the previous section, it was difficult for mothers to carry on their normal activities of caring for their children if they were living in conflict zones. The Mothers’ Front demanded “a climate where [they could] raise [their] sons to manhood, have [their] husbands with [them] and lead normal women’s lives” (De Alwis, 1998b, p. 183).

What made the organization different from others fighting for peace and social justice was that the Mothers’ Front used their grief as a political weapon. Unlike the Lashkar-i-Tayyabia in Pakistan that used mothers’ grief to support conflict and violence, the Mothers’ Front used it to push for peace and ending the violence. As discussed in the previous section, when women grieved in public for the loss of loved ones, their emotional acts could be powerful political tools. The Sri Lankan state did not want its actions to be called into question, and blamed the mothers for their children’s subversive activities. According to the state, if the mothers had done their maternal duty in teaching the children the proper way to be a citizen, then the children would not have developed anti-government sentiments. The
government did not incarcerate the subversives to punish and torture them – they were being rehabilitated due to the mothers’ initial neglect (De Alwis, 1998b). Members of the Mothers’ Front did not intend to break gender or class hierarchies in their society by organizing; they were simply creating a space where they could grieve and fight for social justice. They were being good nationals and mothers by wanting to go back to traditional societal norms to raise their children in safe environments. The mothers rationalized that being in a constant state of militarization and conflict where their children disappeared did not allow for them to perform their traditional duties of being good mothers and citizens. For them to be good mothers again, peace needed to be restored and the disappearing of children needed to stop.

While fighting for the de-militarization of their communities and the end to the disappearances of their children, mothers such as the ones in Sri Lanka had to find a balance between being protective mothers and being nationalists. Apparently, they could not be both at the same time if the state called on them to sacrifice their sons for the cause. Either mothers could protest on behalf of their disappeared children and advocate for the end of violence; or, they could be ‘mothers of martyrs’ like the women in Pakistan taking pride in their jihadi sons. What was common, though, between being a patriotic mother and being a protective mother was the idealization of a mother’s love and sacrifice. De Alwis (1998a) mentioned that even if mothers in Sri Lanka did not want to see their sons participating in militarized conflict, they allowed them to anyway because of “romanticized notions of patriotism” (p. 261) concerning their motherhood acts of love and sacrifice for the nation.

A mother had to quell her fears of losing her children for the greater good of the nation or her community. Like mothers of jihadis, Sri Lankan mothers felt proud for raising nationalist children. According to De Alwis (1998a), “This doubled identity of woman [i.e. mother] and patriot is also what enables her espousal of violence without reducing her femininity and vulnerability. The reason she refuses to worry about her comforts and is even willing to see her son die is because of her commitment to a greater good…” (p. 262). A mother might still worry about the safety of her children in times of war and conflict; however, if her children were being used for the good of the community at large or for the good of the nation, her children’s direct encounter with militarized violence could be justified. She could still grieve for her children as any mother should, but her grief and sacrifice were recognized because she had done her duty as a nationalist mother.
Mothers in Latin America seeking justice for their disappeared children were nationalist mothers as well. However, the mothers’ concept of nationalism did not match the state’s version. During the 1970s and 1980s authoritarian governments in Argentina and Chile, mothers’ groups organized to address the disappearances of their children and other family members. In her article on the roles activist mothers played in the democratization of Chile and Argentina, scholar Wanda C. Krause (2004), described how militaristic regimes in the two Latin American countries would make individuals disappear if the regime considered them subversives or threats to the government, especially if the persons were socialists, liberals, activists, or intellectuals. Like Amanda Bartolome, instead of doing nothing but grieve in private for the loss of their children, women in Argentina and Chile used their common identity as mothers to bring attention to their children’s disappearances. For example, the mothers’ group in Argentina, Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo, silently marched in the plaza in Buenos Aires, holding candles and photographs of their missing children (Krause, 2004, p. 371; Vickers, 1993). Showing photographs of their disappeared children made a powerful statement in public in that it personalized the violence inflicted on their children. The mothers made sure that their missing child was not just another un-named body the state had easily disposed of.

