UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

The Road Towards *Superación*: the Role of Development in Constructing and Mediating an Indigenous Subjectivities in Guatemala City

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Master of Arts

in

Anthropology

by

Marianinna Villavicencio

Committee in charge:

Professor Nancy G. Postero, Chair
Professor Suzanne A. Brenner
Professor John B. Haviland

2016

The Thesis of Marianinna Villavicencio is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

____

____

____
Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016

Table of Contents

Signature Page iii

Table of Contents iv

Abstract of the Thesis v

Introduction: Empowering Indigenous Women 1

Methodology 9

Background: Indigeneity and Difference in Guatemala 31

Indio Permitido 46

Erasure of Identity 53

The "Third Space";
Forming Communities and Finding Resistance at the Interstices 59

Nelson's Metaphors of Resistance: Finding Subversion in Quincentennial Guatemala 65

Opportunities of Resistance in Rural Mexico: Challenging the System Through Solidary Communities 77

Decolonizing Indigenous Subjectivities: Locating the "Third Space" in Ecuador's Heterogeneity 85

Conclusions 104

References 111

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Road Towards *Superación*: the Role of Development in Constructing and Mediating an Indigenous Subjectivities in Guatemala City

by

Marianinna Villavicencio

Master of Arts in Anthropology

University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor Nancy Postero, Chair

This thesis examines how development provides a site for particular performances of indigeneity in Guatemala. It explores what is produced by NGO governmentality amongst a group of indigenous students participating in private scholarship programs in Guatemala City. The thesis draws on existing literature as well as on ethnographic material to analyze three different outcomes when indigenous students engaged with development NGOs that are trying to "empower" them and enable them to *superarse*, or overcome their conditions. First, an example of Hale's "indio permitido" (permitted

indian); second, one of the erasure of indigenous identity, where success means assimilation into mainstream white/non-indigenous society; finally, a "third space" where indigenous actors become agents of their own development. This latter comprises the main focus of the project by analyzing how this "third space" looks in three different ethnographic works—Nelson (1999); Smith-Oka (2013); Radcliffe (2014)—as well as in independent research among two university scholarship programs in Guatemala City.

Keywords: indigeneity, governmentality, Maya, identity, empowerment, *superación*, neoliberalism, *mestizaje*, resistance, Guatemala.

Introduction: Empowering Indigenous Women

Among the glossy papers of *Amiga*—the Sunday special edition magazine within Guatemala's most important daily newspaper, *Prensa Libre*—I learned about Sheva, an NGO that works with women's health and hygiene. Between "healthy" diet recipes and ads for Guatemala's most expensive jewelry store, the article detailed a story that was becoming commonplace in my experience with development in Guatemala. Amid a barrage of daunting statistics about the conditions Racing indigenous women in Guatemala, it described how one of the country's trendiest NGOs on social media is working to empower rural, indigenous girls. This effort sounded similar to countless other organizations started and managed by either Guatemala's elite or foreign groups, whose work, geared towards impoverished indigenous women, is described as a virtuous attempt at the "*capacitación*" (training) and "*empoderamiento*" (empowerment) of disadvantaged populations. Sheva joins the vast number of such groups treating symptoms rather than structural causes. It joins a field of development interventions that, as Ferguson (1990) has pointed out, erases politics from issues that are not only deeply political, but have no hope of improving without political action. To make matters worse, this type of discourse most often engages in a form of victim-blaming, where many of the nation's troubles are said to originate from the bodies and livelihoods of the very people they are virtuously trying to empower.

Most commonly in Latin America, development discourse is aimed at the impoverished, racialized "other," making the category of the "indigenous woman"

highly desirable for such moral labor (Radcliffe 2015; Nelson 1999: 272-274). In this way, women's bodies become sites of neoliberal indoctrination, where the consequences of deep racial and socioeconomic inequality are taken up by the elites who manage development programs and reformulated to maintain the current imbalance of power. Women's bodies are singled out as "corrupt," inferior, or uncivilized, thus making them suitable sites for surveillance and "improvement" (Li 2007). These bodies, then, are conceptualized as the site for the formation of docile citizens. Through condescending and patriarchal relationships, NGOs and governments obscure the gendered and racialized structural violence against indigenous women, and so attempt to turn their bodies into productive neoliberal pseudo-citizens who continue to perpetuate systems of inequality. Despite this pessimistic tone, in this paper I look at how the notion of *superación*[1] (betterment or overcoming), often used to reinscribe sociopolitical inequalities, can also enable women's bodies as places of resistance and contestation to elite power.

