

¿Genocidio Económico? El debate sobre la definición de los derechos humanos en Argentina

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Resumen

Este artículo trata la manera en cómo las organizaciones de derechos humanos (ODH) en Argentina responden a planteos sociales actuales al ampliar su definición de derechos humanos. Este artículo utiliza particularmente la así llamada literatura de “collective action frame” para analizar cómo las ODH relacionan los abusos a los derechos humanos ocurridos en la última dictadura militar con la actual crisis socio-económica. La literatura de los movimientos sociales nos haría pensar que los derechos humanos expanden su definición de derechos humanos para mantener la importancia de sus reclamos y así ganar tanto la atención de la prensa, como apoyo masivo en sus protestas. Sin embargo, a través de un análisis de la relativa influencia de las protestas y de la prensa en los “collective action frames” de las ODH entre 1983 y 2002, este artículo sostiene que la ampliación de la definición de los derechos humanos fue motivada en mayor grado por las protestas que por la atención de la prensa. El artículo se nutre de una investigación cualitativa (con más de 50 entrevistas) llevada a cabo en Argentina entre el mes de septiembre de 2000 y el mes de junio de 2001.

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On September 25, 2003 the current Argentine president, Néstor Kirchner, gave a speech to the United Nations in which he stated that human rights have a central place in the new agenda of Argentina. The reason he gave for emphasizing the importance of human rights was, “We are children of the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo.”

These statements are important in that:

- 1) human rights are identified as a central issue for a president who is facing the challenge of confronting an unprecedented economic crisis and in a country where the military has not been supportive of the defence of human rights;
- 2) and, the reason given for the importance of human rights is the symbolic familial relationship between Argentine citizens and the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

Why would the Argentine president identify human rights as a central issue during an economic crisis; and why is the familial relationship with the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo important for him?

My research has found that women in Argentine human rights organizations (HROs), such as the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, have presented their demands for the protection of human rights in terms of the need to protect the family. In this manner, HROs have strategically established and maintained human rights as a key issue in the process of democratization. This paper assesses the manner in which human rights organizations in Argentina have framed their demands for human rights and why their demands, framed in this manner, appear to resonate as important for Argentine society.

Since the period of hyperinflation in the late 1980s, HROs have expanded the definition of rights that they identify as essential for the protection of the family. Originally, my hypothesis was that they have done so, in order to build alliances with other social movement organizations (SMOs) and to gain media coverage. Socio-economic rights, such as employment and education, are now argued by HROs to be as important for maintaining the integrity of the family as are civil rights. Hence, HROs are making explicit

links between the civil rights abuses of the last dictatorship and the current socio-economic crisis. That is, HROs have responded to the current concerns of Argentine society by broadening the scope of their demands.

However, what I found, and will be arguing, is that the broadening of the scope of rights pursued by HROs does indeed resonate as important for those Argentines who participate in demonstrations, facilitating the building of alliances with other SMOs. But, the broader scope of rights resonates as *less* important for the media. This conclusion is arrived at by analyzing the relationship between HROs and other SMOs in the organization of demonstrations, and the coverage of HROs by the media.

I draw on the collective action frame literature in order to analyze how society has responded to the changing demands of human rights organizations. I borrow my definition of collective action frame from David Snow and Robert Benford who define it as:

interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment. ... [They] underscore and embellish the seriousness and injustice of a social condition or redefine as unjust and immoral what was previously seen as unfortunate but perhaps tolerable (1992:137).

I identify the common collective action frame of the ten most prominent human rights organizations to be "the protection of human rights in order to protect the family". I compare the different ways in which each of these ten human rights organizations present this collective action frame. The human rights organizations I am analyzing are self-identified as the "Historical" Human Rights Organizations (the oldest HROs in Argentina) and self-divide into the "Affected" HROs (those with members who lost loved ones during the dictatorship) and "Solidarity" HROs who have traditionally worked in solidarity with the Affected HROs (see Table 1).

The degree to which a collective action frame can resonate as familiar or important for society can be measured in many ways. In this paper I will assess the resonance of the collective action frame of HROs in terms of what Benford and Snow (2000) call 'experiential commensurability,' or, put more simply, the degree to which the collective action frame is consistent with the current everyday experiences of society. By focusing on 'experiential commensurability' I am able to assess the degree to which the economic crisis has affected the resonance of the HROs' collective action frame for Argentine society, and how important 'experiential commensurability' is to the resonance of their demands.

Table 1: The Historical Human Rights Organizations in Argentina¹

| AFECTADOS | SOLIDARIOS |
|---|--|
| Madres de Plaza de Mayo – Linéa Fundador (Madres-Linéa Fundador) ² | Liga Argentina por los Derechos del Hombre (La Liga) |
| Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Asociación Madres) | Movimiento Ecuménico por los Derechos Humanos (MEDH) |
| Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Abuelas) | Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos (APDH) |
| Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio (HIJOS) | Servicio Paz y Justicia (SERPAJ) |
| Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Polítics (Familiares) | Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) |

The time period I will analyze is from 1983 (when the first elections were held after the last dictatorship) to 2002. I sub-divide this time period into the three presidential periods: 1983-1989 under President Raul Alfonsín, 1989-1999 under President Carlos Menem, and 2000-2002 under President Fernando De la Rúa and others.

Euphoria and Disappointment, 1983-1989

The return of electoral democracy in 1983 led to important changes between HROs and society. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter argue that a return to electoral democracy leads to the demobilization of civil society (1986, 55-56). HROs, often leading popular mobilization during the

¹ Alison Brysk (1994) includes the Jewish Human Rights Movement (MJDH) as one of the Historical HROs and excludes the Children of the Disappeared (HIJOS). Since the publication of Brysk's book, MJDH has become significantly less active and is no longer considered a Historical HRO by the other Historical HROs. The Children of the Disappeared did not exist when Brysk's book was published.

² The Madres de Plaza de Mayo split in 1986. The original group took on the name Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo and the splinter group took the name Madres de Plaza de Mayo-Linéa Fundador. Many reasons are given for why the HRO split. Some people argued that the Mothers split due to class differences: members of the Mothers Association are predominantly working-class, while those involved in the Madres-Linéa Fundador are primarily middle-class. Others argue that the strong personality of Madres de Plaza de Mayo president Hebe de Bonafini led to divisions within the HRO and to the Madres-Linéa Fundador choosing a non-hierarchical organization. The Asociación Madres identifies the primary reason for the split to be a disagreement over the question of whether or not to accept reparation. The Asociación Madres is against reparation. Directly confronting the Mothers-Founding Line, the Mothers Association displays a banner in the Plaza de Mayo at their weekly protests that states "Those who

transition to electoral democracy, are no longer united with large segments of society against a clear and identifiable enemy (Ibid). Many people, who once focused on fighting an authoritarian government, find new representation through political parties and unions; others demobilize out of activist fatigue (Ibid; Canel 1992; OXHORN 1999; WILLIAMS 2001). Despite the changes, this section reveals that the 1980s in Argentina were characterized by the continuation of large demonstrations demanding 'truth and justice' (the slogan of the human rights movement at the time) for what occurred during the dictatorship and an opening of the media to issues concerning human rights.

Demonstrations

The centrality of human rights with the return to electoral democracy gave many people hope that 'truth and justice' would be achieved. 'Truth' was the desire of Argentine society to know what happened during the dictatorship. 'Justice' meant the trial and punishment of all those involved in human rights abuses during the dictatorship. From the beginning it was clear that government fulfillment of 'truth and justice' would require the mobilization of people in demonstrations to let their voices be heard. Aldo Pérez Esquivel, leader of the Solidarity HRO Peace and Justice Service and Nobel Peace Prize winner, told a crowd at a 1983 demonstration: "Only popular organization and demonstrations, peaceful but firm and active, can confront and stop the continuing project of the dictatorship" (SERPAJ June 1983, 13). The Historical HROs were persistent leaders in the organization of these demonstrations.