The mothers’ group in Chile, the Mothers of the Association of Families of Detained-Disappeared, created tapestries, held protests, conducted hunger strikes, or had public mourning for their loved ones to bring national attention to the multitude of human rights violations in their country. Just like mothers in Sri Lanka, the women strategically used their motherhood to politicize their grief and held the state accountable for the crimes against the citizens, particularly their disappeared children. Going public and openly questioning the authoritarian states as mothers legitimized the women’s presence in the masculinized public domain. Under the rhetoric that the women were acting as good mothers, the authoritarian governments and the public could not do anything drastic to silence the women. The mothers did not do anything too radical by rejecting their identities as mothers and adopting feminist activist identities. These mothers turned a traditional identity of maternalism into something more radical by crossing the divide from mothering in the private space to mothering in the public. In a way, the women were mothering and nurturing society to help make the violence stop and bring about peace to their communities and their countries at large. Their identities
as mothers were no longer conceptualized as oppressive or identities that held them back; instead, their maternal identities became their source of political empowerment during tumultuous times in their countries.

Another good example of a mother who challenged her country’s dominant form of nationalism and military activities was American anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan. Like the women in Latin America, she used her identity as a grieving, patriotic mother to challenge the Bush administration and the war in Iraq. Feminist scholar Laura Knudson (2009) has written several articles on Cindy Sheehan’s anti-war activism and the backlash Sheehan received for her efforts. In Knudson’s (2009) article, “Cindy Sheehan and the rhetoric of Motherhood: A textual analysis,” she described that American culture oftentimes equated peace activism and patriotism to motherhood. Just like the mothers of martyrs in the Palestinian liberation movement, Sheehan, too, sacrificed her child to war. Initially, she received sympathy from the public due to her status as a grieving mother. However, instead of a mother that grieved in private, she took her new identity of ‘grieving mother’ to the public as a starting point for anti-war activism (Knudson, 2009). Instead of allowing the U.S. use her grief and the loss of her son to further justify military operations in Iraq, Sheehan politicized her grief herself and pushed to end the war.

As a patriotic mother, she could not be idle and watch silently as President George W. Bush ordered more soldiers to be sent to the battlefield and, perhaps, even their deaths. Unfortunately for Cindy Sheehan, her idea of patriotic motherhood did not match the type of motherhood the U.S. public and the government had expected. Instead of supporting the war, she attacked its legitimacy. Through her activism, Sheehan created a new identity that combined motherhood and patriotism – she called it “matriotism” (Knudson, 2009, p. 172). Knudson (2009) explained that matriotism “turns the concept of patriotism on its head and creates something that grows from motherhood. [Sheehan] refutes all that is wrong in patriotism and replaces it with its opposite, the good and positive from the maternal. Matriotism is the heart of a maternal politics of peace, as it involves embracing and caring for children other than one’s own…” (p. 173). Sheehan did not push to radically alter her gendered role as ‘mother’ or bring down the patriarchal institution that was the military; instead, she used her position as a mother as a starting point for asking difficult questions about war and advocating for peace. Her motherhood and her un-popular sense of
nationalism became forms of activism. Sheehan was no longer a state manufactured patriotic mother confined to the traditional domestic sphere. She was now a new iconic mother that blended her maternalism and nationalism for anti-war advocacy.

**Mothers Organizing and Uniting for Peace**

Mothering and motherhood during times of war and conflict altered the way in which women engaged with the public political space. They were no longer trapped in the domestic space, working to stave off the violence from entering their home and community. Mothers crossed the boundaries into the public realm to criticize the government for hurting their children. What helped justify mothers entering public space to critique the state and the militarization of their daily lives was their strong advocacy for peace. Mothers could be out in the open because they were peacemakers and not fighters. Ruddick (1998) saw mothers as peacemakers because of their devotion to protecting not only their children, but society at large from state sanctioned violence. She wrote,

> The third identity in formation [for mothers], that of peacemaker, is rooted in the daily lives of many women. Unlike the mater dolorosa or outsider, the peacemaker takes responsibility for violence, her own and others', in her home, neighborhood, and country. She then counters violence nonviolently. A peacemaker may be a pacifist, someone who believes that war and other forms of deliberate, institutionalized violence are unjustifiable in principle. But such a general renunciation of violence is neither defining nor typical. Rather, the peacemaker is defined by a commitment to developing nonviolent relationships and ways of fighting, not by a principled or contingent attitude toward uses of military violence (Ruddick, 1998, p. 219).