Superación and its sister words, "empowerment" (empoderamiento) "training," (*capacitación*) and "moving forward" (*salir adelante*) are terms used to describe the perceived transformation of indigenous, rural individuals into "ideal"

---

[1] While *superación* (as a noun) and *superarse* (as a reflexive verb) are hard to translate outright, they connote an idea of both betterment and of overcoming—essentially, overcoming a combination of indigenous, rural, and impoverished identity. In a sense these terms imply the following: first, rising above an identity that is seen as "lacking" and second, an improvement of the overall quality or esteem of a person. Indeed, Hale writes that while "'superarse' is a tricky verb, whose meaning changes with context [...] If the reference is to an Indian, [...] the effort to 'better oneself' is apt to take an on an additional charge. In the traditional ladino mindset, an Indian could not substantively 'better himself' without becoming less Indian" (Hale 20016: 238).

neoliberal citizens. This includes not only the material acquisition of wealth and work, but also a less tangible integration into the westernized, ladino (or non-indigenous) culture of Guatemala City. The terms suggest a paternalistic attitude that relies on "an assumption that indigenous peoples [need] help from benevolent outsiders—and a firm belief that indigenous culture had inherent deficiencies that would only be remedied when Indians became more like ladinos" (Hale 2006: 59). Understanding where these words come from, what they imply, and how they are used —and especially who they are intended to describe— is crucial to understanding power relationships between not only elite NGOs and indigenous women, but on a larger scale, between ladino and indigenous citizens.

Superación, like Li's "will to improve[,] is situated in the field of power Michel Foucault termed 'government.' Defined succinctly as the "conduct of conduct," government is the attempt to shape human behavior by calculated means" (2007: loc. 203). I suggest that those in power[2] use *superación* as a discourse and technique that governs people, encouraging them to comply with current political objectives: those that promote and maintain elite *ladino* power. In what follows, I describe three different outcomes of this exercise of power. The first is an example of Hale's indio permitido (permitted indian); the second of the erasure of indigenous identity (where success means assimilation into mainstream white/ladino society); and finally, one of the "third space" (where indigenous actors become agents of their own development). While this

[2] *i.e.* non-indigenous and for the most part masculine.

"third space" has many manifestations, all of them can be taken, to varying degrees, as political acts of resistance to the hegemonic power of non-indigenous elites. In order to construct this argument, I look at how NGOs use of development and notions of modernity position indigenous subalterns as objects in need of improvement, thereby reinforcing negative connotations of being indigenous. In many instances, they associate indigenous identities to negative notions of rural, backwards, traditional peoples who are confined to endemic poverty.

More importantly, by analyzing how this process plays out, I examine how asserting or suppressing a strong indigenous identity is related to each of the three outcomes. In doing so, I consider the influence that NGO governmentality has on indigenous peoples' habitus, particularly in terms of embodiment (Bourdieu 1977). This includes behavioral patterns—such as eye contact or clothing and food preferences, as well as hygiene and domestic practices. I also consider some psychological effects, such as having particular career goals[3] and economic or lifestyle dispositions. Using this theoretical framework, that combines both Foucault's notions of governmentality, biopower, and discipline with Bourdieu's conception of habitus, allows me to create a framework that clearly highlights the power relations at play between NGOs and indigenous peoples. It also allows me to question what is produced—that is, it makes visible the processes and the outcomes of discourses and techniques of *superación* in Guatemala.

[3] Related to white collar work as opposed to manual labor.

"*You can identify me by my indigenous clothing,*"

The story detailing Sheva's work was not the only time Amiga had evidenced the lopsided nature of power relations between indigenous people and ladinos in the country. The magazine had previously called my attention a year ago when, between the pages detailing what was "in" this season, *Amiga* had a piece called *Contemporáneo & Artesanal* (Contemporary and Artisanal), which displayed a model with striking green eyes and high heels (decidedly *not* indigenous) showcasing a variety of clothing articles accented with "*artesanías"* or handicrafts. This included everything from dress pants with "traditional" patterns to a modified version of a *huipil,* the "traditional" Mayan blouse. Ironically though, none of the images showed the model wearing anything resembling a *corte,* the skirt part of an indigenous *traje* (clothing). Indigenous clothing, particularly women's clothing are often sites where the tensions between ladino power and indigenous women are evidenced (Postero n.d.; Smith-Oka 2013; Nelson 1999). A woman's choice to wear or discard the *traje* is much more profound than mere fashion trends. As Postero suggests, *Traje* plays an important role in mediating identity and outlining communities due to "the critical importance of clothing in marking the categories and meanings of indigeneity" (Postero n.d., 15; See also Nelson 1999: 182, 189). "Traditional" or "cultural" forms of dressing are part of a larger ideological struggle occurring within societies. Clothing can be used strategically (Nelson 1999: 52), as a

conscious choice to distinguish oneself (Stephenson: loc. 146[4]), or it can be used against indigenous women, as a marker that associates them with negative stereotypes. Thus, clothing plays an important role in fashioning the body politic (Nelson 1999), working to shape and define an individual's body (Stephenson: loc.1441). It can also play an important role in contesting dominant conceptions of this body politic.