In 1983, two large demonstrations of approximately 45,000 people were held to reject the military's self amnesty law (SERPAJ June 1983, 13; SERPAJ Aug. 1983, 63). Newly elected President Raúl Alfonsín responded favourably to the demands of the people and repealed the military's self-amnesty. Beginning in 1985, when Alfonsín began to enact his own amnesty laws, more large demonstrations were held (CELS bulletin Dec. 1985, 1; CELS bulletin June 1987, 1; CELS bulletin Oct. 1987, 1; AMPM 1999, 109).

The collective action frame of the demonstrations in the 1980s was 'truth and justice' for what happened during the dictatorship. The justification for HROs demanding truth and justice was that these issues were seen as necessary in order to ensure the protection of rights and the family during democracy. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo who lost their children during the dictatorship and had led

accept reparation are prostituting themselves." Reparation is the financial compensation that has been offered by the

the resistance against the military regime were important actual and symbolic leaders of the demonstrations during the 1980s. The Mothers represented the family and the ability for people outside the government to create change. As participation levels in demonstrations reveal, large segments of Argentine society agreed with the collective action frame of the HROs that democracy requires truth and justice for the violation of civil rights that occurred during the dictatorship due to the devastating impact such abuses have on the family. As Lucas Orfanó said, speaking for Familiares (one of the Affected HROs) at a large demonstration in 1983: “The presence of this huge crowd shows us that we have achieved what we proposed. We are not alone. (...) Because our truth is the Truth, and this shows that the Argentine people have heard us” (SERPAJ June 1983, 11).

The Media

The resumption of electoral democracy had an even more noticeable impact on the coverage of human rights issues by the media. During the dictatorship, coverage of human rights abuses was minimal. The cost for journalists interested in exposing the abuses of the regime was high. According to the *Nunca Más* (Never Again) report, 84 journalists disappeared between 1976 and 1983 (CONADEP 1984, 372-4). For the Argentine media, the return to electoral democracy led to what Alison Brysk describes as “a cathartic explosion of revelations of human rights violations, reinterpretations of the past, and the emergence of a diverse and critical spectrum of new sources of information” (1994, 127; CELS 1995, 164 provides a similar description). That is, human rights became a central media topic due in part to decreased state repression of journalists. However, the use of HROs as authoritative sources by journalists was met with a certain degree of residual fear.

First, the media’s focus on human rights issues in the 1980s was linked to some extent to their preference for the coverage of dramatic and visible events (Kielbowicz & Scherer 1986; Gamson 1992; Smith et. al. 2001). The 1985 trials of prominent military leaders and the many large demonstrations held to reject the various amnesty laws, provided ample and continual human rights events for media coverage. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo played a leading role in many of the human rights demonstrations. The Mothers’ image as grieving mothers and their identifiable white headscarves, made them excellent visual symbols of the human rights movement in the media.

Moreover, reporters' professional values or orientations towards their work were certainly influenced by the dictatorship. Many journalists had been targets of repression or had colleagues who had been. In 1987, *Página/12* (a national Argentine newspaper) was established by ex-political prisoners and represented a need for journalists and many in Argentine society to focus on issues of human rights. *Página/12* emphasizes issues of human rights and HROs, likely further increasing the coverage of human rights issues by the competing newspapers. In the 1980s, *Página/12*'s estimated sales were approximately 60,000 (Brysk, 1994:128).

While decreased state repression of journalists led in part to increased coverage of human rights issues, there did remain some residual fear among journalists regarding what could and could not be said. Notably, the use of HROs as authoritative sources (contacts for information and views on major issues) by journalists in the 1980s was mixed. Some media sources respected organizations such as the Madres de Plaza de Mayo as authoritative sources, while others continued to question whether or not they were "subversive." For example, Herman Schiller (leader of the Jewish Human Rights Movement (MJDH)) wrote about the 1988 media coverage of the locating of the missing grandchild, Juliana Sandoval, and her return to her legitimate family. Schiller argued that the majority of the media coverage used the event as a way to "subliminally support kidnapers, tortures and murderers; and at the same time, by elevation, to cast shadows upon those who – like las Madres y Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, Familiares of the Disappeared and Detained for Political Reasons and other human rights organizations – struggle so that the fierce genocide perpetrated by the armed forces does not remain unpunished" (SERPAJ Aug.-Sept.-Oct.1988, 5).

Hence, the issue of human rights and the abuses of the past dictatorship inherent in the collective action frames of the HROs resonated as important for journalists in the 1980s. However, the manner in which the collective action frame of the HROs was communicated to the public was not necessarily always favourable to the organizations.

Changes in the Collective Action Frames

The attention given to the human rights abuses of the dictatorship in the 1980s came not only from media coverage and high attendance at demonstrations. HROs worked hard to ensure their

message was heard and this work was financially supported by many international sources – sources that disappeared for most HROs in the 1990s.³ HROs used paid statements (*solicitudes*) in newspapers to publicize their positions and inform people of human rights events (demonstrations, public talks etc.). HROs promoted human rights issues through public education in the form of public talks, popular education and work with the school system.

The arts community also played an important role in promoting human rights, often working closely with HROs. Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo benefited the most from connections with the arts community in the 1980s. For example, las Madres were invited on stage when the pop singer Sting came to Buenos Aires in 1987. Also, a large number of films were made about the human rights abuses of the last dictatorship that featured HROs. One of the most well known films from the 1980s, *The Official Story*, highlights the struggle of the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. Another well-known film, *La Noche de los Lápices*, has the main character march with las Madres de Plaza de Mayo.

While during the dictatorship the collective action frame of the HROs was articulated by the slogan “*aparición con vida*”, and the slogan after the return to electoral democracy became “truth, justice and against impunity,” the essential message was the same. HROs presented their collective action frame as the need for the protection of rights in order to protect the integrity of the family. Mothers remained central representatives of the family and of the possibility of achieving truth, justice and the enforcement of rights. The proximity in time to the dictatorship and the desire of society to begin to build democracy made addressing the human rights abuses of the last dictatorship central for Argentine society, the media and HROs. HROs were in an excellent position to have their message, close to how they articulated it, heard and supported by society.

Demobilization, Remobilization and Privatization, 1989-1999

³ Only the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo and el Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) did not see a decrease in their funding after the 1980s. The international fame of las Madres de Plaza de Mayo and their continued work to maintain their international profile has led to continued economic support from international solidarity groups (AMPM 1999). One of the founders of el Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, the late Emilio Mignone, had work for the Organization of American States (OAS) and consequently brought important connections, particularly in the United States, to CELS that the organization has maintained and developed (interview with a member of CELS May 10, 2001, Buenos Aires; CELS website).

While the amnesty laws decreased hope in Argentine society that justice would be found for the crimes committed during the dictatorship, new issues began to emerge. Upon election in 1989, President Carlos Menem began to aggressively pursue a radical neo-liberal economic plan. Judith Teichman posits that “probably no other country carried out a market reform program as rapidly and as thoroughly as did Argentina under Carlos Menem” (2001, 111). Almost all public firms were privatized and unemployment increased dramatically. In 1989, unemployment in Argentina was at 7%; by 1995 it was at 18.4% (Teichman 2001, 222 – also see INDEC). In 1997, 80% of all new jobs were unstable, 29.3% of the economically active population was underemployed or unemployed (Pozzi 2000, 75).

Not only did increased unemployment and job instability further contribute to a shift in societal concern from the human rights abuses of the last dictatorship to pressing socio-economic concerns, but the traditional vehicle for voicing socio-economic concerns, unions, had been weakened by the new economic policies. Corporatism had traditionally given unions a strong voice in government decisions; however, this tradition weakened under Menem (Teichman 2001, 115). In addition, neo-liberal economic policies and rising unemployment decreased the number of workers unions had to represent. Rather than demobilizing, human rights organizations were able to maintain the relevance of human rights to society (experiential commensurability) by linking human rights with the emerging socio-economic issues, achieved by expanding the definition of rights in the central collective action frame of HROs. However, while achieving frame alignment with other SMOs engaged in social protest, the broadening of the definition of rights in the collective action frame of HROs did not necessarily increase media coverage of their work.