Patriarchal society already expected mothers to be non-violent and anti-war because violence and aggression were attributes that conflicted with traditional notions of femininity and to an extent, motherhood. Violence, aggression, strength, stoicism, etc. were masculine traits that could only be performed by men, especially men in the military. Hence, women were thought of as the peaceful gender. Mothers, especially, had the identity as peacemakers because of their ascribed duty to protect life, and keep members of society safe (i.e. their children). Although mothers were exposed to violence and conflict under militarism, they could not fight militarism with violence.

Instead, they had to develop nonviolent methods for keeping their children away from harm and fostering a peaceful environment for their community and state. Mothers have been conditioned by their respective societies to take non-violent stands during times of
conflict. Hence, when their children become endangered due to the threat of war violence touching their children, mothers have to resort to nonviolent strategies to fight back. Some techniques they could employ may include: “prayer, persuasion, appeasement, self-suffering, negotiation, bribery, invocation of authority, ridicule, and other forms of psychological manipulation” (Ruddick, 1989, pp. 165-66). Instead of using violence to end violence, mothers would find other routes to address the conflict around them. Ruddick (1989) went on to write that, “Mothers can, and often do, renounce the violence to which they are tempted, fight back against the violence done to them and their children, name and insist on responsibility for damages done, yet forswear a scarring hatred in favor of a peace in which they can love and work” (p. 83). When mothers were threatened during times of war, they may have had the urge to use violence as well as a reaction to what was going on around them and to protect themselves and the children; however, their maternalist thinking rooted in nonviolence would prevent them from taking a violent course of action. Instead, they would take that energy and turn into something more positive, such as working towards peace.

When militarized violence lessens and governments are ready to make peace, women are not included in the discussions. Yet, from real life examples of how men and women experience conflict differently, we have seen that women cannot be neglected during peace making processes. It has been established that men make the decisions to declare war and order citizens to participate in armed conflicts. Women do not have a voice in these matters. Instead, they are expected to be supportive of their men and to follow their governments’ orders. However, it is quite difficult to ignore women during peacemaking discussions because oftentimes, women and their children are victims of war and conflict violence. Women, especially, are vulnerable to such violent acts as rape, torture, death, or sexual slavery. Additionally, they are forced to adapt to the crumbling of social institutions crucial to their livelihoods. For example, when civil war broke out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1996, women’s lives took a turn for the worst. Women had to become single heads of households if their male partners were recruited or forced into the conflict. They dealt with “shortages of food, wood, water, and health care” (Puechguirbal, 2003, p. 1273). Communities could not provide employment for their citizens because businesses and local government infrastructures collapsed during the conflict. Also during this time, women and
girls were vulnerable to domestic violence and sexual violence inflicted by male soldiers (Puechguirbal, 2003).

Since women feel the brunt of war and conflict the most, as in the case of Congolese women, it makes sense to have them actively involved in peace discussions. Ruddick (1989, 1998) already mentioned that women were labeled as peacemakers due to their ability of using their maternalism to help push for the end of violence. Reiterating their roles as good mothers, women enact nonviolent methods to call an end to violence and advocate peace. Yet, what is lacking is the institutionalization of women’s participation in gendered peace building processes. Traditionally, women are not part of the official conversations regarding the development of peace treaties or talks amongst government or state officials. This is problematic because war and conflict are experienced differently by men and women, where women and girls more likely end up being victims of masculinized and militarized violence. Women have recognized their absence in the peace building process and realized that they had to get involved if they wanted their governments to take their concerns and demands seriously. Puechguirbal (2003) mentioned that after the civil war in the Congo ended, Congolese women mobilized themselves in groups in order to get involved in peace building. They wanted to have representatives in official dialogues concerning how to go about ending the violence in their communities. It also helped the women’s cause that international bodies such as the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) would support capacity building programs and push to have gender issues on the national agenda (Puechguirbal, 2003).

Echoing Puechguirbal (2003) in regards to having peace building inclusive of women and looking at peace through a gendered perspective are Cheryle de la Rey and Susan McKay (2006) in their study on South African women’s views on peace building. As mentioned before, women and men experience war and conflict differently. It should then come as no surprise that the two genders also do not experience the process of peace the same way. Citing the UN Security Council’s Resolution 132510, de la Rey and McKay

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10 The Resolution advocates for the participation of women in peace building and post-conflict reconstruction. In addition, the resolution encourages those actively involved in negotiating peace after conflict to take on a gendered perspective when looking into the needs of women and girls. Local women’s peace initiatives and indigenous conflict resolution projects also had to be supported and considered in the peace
(2006) revealed that through their study, women in South Africa had strong desires to contribute to peace talks and take part in implementing provisions in peace agreements. UN Resolution 1325 represented the institutionalization of women’s capacity for official peace building. Having an important resolution on record that emphasized the necessity of women’s inclusion in peace building served to highlight the importance of gender when discussing matters of war, conflict and peace. War and conflict were not only men’s issues if women were adversely affected by them, too. Women did not necessarily want peace to be a gendered issue, considering that peace building was a community project involving both men and women. However, because women had been so vocal and willing to transgress traditional gender roles to push for an end to violence, peace had subsequently become a women’s issue. Mothers and other women fought for peace and the right to be included in political conversations for not just themselves, but for the nation as a whole. Being a peacemaker, then, in an official governmental capacity solidified mothers as true nationals – as women who were willing to fight for the good and unity of their state and community.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

What I found compelling about the mothers discussed in this chapter was how they employed their traditional identities as mothers to cross the boundaries of public/private citizenship. As traditional mothers, they were supposed to stay in the domestic space as private citizens, rearing the next generation of countrymen or women. Enloe (2000) noted that sometimes public institutions, particularly the military, manipulated the private boundaries of motherhood for their own purposes for a kind of militarized mothering. The military institution needed mothers to produce more soldiers for the nation. In a way, the production of future citizens of the nation enabled women to engage with public politics and society as not just mothers, but citizens of the nation. Mothers recognized their important roles in the state and used their roles to enter the public space as mothers to protest against the government or military that had harmed their children and other family members. The resolution emphasized as well that women needed to be part of implementing peace agreements and actively participate in official decision making processes. (United Nations Security Council, 2000)
Bejarano (2002) added that as activist mothers, “[the women] acted and engaged their maternal citizenship in the public sphere. Although mothers were considered citizens prior to their activism in the political arena, they were ‘silent’ citizens expected to remain passive about larger political issues” (p. 131). Women rallied around their identities as mothers to organize and become involved in resistance movements challenging the militaristic violence and political oppressions their governments enacted on their people. These women appropriated their traditional roles as mothers to transcend the boundaries of the public/private spaces and bring attention to their children’s murders or disappearances. Instead of finding limitations in their maternal roles, the women found a space where they could be socially and politically active. For Amanda Bartolome and the women in Argentina, Chile, and the Congo, motherhood was not an institution that oppressed them; rather, it was an institution and an identity that could be transformed into an act of resistance.

The film ended the same way it began – the images of a demonstration, people throwing their fists in the air, and Amanda holding up a yellow banner in the middle of the protest. What changed was Amanda’s monologue. In the beginning, she stated she was not just a mother in society with the sole duty of giving birth and raising the next generation of citizens. She, too, was a citizen that wanted to go beyond her prescribed gender role. However, her ending monologue was quite telling about the transformation Amanda had gone through because of Jules’ imprisonment and Jason’s death. In the monologue, she said,

> The Filipinos are still held prisoners. Their prison extends far beyond bars of steel. But each day, a child and a parent are born. Together, they will row the boat along the sea of change. Because the tranquil soil is only for those who brave the waves in the darkest hours of a raging storm. The masses, the country are fighting for their freedom! (Roño, 2002)