Demonstrations

According to a 1997 Centre for Legal and Social Studies report, 80% of protests in Argentina that were held between 1989 and 1992, were organized by unions (1997:344). The protests were primarily in the form of strikes and the major issues concerned better salaries and the defence of existing jobs (CELS, 2001:166). Between 1992 and 1996, there was a substantial increase in the number of non-union protests such as rural organization, local or provincial revolts, and demands for civil rights or justice (CELS, 1997:345). The Centre for Legal and Social Studies reports that between 1989 and 1996 there were approximately 2000 protests (Ibid, 346).

Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo are noted by el Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales as having continued to play an important role protests in the 1990s. The Mothers' organization of human rights protests, such as the weekly Thursday marches and the annual March of Resistance, is explained to have expanded to include their important "role in protests against the economic situation and their support of other protest groups such as student protests" (CELS 1997, 345). The emerging link between the human rights abuses of the last dictatorship and the protests against the new socio-economic situation perhaps contributed to the impressive attendance at the march commemorating twenty years since the last coup held on 24 March 1996. Approximately 100,000 people attended the event held in the Plaza de Mayo (SERPAJ Dec. 1996, 2; *Página/12* February 15, 2001) under the slogan "Memory, Truth and Justice." Of the eight demands made by the organizing committee⁴, the seventh concerned not only issues related to the civil rights abuses of the last dictatorship but that "there will not be truth nor justice while this [economic] model of hunger and unemployment continues" (CTA 1996).

In 1996/97, new forms of protest began to emerge. Most notably, poor unemployed people in the provinces of Argentina began to resist neo-liberal reforms by setting up *cortes de ruta*. These protesters have come to be known as *piqueteros*. In 1997, there were 104 road blocks. In 1998, there was one *corte de ruta* per week. By 1999, there was a *corte de ruta* every day and a half (CELS 2001, 166). The road blocks last anywhere from a few hours to weeks (CELS 1998,168). The demands of *piqueteros* concern unemployment and the need for increased social spending on particularly, education and health (Ibid, 169).

HROs responded to the changes in collective action and the changing political climate by adapting their collective action frames. The justification for the change in the focus of the collective action frame depended on the HRO.

The Solidarity HROs had always based their demands for the protection of human rights in the need to meet the rights outlined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the San José, Costa Rica Pact. These international charters of human rights include socio-economic rights, and so all the Solidarity HROs had been addressing socio-economic rights to some degree since these HROs began. Prior to the amnesty laws the HROs and Argentine society believed that it was possible that those

⁴ More than 100 organizations participated in the preparations for the March 24, 1996 demonstration. Preparations

people responsible for the human rights abuses of the last dictatorship would be punished. The amnesty laws combined with the new economic crisis led to a decrease in what Robert Benford and David Snow call 'experiential commensurability' between the claims of HROs for truth and justice pertaining to the crimes of the last dictatorship and the immediate concern of Argentine society for the economic crisis. Consequently, after the amnesty laws were passed in the late 1980s and the economic crisis began, Solidarity HROs began to work increasingly on socio-economic rights as important issues of human rights (interviews with members of all Solidarity HROs (see Appendix 2), SERPAJ's *Paz y Justicia*, CELS bulletins and annual reports).

The widening of the scope of human rights to include the major issues of the day was met with a number of challenges. First, some HROs had a significant number of members who were devoted Peronists. Some Solidarity HRO members stated that Peronist members were less likely to support criticisms of the Peronist Menem government and sometimes, outright opposed the HROs' pursuit of public criticism of Menem's socio-economic policies (interview with a member MEDH, Buenos Aires, May 3, 2001). Second, all the Solidarity HROs, with the exception of el Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, experienced a drastic cut in funding from their international supporters. The reasons given for decreases in funding were similar across the HROs and included the following: First, the international perception was that Argentina was now a democracy and other countries were in more need of funding for human rights work. Second, convertibility (the tying of the peso to the U.S. dollar) and the subsequent increase in the cost of living and activist work in Argentina meant that the amount of money needed by HROs was greater than what was needed for activist work in many European countries, countries that had been providing the HROs with most of their funding. Hence, the value of the money received from European funding sources was reduced. Third, changes in the socio-economic policies of many European countries decreased the money available for donations from Europe (interviews with members of MEDH, SERPAJ, APDH, and La Liga). El Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales receives considerably more funding from the United States than the other HROs due to their strong connections in the U.S. and their willingness to work with organizations such as the Ford Foundation.⁵

included two National Meetings (CTA 1996, capitalization theirs).

⁵ The Ford Foundation is boycotted by many HROs due to the Ford Company's connections with the last dictatorship and, allegedly, the World War Two holocaust. Ford Falcons were the cars used by the military to kidnap people

The Solidarity HROs were in a better position than the Affected HROs to make a transition in their collective action frames from a focus on the abuses of human rights during the last dictatorship to appeal to the increasing socio-economic concerns of Argentine society. However, the Solidarity HROs were generally weakened in their actions during the 1990s due to decreased funding and internal disputes. Coordinated work with the other Historical HROs, as well as other social movement organizations, remained important for the Solidarity HROs. The emergence of the CTA (Central de Trabajadores Argentinos) in 1996 – a union confederation focused on democracy, a wide definition of workers (including the unemployed), and strong connections with social movements -- gradually became an important partner for all the HROs in organizing large events.

In contrast to Solidarity HROs, the basis for the organization of the Affected HROs is what happened to their loved ones during the last dictatorship. Their relationship to these lost loved ones is central to their symbolic importance and their continued activism. Gradually, all the Affected HROs have incorporated socio-economic issues into their definition of human rights.⁶ The premise for the incorporation of these additional rights was based on a number of issues. First, some Affected HROs strongly believed that part of what kept their loved ones alive for them was continuing their struggle. The struggle of the disappeared was primarily concerned with socio-economic issues. The Affected HROs who most vocally pursue the struggle of the disappeared are the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Asociación Madres) and HIJOS. Second, almost all Affected HROs have taken the position that they are important representatives or voices for the family in Argentina and, like the disappearances, socio-economic issues are threatening the integrity of the family for which mothers are particularly responsible (Interviews with members of all Affected HROs). That is, the historical frame of women's political participation that emphasizes women's role as representatives of the family has contributed to the Affected HROs' willingness to respond to the emerging socio-economic concerns of Argentine society.

during the Argentine Dirty War and some Ford factories in Argentina were used as clandestine detention centres. HROs refusing to take money from the Ford Foundation include the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo-Founding Line, the Association Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, the Ecumenical Human Rights Movement, and the Human Rights League. The HROs with the strongest connections with the Ford Foundation are the Centre for Legal and Social Studies and the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo. (Interviews with members of all the HROs)

⁶ As explained in the introductory chapter, the expansion of the definition of rights pursued by HROs to include socio-economic rights is a phenomenon that has occurred across Latin America in response to structural adjustment and economic crisis (see for example, Blacklock & MacDonald 1998; Elson 1992).

Las Abuelas have been the least vocal regarding socio-economic rights. While the Abuelas do have the concrete and time-consuming task finding their missing grandchildren, HIJOS could have similarly limited their work to helping children of the disappeared find their grandparents, but they have not.⁷ The Abuelas made a choice to be a single-issue organization focused on finding their missing grandchildren. The focus has provided the Abuelas a positive relationship with the various governments and has allowed them to benefit from the use of the courts. Focusing on the missing grandchildren has allowed the Abuelas to emphasize a “project” over “politics” (interview, Alba Lansiloto, Buenos Aires, April 20, 2001), the latter carrying for them connotations of corruption and opportunism. Since the work of the Abuelas relies primarily on government cooperation and very little on wide societal support created through demonstrations,⁸ it remains important that the Abuelas’ collective action frame not threaten the government. The Abuelas do not reject the inclusion of socio-economic issues as human rights and often sign their name to statements made by all the Historical HROs regarding socio-economic issues. But, they do not take an independent stance on socio-economic issues that could jeopardize their positive relationship with the state.

The reluctance of the Abuelas to engage strongly in the struggle for socio-economic issues that began to lead social protest in Argentina beginning in the mid-1990s was not unfounded. While the state had been relatively respectful of human rights demonstrations in the 1980s, the response to societal protests against the government’s socio-economic policies was met with increasing repression in the 1990s (Human Rights Watch 1998, 98; Human Rights Watch 1999, 102-103; Amnesty International 1995, 59; Amnesty International 1996, 77-78). While police repression of protest prior to 1996 is described by el Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales as “selective” (CELS 1997, 344), the beginning of cortes de ruta changed the levels of repression. In March 1997, the budget for security forces and provincial police was increased by 180 million pesos; the money was given for the explicit purpose of combating social

⁷ A clear example of the contrasting approaches of the Grandmothers compared to the Children of the Disappeared occurred on 5 March 2001. The wife of then Governor of Buenos Aires Carlos Ruckauf held an event for International Women’s Day at which the president of the Grandmothers, Estela Carlotto, was to be honoured for her work. HIJOS held an *escrache* (protest) against Carlos Ruckauf, disrupting the event (*Página/12* March 6, 2001, 19). As Minister of Labour under Isabel Perón, Ruckauf signed the decree that gave the military the power “to quell subversive elements in the entire territory of the country” (Ibid).

⁸ In an interview in *Página/12*’s insert on women, *LAS/12*, Grandmothers’ President Estela Carlotto described the weekly Thursday marches in the Plaza de Mayo held by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo as of little importance and as “primarily a tourist attraction” (Jan.5, 2001: 2-4).

conflict (CELS, 1998:169-170).⁹ The judiciary was also given the power to attempt to stop socio-economic protests. In 1997, there were an accumulated 600 penal cases against union leaders, delegates and activists for petitioning authorities, strikes, and expressing their ideas publicly (CELS, 1998:173). On 20 April 1997, *Clarín* (Argentine national newspaper) reported a secret document written by the Gendarmería Nacional and others that stated the intention of protesters was to achieve “a change in structures, even at intolerable costs to the established democratic order” (Ibid: 170-1). The Centre for Legal and Social Studies argues that the attempt in this report and others that followed was to show then President Menem that protesters, and particularly the *piqueteros*, represented “pre-subversive” activity and were “potentially insurreccional” (Ibid:171).¹⁰

While the political environment and the reasons for the mobilization of large numbers of Argentines shifted from justice for human rights abuses committed during the dictatorship to socio-economic issues, HROs had important issues to consider before expanding their collective action frames to reflect the concerns of Argentine society. Among the issues HROs had to consider were: why the HRO was concerned about human rights; how much funding was available to them; and what their relationship with the government was like. However, the need to maintain experiential commensurability, and hence maintain the resonance of their collective action frames, required HROs to not only justify their demands for the enforcement of universal rights in the need to protect the family but to expand their definitions of rights to include socio-economic rights that also threaten the integrity of the family.

Media

The media responds to changes in types of protests and the primary interests and concerns of society (Kielbowicz and Scherer, 1986). In Argentina in the 1990s, the changes in types of protests and issues of pressing concern moved from the human rights abuses from the last dictatorship to socio-economic issues. The shift in the media to increased coverage of socio-economic issues was not smooth. Not only were the government and security forces involved in increased repression of social protest against socio-economic policies, but many journalists became targets of repression for covering both demonstrations and issues pertaining to socio-economic rights (Amnesty International, 1997). The Centre

⁹ On 26 February 1990, President Menem promulgated a decree “authorizing the intervention of the armed forces in situations of social unrest” (Human Rights Watch, 1991a:114).

for Legal and Social Studies¹¹ summarizes the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s for the media in Argentina by positing that “While in the 1980s there was a noticeable opening of the media, in the 1990s it became apparent that censorship and repression against journalists continued” (CELS, 1995:164).¹² Consequently, repression of the media became a central issue in the coverage of HROs in the media in the 1990s, affecting both the coverage of some HROs and their use by journalists as authoritative sources.

President Menem played an important role in limiting the freedom of the press in the 1990s. The president put pressure on the media to stop criticizing the government by pursuing court cases against journalists and making derogatory public speeches about the media.¹³ The Centre for Legal and Social Studies reports that between 1990 and 1996, ten civil and criminal court cases initiated by President Menem or members of his family were pursued against the weekly magazine *Noticias* alone (CELS,1997:305; Human Rights Watch, 1998:100). Upon re-election in 1995, President Menem gave a speech from Government House in which he stated “We have not only won out over the opposition parties but also the media” (CELS, 1998:110). In 1997, President Menem was publicly recognized by the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (New York) and the Freedom Forum as having pursued more court cases against journalists than any other president in the Americas (CELS, 1998:122, 128). By 2 October 1997, President Menem was speaking about a “dictatorship of the press” (CELS,1998:145) and by June had identified the well known journalist and member (now president) of the Centre for Legal and Social Studies, Horacio Verbitsky, as “one of the great terrorists that Argentina has had” (CELS,1998:132; Human Rights Watch, 1991(b):143¹⁴).

¹⁰ In 1998, Menem initiated legislation that defined the act of “criminal conspiracy,” that would permit all police to detain individuals on the basis of their “suspicious attitudes” (Human Rights Watch, 1998:97).

¹¹ While the Centre for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) is one of the HROs I am studying, it is also a reputable source of information on human rights abuses in Argentina. Well known and respected political scientists are members of the organization’s executive, including Guillermo O’Donnell and José Nun (CELS, 2002). Human Rights Watch has used human rights figures and information from CELS’ annual reports (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

¹² Human Rights Watch reports that in 1998 police brutality was the top human rights concern in Argentina and that one of their primary targets was independent journalists (1998:97). The degree of repression faced by journalists in Argentina in the 1990s led Amnesty International to write two special reports on the issue, one in January 1994 and the other 8 May 1998 (see bibliography).

¹³ In their 1992 report, Human Rights Watch state that “Página 12 has suffered unrestrained verbal attacks from the government, particularly from President Menem, which go well beyond legitimate criticism” (1991(b):142-143).

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch states that President Menem referred to Horacio Verbitsky as a “criminal journalist” (1991(b):143).

The position of the president likely gave other political figures the leadership they needed to make similar statements. On 31 March 1997, the Archbishop of Córdoba, Monseñor Marcelo Martorell, stated that the press “is dominated by the devil” (CELS, 1998:124). In May of the same year, the Minister of the Interior, Carlos Corach publicly linked the increase in social protest to the media. Corach stated that the increased number of road blocks were due to their “excessive” coverage by the press, because “the road blocks are done to get the attention of the press” (CELS, 1998:130).¹⁵

In 1999, the Buenos Aires Union of Press Workers (UTPBA) reported that in the last ten years there had been 1,120 threats and attacks on journalists (CELS, 2000:389).¹⁶ In 1997 alone, there were approximately eight cases of threats, death threats, attacks or court cases against journalists for critical reporting on socio-economic issues, approximately 16 for criticizing the government (national or provincial), and approximately 8 for criticizing the police (CELS, 1998:107-166).