Amanda felt the oppression of the Marcos regime firsthand when the effects of martial law entered her sacred home space. Because of the tragedies that had struck her family, she felt compelled to do her nationalistic and maternal duty and take action against the government and military that had abused their power and harmed Filipino citizens. As a Filipino woman, she had been socialized to believe that she would only become a wife and mother. But because of the abnormal circumstances martial law created for Philippine society, Amanda was forced to go beyond the traditional scope of her gender. As a mother and citizen, she could not let the government abuses continue. She was a good mother and Philippine national because she wanted to help restore democracy to the country and help stop the
militarized violence happening around her. She became an activist not only to bring justice to her sons, but also to the many lives lost and the oppressed citizens under the regime. Amanda’s political activism as a mother was an alternative way of her fulfilling the traditional duty of what a good mother was supposed to be and what a good Philippine citizen represented. Through her actions, she altered the definitions of wife, mother and citizen.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Motherhood is more than a biological disposition for women. It is a socialized performance, an institution, form of activism, and even a source for empowerment. For many, motherhood has various meanings – it can mean caregiver, peacemaker, or life giver. However, definitions and concepts of motherhood do not stay the same; rather, they are fluid and constantly changed over time and circumstance. Although true, patriarchal societies attempt to maintain well-defined notions of motherhood for women as a form of gendered, hierarchal control. Since women give birth and have the responsibility of raising children, patriarchal societies label them the weaker sex. However, in times of socio-political turmoil like war and conflict, the weaker sex rises to the occasion of trying to bring order to chaos. After all, does not the mother have the task of not only birthing the nation’s citizens (i.e. sons), but also bringing up those citizens with nationalistic ideals? Is it not the mother who tirelessly works to keep violence and harm from touching the lives of her children particularly under states of militarization? Mothers play vital roles in their communities and their nation as a whole, because they are figures the nation looks to in expressing nationalistic beliefs and values. Weaker sex or not, mothers carry the nation through difficult times for the purpose of survival and restoring peace to civil society.

As discussed in the previous chapters, women’s identity as mothers was multilayered and highly complex. Although patriarchal societies essentialized women as simply being wives and mothers, using those particular identities as sites of gendered oppression, we saw women take those traditional identities and turn them into politically transformative ones. However, the women discussed in my thesis did not suddenly decide to become politically active and engage the public space to radically change the patriarchal institutions around them. Women crossed into the public arena when politics became personal and involved the safety of their children. When women entered the public space, particularly in times of conflict and even after the conflict, women had to acknowledge the multiplicity of their nationalism as it became inextricably linked to their maternal political activism. There was
more than one way to express nationalism, not just the way propagated by the state. Women became citizens and political agents “through the discourse and praxis of the culture of motherhood” (Zaatari, 2006, p. 34). Motherhood was not necessarily an institution that kept women from participating in civil society; rather, motherhood was a site of political empowerment and an opportunity to make positive changes in society.

**MARTIAL LAW AND ITS MEANING FOR FILIPINO WOMEN**

Philippine martial law was one of the darkest times in the country’s history, but it was also a pivotal moment for Filipino women. At a time of extreme oppression from the authoritarian state, women like Corazon Aquino and Imelda Marcos cultivated a sense of empowerment in a traditionally patriarchal society. As First Lady, Imelda Marcos acted as a diplomat in international settings, became governor of Metro Manila, and even held the position of minister of human settlements in her husband’s cabinet (Ellison, 1988). After her husband’s death, Corazon Aquino became first the leader of the opposition movement against Marcos and then president of the Philippines. Both Imelda Marcos and Corazon Aquino were mothers under martial law; yet, each woman represented different aspects of motherhood depending on their relationship to the period. Additionally, women’s groups such as Makibaka and Pilipina formed prior to martial law and continued to exist under the Marcos regime; however, they could not pursue gender issues exclusively because they needed to form coalitions with opposition groups against Marcos. Women prioritized the needs of the nation before their own. Women’s groups did not start a separate movement because it could have undermined the effort to get rid of the dictator. Instead, women’s groups used martial law and the anti-dictatorship movement as a chance to bring together their feminism and nationalism. Filipino women no longer wanted to be the support system for revolutionary men– they wanted to exercise their agency and actively participate in the movement equally.

One way women participated in civil society was through their involvement in political organizing, particularly in bringing down Marcos and pushing for the re-democratization of the state. Even though Marcos issued Proclamation 2045 in January 1981 to end martial law, authoritarian rule and state sanctioned violence did not stop (Dolan, 1991). The event that triggered the movement to bring down Marcos occurred on August 21,
1983 when opposition leader, Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, Jr., was assassinated upon his return to the Philippines after living in exile. His death not only inspired Filipinos to fight back against the Marcos regime, but it also put his widow, Corazon “Cory” Aquino, as the reluctant leader of the opposition. Since Cory Aquino was used to being in the background as a political wife and mother, she was content in supporting the opposition movement from a distance; however, due to public demand and support from her late husband’s political allies, she became a public political figure (Komisar, 1987). Cory Aquino became an example of a woman that utilized her gendered identities of a widow and mother as sources of political agency. In the time between her husband’s assassination and her eventual rise to the presidency in 1986, she fought for social justice and democracy in the Philippines with her newfound political agency as the new leader of the opposition.