On 25 January 1997, the photo-journalist, José Luis Cabezas, was found dead in Pinamar. Cabezas had been killed in the same manner that people had been killed during the dictatorship (CELS, 1998:21).¹⁷ All political analysts immediately suspected that the Buenos Aires provincial police were the perpetrators of the crime (Ibid: 20); a Chief of Police was accused of firing the shot that killed Cabezas (Amnesty International, May 1998). The reason for Cabezas’s death was thought to be one of two possible events. First, since April 1996 Cabezas had been writing critical reports on the police for which he had been receiving death threats (CELS, 1998:23; Human Rights Watch, 1998:99). Second, in 1996, Cabezas was successful in taking a picture of a powerful businessman suspected of corruption, Alfredo Yabrán. Upon the photo being published, Yabrán stated that the picture was “equivalent to shooting him in the head” (CELS, 1998:24). In 1997, over 14 journalists received threats, attacks or death threats as a result of their protesting or covering the death of Cabezas (CELS, 1998:107-166; Human Rights Watch, 1998:99). In many cases, the journalists were threatened or accused of being “subversives” (Human Rights Watch, 1998:99).

¹⁵ Corach also called for an ‘Ethics Tribunal’ to be established to “punish journalist whose conduct was not deemed to be professional” (Amnesty International, May 1998).

¹⁶ Between March 1992 and August 1993, Amnesty International found over 100 cases of recorded death threats and assaults on journalists (1994:60). Human Rights Watch reports that between 1995 and October 1998, 43 journalists had been attacked in Argentina (1998:99).

¹⁷ Retired Navy Captain Alfredo Astiz publicly insinuated that Cabezas had been killed “with some official involvement” (Human Rights Watch, 1998:100).

The media as an intermediary between the government and social movements is weakened when it is subject to attack by the government or security forces. If the media is accused by the state of representing a “dictatorship,” being composed of “terrorists,” and being dominated by the “devil” (see previous statements by President Menem and Archbishop Marcelo Martorell), then the media is likely to sympathize more with social movements, particularly human rights organizations, than the state.

However, the collective action frames of all the HROs are not treated by the media in the same manner. The Centre for Legal and Social Studies (one of the Solidarity HROs) received a great deal of press coverage in the 1990s due to its involvement in court cases and Horacio Verbitsky’s (now president of the Centre for Legal and Social Studies) high profile and work with *Página/12*. The Centre for Legal and Social Studies also worked very closely with the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in the 1990s, helping them with their court cases regarding stolen children. The Grandmothers’ favourable position with the government and image as grandmothers only seeking to put their families back together made them a relatively low risk HRO to cover. A senior editor at the Buenos Aires Herald (interview, Andrew Graham-Yooll, Buenos Aires, April 3, 2001) described the media coverage of the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in the following manner. The editor argued that the Mothers Association president, Hebe de Bonafine’s, personality was one that was hard to feel empathy for because, he argued, you are either with her or you are not. The Mothers-Founding Line, he argued, have expanded the definition of human rights too much, so their message has become less clear and therefore less easy to empathize with. The Grandmothers, on the other hand, have remained clear about their cause. The editor argued that the president of the Grandmothers, “Estela Carlotto will meet with all government officials and uses them as contacts. The Grandmothers can show concrete results” (Ibid).

Three important issues are brought up in the analysis of the editor, Hebe de Bonafini’s personality, the expansion of the definition of human rights, and HROs’ relationship with the government. First, Mothers Association president Hebe de Bonafini is known for her “radical” speeches against the government. For example, Bonafini’s public comments regarding government policy in 1990 and 1991 led to the Mothers Association receiving death threats and being labelled by President Menem as “traitors to the motherland” (Amnesty International, 1992:58). Considering the already high levels of repression against journalists for criticizing the government, Bonafini’s inflammatory language was likely something

most Argentine media sources wanted to avoid covering. Second, the Mothers-Founding Line certainly expanded their definition of human rights, as did all the Historical HROs in the 1990s. It is possible that the inclusion of socio-economic issues into most HROs' primary collective action frame has made HROs more risky for the media to cover than when, particularly women, emphasized their traditional role as mothers and grandmothers who had lost their children. Finally, the editor of the Buenos Aires Herald portrayed the Grandmothers' position of working with the government favourably. Again, working with the government represents a willingness to refrain from strong criticism of the government, an action with positive consequences for media coverage. A more extensive analysis of media coverage of HROs will be provided in the next section (2000-2002).

Hence, while the media shifted its focus from the substantial coverage of human rights issues to the substantial coverage of socio-economic issues¹⁸, the shift in focus came at a cost. State repression of journalists became more evident in the 1990s. This tension impacted the type of coverage received by HROs. It appears that HROs that maintained a positive relationship with the government and avoided a public focus on socio-economic issues received more coverage in the media and were used as authoritative sources more often than HROs who publicly pursued a broader and more confrontational definition of the rights. Evidence supporting this point will be developed in the next section.

Changing Collective Action Frames

While emerging socio-economic tensions provided the media with a new dramatic event that was of immediate concern for many Argentines, the repression of the media for covering the new issue was an important consideration for journalists. Consequently, the choice of the majority of HROs to expand the meaning of their collective action frame to incorporate socio-economic issues was unlikely to have been made with the sole objective of obtaining media coverage. However, the HROs' expansion of the meaning of 'rights' and 'protection of the family' did facilitate frame alignment with other SMOs and strengthened the degree to which the collective action frame resonated with society at large, especially those they hoped to mobilize.

¹⁸ Data supporting the media's shift in focus from human rights issues to socio-economic issues will be provided later in this chapter through an analysis of *Página/12* (Argentine national newspaper) articles from September 2000 to June 2001. The reason for limiting the analysis on *Página/12* is provided immediately prior to the analysis.

Rights, the Family and Economic Crisis, 2000-2002

The new millennium brought a new president and further deepened Argentina's economic problems. In December 2001, the Argentine economy faced an unprecedented economic meltdown that led to the resignation of President Fernando De la Rúa and three subsequent presidents in a matter of two weeks. The connection for human rights organizations between the human rights abuses of the last dictatorship and present socio-economic issues has become even tighter. With rising crime and more discussion of the military's possible role in combating it, connecting the abuse of civil rights by the military and the need to protect socio-economic rights is becoming more and more important. This section will look at the growing links between human rights abuses of the last dictatorship and the increasing socio-economic issues through their expression in debates between HROs and society in demonstrations and the media.

Demonstrations

As seen in Tables 2 and 3, protests by the unemployed through road blocks and the number of general strikes increased significantly at the beginning of the new millennium.

Table 2: Increased Use of Roadblocks, 1997-2002

| Year | Number of Road Blocks Per Month |
|-------------|--|
| 1997 | 11 |
| 1998 | 4 |
| 1999 | 21 |
| 2000 | 43 |
| 2001 | 115 |
| 2002 | 244 ¹⁹ |

Source: Nueva Mayoría,²⁰ March 6, 2002, www.nuevamayoria.com

Table 3: Increase in General Strikes, President Alfonsín to De la Rúa

| President | Frequency of General Strikes |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Alfonsín | One every 6 months. |

¹⁹ The number of roadblocks per month is based only on the first two months of 2002 (Nueva Mayoría, March 6, 2002).

²⁰ Centro de Estudios Nueva Mayoría is an Argentine think tank headed by the U.S. political scientist Arturo Valenzuela.

| | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| Menem | One every 15 months. |
| De la Rúa | One every 3 months. |

Source: Nueva Mayoría, December 13, 2001, www.nuevamayoria.com

The protests were primarily motivated by growing unemployment and a decrease in social services such as health care and education (CELS, 1998:169; CELS, 2001:166). The HROs have attended road blocks and provided support to the *piqueteros*, but their primary work has been education. The Peace and Justice Service (Solidarity HRO), with the participation of the Mothers-Founding Line (Affected HRO), have organized *Diálogo 2000*, a coalition that disseminates information about the impact of neo-liberalism. *Diálogo 2000* meets twice a month and sometimes holds larger events such as photo and art contests on the theme of the external debt. The Peace and Justice Service also works on opposing the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) (Interview with a member of SERPAJ, Buenos Aires, Dec.14, 2000). Adolfo Pérez Esquivel (Peace and Justice Service) and Nora Cortiñas (Mothers-Founding Line) are often present at major events protesting the government's socio-economic policies. Along with Víctor Gennaro (leader of the union confederation CTA), Esquivel and Cortiñas are often seen at the front of such marches and gain media coverage.