Aside from Cory Aquino, women’s groups openly participated in the opposition movement and became more vocal in their involvement in the political scene. For example, in 1984, various women’s groups came together to form the feminist umbrella group, Gabriela. Under Marcos, women’s groups did not have a space to voice their gender specific politics or grievances; however, when Aquino became the country’s first female president, they saw the opportunity in helping to shape politics benefiting women. Women’s groups tended to support issues such as education, healthcare, land reform, and family planning, but Gabriela was the only mainstream women’s group that pushed for feminism. President Aquino encouraged political involvement by not just mainstream politicians, but everyday Filipino citizens, too. Hence, after being elected to power, “middle and upper-class members of the [Philippine] women’s movement ran for Congress in 1987 and served on the Constitutional Commission” (Friesen, 1989, p. 685). Having a female president advocating community involvement in government and pushing for political diversity on the national stage gave women the confidence to enter politics and perhaps even forge political careers. It should come as no surprise, then, that Gabriela later expanded its capacity from an umbrella feminist women’s group to a women’s political party.11 Since women with means wanted to

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improve the living conditions for Filipino women in general, working within the government institution gave them a vehicle in which to work for positive social change.

**NEGOTIATING TRADITIONAL IDENTITIES WITHIN THE NATIONAL POLITICAL SCENE**

Women have gone from being in charge of households to being leaders of opposition movements. Then, few women went further and became heads of state. Women’s presence in the political scene and having them as heads of state became acceptable in several Asian countries such as Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, and the Philippines. Yet, a common thread among women occupying high political positions such as prime minister or president has been their roles as oppositional leaders during times of socio-political unrest. For example, women such as Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina Wajed of Bangladesh, Cory Aquino of the Philippines, and Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia, lead oppositional movements against oppressive regimes. Each of these women “inspired and organized mass protests against non-democratic regimes...and then guided precarious transitions to democracy” (Thompson, 2002). Additionally, female political leaders possessed certain economic, political and social advantages that made them “leadership material” for oppositional movements and eventual positions of power. Thompson (2002) and Fleschenberg (2008) stated a few conditions that made it suitable for women to take leadership positions. Some of the conditions included kinship to political dynasties, close relationships with martyred male political figures (i.e. widows, wives, or daughters), continuation of martyred male’s causes, and positive perceptions of both local and global media (Fleschenberg, 2008; Thompson, 2002). The Philippines female presidents met the criteria –Aquino came from a politically influential family, she was the widow of Ninoy Aquino, and continued her husband’s cause of using non-violence to re-democratize the country. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo also came from an influential political family where her father was former Philippine president, Diosdado Macapagal (1961 – 1965), and she was put in power after the second People’s Power movement in 2001.

Although countries such as the Philippines have had female heads of state, that did not automatically mean women’s conditions improved under female leadership. Patriarchal society did not become egalitarian just because a woman was prime minister or president. According to an article in the *New York Times* regarding women’s leadership in Asia, women
leaders as a whole “have done little to advance the causes associated with women’s rights..., they have not, with a few possible exceptions, governed differently from men, and they have not broken a path to the top that other women have followed” (Mydans, 2010). Female leadership did not change the patriarchal nature of Asian countries; instead, female leaders proved that having strong name recognition and connections to political dynasties propelled them into political office (Fleschenberg, 2008; Mydans, 2010; Thompson, 2002). Women may have reached high places in politics, but that did excuse them from living up to cultural and societal ideals of womanhood. Prominent female political leaders such as former Cory Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo still had to negotiate their traditional, Filipino societal roles as wives, widows or mothers. Their electability to office depended upon their performances of respectable Filipina womanhood – chaste, modest, intelligent, firm but feminine, and maternal. To maintain their leadership positions, women had to work within the patriarchal political system and not against it. Trying to radically alter patriarchal institutions could lead to political suicide for the female politician, thereby possibly hurting her chances of making positive changes for women overall. After all, the female head of state was not just a political leader, but also a maternal figure for the nation.

**THE MARCOS LEGACY CONTINUES**

The years after President Marcos’ fall from power showed that the Filipinos did not need to tolerate corrupt political leadership. After twenty years of living under an oppressive, authoritarian regime, citizens realized that if they allowed the state to suspend or trample on their human and civil rights, their society could only spiral downward. That explained why Filipino citizens invoked ‘People Power’ when national leadership committed acts of corruption and political graft. For example, in 2001, citizens enacted the second People’s Power movement to remove former President Joseph Estrada from office amidst allegations of corruption. The movement succeeded and his vice president, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo became president that same year. Interestingly enough, a third People’s Power movement occurred in 2008 calling for the resignation of now former President Gloria Arroyo for political corruption and multitudes of human rights violations. However, the third People’s Power movement did not succeed in bringing down Arroyo, as she recently finished out her term in June 2010. Filipinos want honest political leadership, which is why the
newly elected president of the Philippines, Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III\(^{12}\) intends to create a non-partisan “truth commission” to investigate corruption allegations against politicians (New York Times, 2010).

Since Filipinos have been so intent on keeping crooked politicians from office, it comes as a surprise that even with President Marcos’ legacy as a dictator and imposing martial law, that members of his immediate family successfully won elected political positions. In this year’s May 2010 elections, three members of the Marcos family were elected to office – Imelda Marcos was elected as a representative from the second district of Ilocos Norte, Imee Marcos was elected governor of the Ilocos Norte province, and Ferdinand “Bong Bong” Marcos, Jr. won a seat in the Philippine senate. Previously, Imee Marcos had been a member of the House of Representatives (the same seat that her mother now occupies) and Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. was the governor of Ilocos Norte. It seemed that within their stronghold of the Ilocos Norte province, Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. and his sister, Imee, along with various cousins, have held important political positions in rotation (Onishi, 2010). The Marcos name could have gone down in infamy when the dictator was exiled in 1986; however, current politics has shown otherwise. The Marcoses, headed by matriarch, Imelda Marcos, may have their sights set on the presidency in the future. New York Times reporter, Norimitsu Onishi (2010), mentioned in a recent article that Imelda Marcos campaigned so hard in these past elections for her children and herself to restore the Marcos dynasty. Even with their family history, citizens gravitated towards the family and gave them their votes.

During her campaign for a seat in the House of Representatives, Imelda Marcos told her constituents, “I’m running not only as your representative, but as your mother… I’ll take care of you” (Onishi, 2010). Unfortunately, the last time she was the mother of the Filipino citizens, her husband’s regime committed acts of political and militarized violence. However, what stood out in her statement was the conscious link she made between being a politician and being her constituents’ mother. Although Imelda Marcos was recently elected

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\(^{12}\) Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III is the newly elected president of the Philippines. He is also the only son of former president Corazon Aquino and slain, oppositional leader, Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, Jr. To honor his parents’ political legacies, one of his main campaign promises was to have an honest administration and to seek social justice for citizens who have been victimized of corrupt Philippine politics. President Aquino is also a prime example of political family dynasties in the country (Doronila, 2010).
to a political position, she had not abandoned her traditional role as mother. In fact, she used this particular gendered rhetoric as a political tool to help get elected to office. She presented herself as a politician and maternal figure, with each identity depending on the other for success. Imelda Marcos recognized that regardless of her career in politics, her roles as former first lady and mother were integral to her identity as a Filipino woman. This revealed that motherhood did not necessarily have to be confined to the domestic sphere, but it could be an important asset to a female politician’s career.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In my thesis, I used *Dekada ’70* (Roño, 2002) and its main protagonist, Amanda Bartolome, as case studies to discuss women’s complex relationship to conflict, militarism such as martial law, and motherhood. Within militaristic institutions and environments, women and femininity were not held in the same high regard as men and masculinity. This gender hierarchy became more apparent in times of conflict. Ironically, where militarism favored masculinity over femininity, the military institution relied on women and femininity to thrive. In chapter 2, I provided the historical background to contextualize the film, and discussed events leading up to martial law and its effects on Filipino women. Having background knowledge on the gendered aspects of militarism and its relationship to Philippine history served to garner a deeper comprehension of the film’s depiction of the social and political turmoil of 1970s Philippines.