The Permanent Human Rights Assembly, the Ecumenical Human Rights Movement and the Centre for Legal and Social Studies (Solidarity HROs) all have committees that focus on addressing human rights as they relate to socio-economic issues. The committees produce and disseminate written information, hold public events to discuss and draw attention to the issues, and use popular education to reach out to poorer communities. The Human Rights League (Solidarity HRO), the Children of the Disappeared, Families and the Grandmothers (Affected HROs) work with the other Historical HROs to formulate common positions regarding human rights and socio-economic issues. The Human Rights League provides legal assistance to people who are charged for crimes related to socio-economic issues.²¹

²¹ For example, the Human Rights League has assisted Emilio Alí against charges related to socio-economic issues. Emilio Alí is a leader of a union of neighbourhood organizations in Mar de Plata and member of the CTA. In 2001, Alí led a group of unemployed people to a well-known supermarket and asked for food. The event was non-violent. Alí was sentenced on 28 April 2001 to 5.5 years in jail for aggravated co action ("*coacción agravada*") and extortion (La Liga, flier, April 2001).

For the Mothers Association, socio-economic issues are central and are expressed more forcefully (some HROs say “radically”) than the other Historical HROs. The Mothers Association organizes its own events (usually parallel – same day, different time and location) with labour organizations and left wing political parties that are favourable to their position.²² The Mothers Association works on promoting socio-economic rights as central to human rights through publications, courses and public talks held at their bookstore and the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Popular University. (This position is evident in everything the Mother’s Association does, see for example: any issue of the Mothers Association publications, such as *Tierra de Todos* [newspaper], *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* [newspaper], *Locas: cultura y utopías* [periodical] and their website, www.madres.org). The Mothers Association is also actively engaged in popular education (Interview, Juanita, Buenos Aires, December 27, 2000).

For the Mothers Association, it is not only the need to protect the integrity of the family that motivates their activism on socio-economic issues (as is the case with the other HROs), but their need to continue the struggle of their missing children. The Mothers Association argues that the reason their children disappeared was because they struggled to change the socio-economic situation in the country. By pursuing the struggle against neo-liberal economic policies, the Mothers Association argues that they are keeping the memory of their children alive, what they call “active memory” (as opposed to monuments and museums).

In an open letter to the Argentine President in June 2002, the Mothers Association writes: “Our children gave their lives to the fight against the economic plan of Martínez de Hoz and Cavallo.²³ The same plan that was continued by Alfonsín, Menem, De la Rúa and today Duhalde” (June 5, 2002). Making a direct parallel with their children who disappeared and the children they see themselves representing today who are now dying of hunger, the Mothers Association goes on to explain that “The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo put the responsibility of the crime of *our* children’s hunger on all those who govern. We cannot accept that *our* children eat stuffed toads, rats, rotten food, sick horses in order to

²² Many of the labour organizations and political parties participate in both events. The events held by the Mothers Association tend to be smaller than those of the CTA, the Peace and Justice Service and the Mothers-Founding Line.

²³ José Martínez de Hoz was responsible for the economic policies of the last military regime. As explained in chapter three, Martínez de Hoz attempted to introduce market reforms. The failed reforms brought Argentina to bankruptcy between 1976 and 1981. Domingo Cavallo was the Economy Minister under President Carlos Menem and was responsible for Menem’s market reform measures.

survive” (June 5, 2002, italics mine). The Mothers Association draws on their spiritual or symbolic motherhood to expand the definition of rights and demand their enforcement.

The educational work of the HROs has not gone unnoticed. On 24 March 2001, a demonstration was held to commemorate twenty-five years since the last coup. The HROs (with the exception of the Mothers Association, who held their own event) coordinated, with approximately 200 other organizations, a march and public statement that linked the human rights abuses of the last dictatorship to the present socio-economic issues. The public statement had a lengthy title that stated: “30,000 Detained-Disappeared Present!”²⁴ The economic powers and each government that has been in power have guaranteed that the genocide given impunity yesterday continues with the genocide of today: Enough Hunger, Submission, Unemployment and Repression!” A summary of the major demands of the march included 19 points, six of which pertained to socio-economic issues and five pertaining to human rights abuses since the dictatorship include the repression of social protest and police violence against youth. Whereas traditionally the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo lead the march from Congreso to the Plaza de Mayo, in 2001 they were joined by Víctor Gennaro (leader of the CTA). Over 100,000 people participated in the march – the largest human rights demonstration since the 1980s. Many participants and observers argued that the reason for the large numbers of people was due to the event commemorating twenty-five years and the connection Argentine society was making between the past dictatorship and the present socio-economic issues.

Media

The severe economic crisis has led to a large degree of disillusionment regarding democracy in Argentina. According to a 2002 Latinobarometro survey, 90 per cent of Argentines have no confidence in either their government or their democratic institutions (BBC, Oct. 3, 2002). According to a poll conducted by the Centro de Estudios Nueva Mayoría (New Majority Research Centre) in April of 2001, the disillusionment Argentines have regarding their democratic institutions varies. According to the poll, one of the most positively regarded institutions is the media, with 44% of Argentines stating that they have a positive image of it (see Table 4).

²⁴ Human rights organizations in Argentina (particularly both groups of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) often make a point of emphasizing the centrality of the disappeared in their struggle by declaring their presence at human

Table 4: Image of the institutions

| Institutions | Positive | Fair | Negative | Don't know | Pos / Neg | Total |
|------------------|----------|------|----------|------------|-----------|-------|
| Catholic Church | 45% | 32% | 19% | 4% | 2,4 | 100% |
| Media | 44% | 41% | 14% | 1% | 3,1 | 100% |
| Armed Forces | 21% | 30% | 38% | 11% | 0,5 | 100% |
| Police | 15% | 32% | 50% | 3% | 0,3 | 100% |
| Business sector | 8% | 39% | 42% | 11% | 0,2 | 100% |
| Judicial Power | 6% | 32% | 57% | 5% | 0,1 | 100% |
| Congress | 6% | 29% | 62% | 3% | 0,1 | 100% |
| Trade Unions | 5% | 20% | 71% | 4% | 0,1 | 100% |
| Political Powers | 4% | 26% | 66% | 4% | 0,1 | 100% |

Source: Nueva Mayoría, www.nuevamayoria.com, May 18, 2001.

According to an earlier study by Nueva Mayoría, the reason for people's support for the media stems from a number of perceptions. Most importantly, the media "appears as the expression of social claims" and is seen as a better and more efficient way to report and fight corruption than any other political institution, including the judiciary or the Congress (Nueva Mayoría, November 2000). Considering the importance of the media for Argentines, it is significant to consider how HROs have been covered in the media at the beginning of the new millennium.

The repression of journalists²⁵ and a preference for articles on socio-economic issues has continued during the period of 2000-2002. Taking into consideration these issues, I will focus the analysis

rights events. This happens not only in written documents such as this one but also orally at events such as demonstrations, public talks and book launches.

²⁵ While President De la Rúa promised to care for, promote and protect freedom of the press, arguing that it is the "cornerstone of democracy" (*Página/12*, October 18, 2000:12), the repression of journalists continued. For example, Miguel Bonasso, a journalist for *Página/12*, was attacked outside his home by police. The reason for the attack suggested by *Página/12* was to threaten Bonasso regarding a book he had just completed on the 20 December 2001 repression (*Página/12*, November 27, 2002). A photojournalist, Alejandro Goldin of Indymedia Argentina was beaten by Federal Police officers while covering a demonstration outside the Brukman factory (which workers had taken over and the courts had banned the workers from) on 9 June 2002. The Argentine Journalists' Association argued that the evidence uncovered in the case "reveals a systematic plan [repression of journalists] to prevent the

of this section on how HROs have been covered in the media and the degree to which some HROs are considered authoritative sources. The analysis will focus on the coverage of HROs in *Página/12* (Argentine national newspaper) in the majority of issues from September 2000 to June 2001 (the time period of my field research).

Página/12 is one of the three major national Argentine newspapers (the others being *El Clarín* and *La Nación*). Andrew Graham-Yooll (Senior Editor, Buenos Aires Herald, English language newspaper) described the readership of the three newspapers in the following manner. Both *Página/12* and *La Nación* have loyal readerships who buy the respective newspapers regularly and will not buy any other newspaper. People who buy *El Clarín*, buy it out of economic necessity; it costs the same but it is fatter (interview, Buenos Aires, April 3, 2001). Of the newspapers, *Página/12* has the most coverage of human rights issues and human rights organizations (there are articles on these subjects almost every day). The newspaper's concern for human rights is part of its mandate to promote democracy that it has supported since its establishment in May of 1987 (*Página/12*, May 26, 2001). Based on my observation over the nine months I was in Buenos Aires from September 2000 to June 2001, I estimate that articles on human rights issues or human rights organizations or both in *El Clarín* and *La Nación* appear approximately once a week -- more often in March due to the annual commemoration of the 1976 coup. Due to the higher degree of coverage of human rights issues in *Página/12*, it is important to see how HROs have been covered in this newspaper. Given the favourable position of *Página/12* vis-à-vis human rights issues, if an HRO is not covered well in *Página/12* its coverage in the other newspapers is likely even less.

All the HROs agree that *Página/12* has helped them by covering their work (interviews with members of each of the Historical HROs, September 2000-June 2001). After *Página/12*, *Clarín* is noted by HROs to be the other media source that most covers their work (Ibid). All HROs go beyond waiting to be covered by newspapers and use paid statements as a way to get their message out in the manner they want it to be heard. Many of the paid statements are published by all the Historical HROs together (usually with the exception of the AMPM). Seventeen joint statements were published between September 2000 and June 2001. That said, not all HROs are covered by *Página/12* to the same degree (see Tables 5 and 6).

circulation of images during social protests" (*Página/12*, June 13, 2003). Also see Amnesty International Report

Table 5: *Página/12* coverage of 'Affected HROs' from September 2000-June 2001

| | Grand-mothers | Mothers Association | Mothers-Founding Line | Children of the Disappeared | Families | Total |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|------------|
| Paid ad or statement | 11 | 26 ²⁶ | 7 | 3 | 0 | 47 |
| Non-paid article or mention | 38 | 12 | 16 | 17 | 2 | 85 |
| Total | 49 | 38 | 23 | 20 | 2 | 132 |

Source: *Página/12*, September 20, 2000 to June 8, 2001.

Table 6: *Página/12* coverage of 'Solidarity HROs' from September 2000-June 2001

| | Centre for Legal and Social Studies | Ecumenical Human Rights Movement | Permanent Human Rights Assembly | Peace and Justice Service | Human Rights League | Total |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Paid ad or statement | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Non-paid article or mention | 24 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 42 |
| Total | 24 | 4 | 10 | 5 | 4 | 47 |

Source: *Página/12*, September 20, 2000 to June 8, 2001.

Comparing Table 5 to Table 6, we see that the organizations covered the most in *Página/12* between September 2000 and June 2001 were the Affected HROs with the exception of Families (who rarely organize events on their own). For most of the Affected HROs, the majority of articles on them were not paid for. However, the Mothers Association had to pay for two thirds of their coverage (more if their weekly supplements are included). No other historical HRO had the financial means²⁷ or need to pay for an equivalent amount of coverage. The paid advertising of the Mothers Association (in combination with fliers and newspapers available at the Mothers Association bookstore) suggest that the Mothers Association was involved during this period in many newsworthy events, including demonstrations and

2003 and Human Rights Watch Report 2000 (1999:103).

²⁶ This figure does not include at least 33 weekly inserts put out by the Mothers Association. The weekly supplement put out by the Mothers Association's Popular University in *Página/12* consisted of about four pages on a particular topic. The articles were usually written by intellectuals associated with the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Popular University and were about ideas rather than news.

public talks by high profile people, that were not covered in non-paid articles. In contrast, the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo were mentioned or had articles written on them that were unpaid more often than any other HRO.

Some articles on the Grandmothers were written by a journalist sympathetic to human rights issues, Victoria Ginzberg²⁸ (3), and the Grandmothers gained coverage in six articles for their involvement in court cases with the Centre for Legal and Social Studies (whose president is also a leading journalist for *Página/12*). However, the single largest issue covered on the Grandmothers was their nomination by Argentine politicians for the Nobel Peace Prize (ten articles). An article was written every time a politician publicly declared his or her support of the Grandmother's nomination. That is, the government was publicly stating that they approved of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and hence the need for journalists to fear repression for covering the organization was reduced.²⁹ Possibly as a result, there were more articles written about the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo -- who they are as an organization -- than any other historical HRO. The Grandmothers did not necessarily have to do anything newsworthy to have articles written about them. In contrast to nine articles about the organization Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo (who they are and what they do generally), only the Children of the Disappeared (2 articles) and the Permanent Human Rights Assembly (1 article) had comparable articles written on them. That is, most other HROs have to do something newsworthy in order to have articles written about them.

The only Solidarity HRO that was covered substantially was the Centre for Legal and Social Studies (CELS). The majority of articles that mentioned or focused on the Centre for Legal and Social studies pertained to court cases the organization was involved in (15 out of 24 articles), including courts cases that they were working on with the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo. CELS was the only HRO that received substantial coverage without paying for any of it. Eleven of the 24 articles that mentioned or focused on CELS were written by Horacio Verbitsky (1) or Victoria Ginzberg (3) or made mention of

²⁷ The Mothers Association has substantial funding from international solidarity organizations around the world (AMPM, 1999).

²⁸ Victoria Ginzberg is a member of the Children of the Disappeared (interview, Alba Lansiloto, Buenos Aires, April 20, 2001).

²⁹ While the connection between the De la Rúa government and the repression of journalists is unclear, Amnesty International reported that in the 1990s there were widespread allegations that the ruling Peronist Party was responsible for at least some of the attacks on journalists (1994:60). In 1994, a *Página/12* journalist was attacked after writing about links between attacks on journalists and the government. The journalist was told that he would be killed if he continued to publish such articles (Ibid).

Horacio Verbitsky (7). Horacio Verbitsky is not only the president of CELS but is also a leading journalist for *Página/12* and hence a likely authoritative source for *Página/12* on human rights issues. Victoria Ginzberg is a member of the Children of the Disappeared (interview, Alba Lansiloto, Buenos Aires, April 20, 2001) and hence is another likely authoritative source at *Página/12* on human rights issues. Victoria Ginzberg also wrote one article on the Children of the Disappeared during this period and three articles on the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo. The Permanent Human Rights Assembly was the second most covered Solidarity HRO with ten articles written on the organization. However, almost half of the articles (four of the ten) pertained to a court case the Permanent Human Rights Assembly was working on with the Centre for Legal and Social Studies and the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

In the majority of *Página/12* issues from September 2000 to June 2001, Families, the Ecumenical Human Rights Movement, the Peace and Justice Service, the Human Rights League and the Permanent Human Rights Assembly (all Solidarity HROs with the exception of Families) received relatively little mention in the newspaper. These organizations tend to appear in statements that they paid for, small announcements regarding events such as public talks being held by them, and, from time to time, small statements regarding their opinion on human rights events. The Peace and Justice Service is sometimes mentioned when their co-ordinator and Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel attends events. When interviewed, members of the Ecumenical Human Rights Movement, the Peace and Justice Service, and the Permanent Human Rights Assembly, were aware that they are not widely covered in the newspapers, did not suggest a reason why, and did not seem particularly concerned. In interviews, members of Families, the Ecumenical Human Rights Movement, the Peace and Justice Service, and the Permanent Human Rights Assembly emphasized that they receive their best coverage when working together with the other Historical HROs.³⁰

For none of the HROs was their participation in demonstrations, or their organization of them a primary reason for their coverage in the newspaper. Only the Children of the Disappeared had significant

³⁰ A member of the Human Rights League stated that their low profile in the media was likely due to their left-wing position (most people consider the Human Rights League to be affiliated with the Communist Party, although members of the Human Rights League deny that the connection is very strong).

coverage of their participation in demonstrations (6), half of which were of their *escraches*.³¹ For most of the Historical HROs the single issue that received the most coverage in the newspaper was their organization of or participation in arts, fundraising and public education events (Mothers-Founding Line³², Children of the Disappeared³³, Mothers Association³⁴, Permanent Human Rights Assembly, Ecumenical Human Rights Movement and the Peace and Justice Service). The articles ranged in size from notes regarding when and where the event would be held to larger articles about the event and the organization.