In addition to portraying the country under the Marcos regime, the film told the story of Amanda Bartolome, a woman that developed her national and feminist identities amidst the socio-political chaos of the decade. Conducting an intensive film analysis in Chapter 3 allowed me to trace Amanda’s transformation from a housewife and mother to a political agent. She realized the parallels between the state’s oppression of Filipino citizens under martial law and her own oppression living under the authoritarian paradigms of institutionalized marriage and motherhood. In order for Amanda to help enact change in her nation, she needed to define herself as a citizen, wife, and mother on her own terms. Framing her activism around maternal nationalism made Amanda a more effective political agent because she was able to balance her political agency with traditional notions of Filipino womanhood. Not completely abandoning her traditional gender roles made combining her
nationalism and feminism easier because she was not choosing one consciousness over the other.

Shifting roles from traditional wives and mothers to political agents engaging the public sphere has not been an easy transition for most women. As discussed in chapter 4, women contended with the institution of motherhood in trying to define themselves and their location in society. However, in times of conflict, women re-conceptualized and re-appropriated their traditional gender roles and sense of citizenship for survival and social change. Like Amanda, many mothers developed methods to exercise their sense of maternalism while balancing their nationalistic identities. I explored these tensions in chapter 4 where I noted that when women felt their governments were at fault for harming their people, especially children, they felt it was their maternal and patriotic duty to bring their concerns to the public space. When civil society crumbled because of war and conflict, mothers could not fulfill their traditional role properly. Thus, it was pertinent for them to restore order in the nation and promote peace as a way to be both good mothers and citizens.

Focusing on Philippine martial law to discuss conflict, militarism and mothering had its limitations in the discourse of women and militarism. One such limitation was highlighting women that suffered under authoritative and militarized states. By positioning women as constant victims of war and conflict, scholars, historians, and society have perpetuated the gendered, hierarchal nature of conflict. Men have not often been positioned as victims of war and conflict because of the gender bias that men were strong and the masculinity was enough to protect themselves and their countries. Another danger of continuously viewing women as victims was the lack of conversation regarding women as instigators of violence. If women were perpetrators during times of conflict, the gendered aspects of militarism and women’s traditional gender roles (i.e. as mothers) would unravel the gender hierarchy of the military institution. Exploring this area of gender and militarism could further complicate women’s relationship to war and conflict.

It was easier to allow mothers and other women engaging the public political space if they were doing so only when innocent lives (i.e. children) became casualties of conflict and war. Women became accepted bodies in militarized spaces because they entered the arena under the pretense of being concerned mothers and citizens that wanted peace. Staying within the parameters of their gender enabled women to become public fixtures because they
were not explicitly advocating for the dismantlement of patriarchal institutions. However, equating activist mothers with peace negated mothers who have also crossed the boundaries of the political space to encourage and participate in conflict, knowing the possibility of losing lives and disrupting civil society. As feminist scholars, how do we view mothers that willingly take part in the military institution and are complicit in acts of violence that oppress other societies and other women? Should feminists revere them for penetrating a traditionally male space, or see them traitors to the female gender by becoming vehicles of violence like their male counterparts?

More feminist research needs to be conducted on the matter of militarism, mothering and conflict to enrich the discourse on women and war. Additionally, with more women entering politics and even occupying high positions as presidents and prime ministers, further research must be conducted to study their path to power and their new roles as ‘mothers of the nation.’ In Women’s Studies, feminists have critiqued the institution of motherhood as being oppressive and limiting for women particularly during times of war and conflict. However, this form of feminist thinking ignores women who found empowerment in motherhood or discovered their political voice as a mother. Good questions to ask are, “Do feminists not include these mothers in conversations about motherhood for fear of further complicating the relationship between women and institutionalized mothering? If women organized around their identities as mothers for social justice causes or anti-militarist endeavors, does their activism have less value because it is being framed around women’s traditional gender role?” Mothers getting together to fight against militarism and violence is important. However, I cannot help but wonder what that fight would be like should mothers apply feminist idealism to the anti-militarism or anti-war cause. Maternalism and feminism do not have to be exclusive of each other – in fact, they could work in tandem to create a new framework in looking at women and militarism discourse. As feminists, especially anti-militarism feminists, we cannot marginalize motherhood and view it as an oppressive part of women’s lives. Instead, we need to constantly interrogate motherhood and develop ways to use this identity to expand our conversations about gender, militarism, politics, and conflict. More often times than not, women clean up the mess war and conflict leave behind. Thus, their voices matter.
REFERENCES