Moreover, work of HROs in support of socio-economic issues as human rights issues did not receive very much coverage either. Of the 229 articles about or mentioning the Historical HROs (including 17 group paid statements and 33 Mothers Association inserts), only 27 (or 12%) addressed the position of the HROs on socio-economic issues. Of those 27 articles, approximately two thirds of them (17) were paid for by the respective HRO. The majority of non-paid articles (6 of 10) noted the presence of HROs or their prominent members at demonstrations and only two of these explained the connection the HROs were making between the human rights abuses of the past and the present socio-economic issues. However, all the HROs were mentioned in some manner in connection to socio-economic issues even if the organization's name was simply mentioned along with all the other Historical HROs.

³¹ An *escrache* is a demonstration where the Children of the Disappeared reveals to neighbours and media where someone responsible for human rights abuses during the last dictatorship lives, drawing attention to the fact that the person is not in jail for the crimes he committed.

³² Coverage of the Mothers-Founding Line in *Página/12* was primarily in reference to artistic fundraising events, the launching of their new magazine and other events. During this nine-month period there was a film released entitled *Yo, Sor Alice* that raised funds for the Mothers-Founding Line. A large benefit concert was also held that featured top performers such as Joan Manuel Serrat and Pablo Milanés. The concert was held the evening before the march commemorating 25 years since the last coup and drew a crowd of approximately 30,000 (*Página/12*, March 24, 2001, p.5). A two page article interviewing one of the performers in the benefit concert, Víctor Heredia, was entitled "Sin Madres, ¿en qué podríamos creer?" (Without Mothers, what can we Believe in?).

³³ The majority of articles about the Children of the Disappeared concern their experience as children of the disappeared and artistic events held to draw attention to their experience. The focus is on their place within the family and how their relationship with the family has been harmed by the last dictatorship. Artistic events covered in this nine month period alone are a film called (*H*) *Historias cotidianas* (*Daily Stories*) a play entitled *Más de mil jueves* (*More Than a Thousand Thursdays*) and a concert put on in support of the Children of the Disappeared by the pop singer Manu Chao. *Página/12* published large articles about the Children of the Disappeared and the artistic events organized in their benefit. A one-page article was written on the Children of the Disappeared's 2000 National Congress (none of the other HROs received such coverage for their National Congresses). The Children of the Disappeared does use paid advertisements to express their position on particular issues and to advertise some events. Some of their paid public statements are very emotional, such as one put out for Mother's Day where they stated how they would like to be spending Mother's Day with their mothers but their mothers were disappeared.

³⁴ The vast majority of the coverage of the Mothers Association consists of paid statements of their positions on various issues, events and courses being held at their bookstore and popular university, artistic events they hold, and a weekly supplement. The participation of the Mothers Association, particularly Hebe de Bonafini, in demonstrations

The above analysis of the coverage of HROs in *Página/12* between September 2000 and June 2001 reveals that media coverage of HROs had very little correlation with their participation and organization of demonstrations or the inclusion of socio-economic issues in their collective action frame. Instead the two issues that appear to have increased coverage of certain HROs over others were their favourable relationship with the government and their relationship (personal or through shared activities) with Horacio Verbitsky (an authoritative source for *Página/12*). Moreover, it appears that Affected HROs who emphasize their representation of the family (using the historical frame of ‘women’s political participation’) were covered more often in *Página/12* compared to the other historical HROs (with the exceptions of Families and CELS for the reasons provide early in this section). Hence, it appears that, historical frames (centrality and narrative fidelity) are more important for the resonance of HROs’ collective action frames vis-à-vis the media than experiential commensurability.

Conclusion

In order for human rights organizations to gain the support of society for their demands for the enforcement of rights, it is important that their collective action frame resonate with society. Indicators of the resonance of collective action frames for society include the historical familiarity of the vocabulary or meaning of the frames,³⁵ and the consistency of the frame with pressing issues faced by society due to current events³⁶.

However, this chapter has shown that these indicators of resonance are dependent upon context and audience. In some contexts and for some audiences, some of the indicators of resonance are more important than are others. It is important in order for an HRO to achieve frame alignment with other SMOs and gain the support of large numbers of potential adherents, that the collective action frame of the HRO has experiential commensurability. In the case of Argentina, the shift in the 1990s from a central societal concern for the human rights abuses of the last dictatorship to the growing economic crisis required that HROs expand the meaning of their collective action frame. By making the connection between the human rights abuses of the last dictatorship and how they affected the family, with the impact of poverty,

and other events is always noted. If the Mothers Association is organizing an event, Bonafini is often interviewed. When Bonafini went to the hospital and later when her daughter was attacked, the events were covered.

³⁵ This is what what Robert Benford and David Snow (2000) call ‘centrality’ and ‘narrative fidelity.’

unemployment and reduced social services on the family, HROs increased the resonance of their demands for the protection of human rights. The success of the HROs in making this connection was manifested best in the 24 March 2001 demonstration commemorating the 1976 coup.

In contrast, the coverage of HROs by the media appears to have depended less on the experiential commensurability of the HROs' collective action frames and more on their centrality and narrative fidelity. That is, the continued use and adaptation of historical frames by HROs, notably women's representation of the family, was more important than the inclusion of socio-economic issues into their collective action frame. Repression by the state (especially the police and possibly the government) against those who challenged the government's socio-economic policies possibly contributed to journalists' being reticent to emphasize or cover the connection made by HROs between these policies and the human rights abuses of the past. While the media has covered substantially the growing economic crisis since the 1990s, it is possible that combining this issue with that of the human rights abuses of the last dictatorship is simply too dangerous. The disproportionate amount of repression faced by the Mothers Association, the HRO that is the most vocal on the connection between socio-economic issues and the last dictatorship, would suggest that this is indeed the case. Those HROs that are used as authoritative sources and are covered the most in the media (unpaid) are the same HROs that focus publicly most on the human rights abuses of the past dictatorship, emphasize their representation of the family, or have a relatively amicable relationship with the government, or all three. These HROs are primarily the Affected HROs and the Centre for Legal and Social Studies.

Hence, the historical frame that emphasizes women's role as representatives and defenders of the family, remains central to HROs' attempts to persuade society of the importance of their claims. In demonstrations, the defence of the family provides continuity between the collective action frames of HROs focused on the human rights abuses of the past and the new focus on the impact of economic crisis. In the media, women's representation and defence of the family in terms of what occurred during the dictatorship is emphasized over the work of non-family based HROs (Solidarity HROs) and is more important than the attempts of HROs for experiential commensurability. Women's political participation as representatives and defenders of the family provides resonance for the collective action frames of HROs

³⁶ This is what Benford and Snow (2000) call 'experiential commensurability.'

that in turn enables their claims to be persuasive in a way that demands for the enforcement of rights based on the individual would not be.

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