This became clear in 2013, when I met Andrea, a former member of the Guatemalan Congress and now an integral part of the office of La Defensoría de la Mujer Indígena (The office for the advocacy of Indigenous Women). I had not met her in person at this point, but throughout our entire email interaction she had been actively reminding me of her identity as a Mayan activist, greeting me with a "welcome and good stay in Guatemala. In the lunar calendar today Aq´ab´a is 12, the beginning, the dawn, the clarity [5]" in response to the more formal email language I had originally used. When we agreed to meet, she told me I would be able to identify her at our meeting place by her indigenous clothing. I was just beginning my fieldwork and was excited to meet with someone who so openly prided themselves in their indigenous clothing. When I arrived at San Sebastián park that day there were dozens of women wearing indigenous clothing, walking around the park, sitting inside the chapel, buying and selling food, and generally

---

[4] Loc. refers to Kindle edition locations rather than page numbers.

[5] "Bienvenida y estadìa en Guatemala. en el calendario lunar hoy es 12 Aq´ab´al, el comienzo, el amanecer, la claridad."

going about their daily lives. In the end, it was I, as the lighter-skinned student walking around with a notebook and a recorder, who was identified by Andrea[6].

This contrasts with situations like *Amiga*'s blatant display of cultural appropriation, and creates a starting point for understanding how indigenous women are conceived as the opposing entity to the state, where they come to represent the tradition that stands in opposition to modernity. Women are thus seen as preservers of culture, as belonging to the private sphere, confined to domestic and gendered forms of labor. The state or NGOs on the other hand, are seen to operate with a modernizing force, working in the public sphere to heal Guatemala's wounded body politic (Nelson 1999). On the other hand, Andrea's pride demonstrate that subalterns can co-opt these very symbols to form communities that resist the negative associations placed on them.

Previous literature demonstrates how governmentality and discourses of improvement are used by those with power to control those without. For instance, in her work on Indonesian development NGOs, Tania Li shows how ultimately, "the will to empower others hinges upon positioning oneself as an expert with the power to diagnose and correct a deficit in power in someone else" and as such, "empowerment is still […] a relationship of power" (2007: loc 4996). Similarly, in her work on Mexico, Vania Smith-Oka describes how such power imbalances in developmental interventions "set up

[6] I have often wondered why this miscalculation arose and what exactly she meant by that phrase. Although I have not been able to come up with a decisive answer, I have a feeling that her email was meant to establish her indigenous pride in advance, making it her decision to wear *traje* in a very political way. I am not quite sure why neither of us at the time thought of the possibility that there would be other people in the church within San Sebastián's park at this time, much less other indigenous women in *traje.*

systems to shape, integrate, and control the population" into idealized neoliberal citizens (2013: 30). As I show below, despite the problematic nature of the ways in which NGOs and governments use biopower and governmentality to control indigenous women (and their reproductive bodies) and the racialized and gendered nature of this oppression, the heterogeneity of the very category "indigenous women" opens up spaces of resistance. I suggest here that understanding the interdependent relationship between indigenous women and those carrying out the work of governmentality—both the state and NGOs—along with the complex politics of identity they come into contact with, makes clear the new spaces of contestation and community within these asymmetrical power relations.

In this thesis, I look at how women's experience with development programs interacts with concepts of gender, class and nationalism in their articulation and performance of identity. I take into account the relational and contingent nature of identity (Postero, n.d.; Nelson 1999) by looking at the ways that the discourses of improvement used by those working with governmentality affect people's own understanding of indigeneity. Lastly, I analyze how this mediation of indigeneity feeds *back* into their interaction with development, producing communities of solidarity that have the potential to overcome certain of the problems that arise with governmentality work. In this way, I problematize the notion of development as merely problematic and apolitical, instead showing how it interacts with complex notions of indigeneity to open up spaces of potential resistance to hegemonic power.

That is, I ask: how does development provide a site for particular performances of indigeneity? Answering this question means analyzing the categories of the *ladinoized* indian (those who have turned their backs on their indigenous identity) and "*indio permitido*" (or authorized indian) (Hale 2002; Hale and Millamán 2006) as well as the identities belonging in the "third space" that does not fall in either of these categories. Before we examine those categories, however, let me briefly describe first, the methodology of the thesis; second, how the theories of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu provide the necessary analytical base for conceptualizing these two categories; and third, how these categories have been defined and managed historically in Guatemala.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis will constitute a literature review of the following ethnographies: *A Finger in the Wound* by Diane Nelson (1999), *Indigenous Women and Postcolonial Development: Social Heterogeneity, Rights and Socionatures* by Sara Radcliffe (2014), and *Shaping the Motherhood of Indigenous Mexico* by Vania Smith-Oka (2013). While my own research in Guatemala certainly informs the questions I ask and the analysis I develop, I use the data presented by these books to make a more substantive argument about the nature of the interactions between the fetishized state and the overdetermined indigenous woman and how these inform indigenous subjectivities. The work of these three authors illuminates how the forms of disciplinary power accompanying

development reinforce colonial conceptions of race by asserting non-indigenous ways of being. All three of ethnographers analyze how these "modernizing" projects affect indigenous identities, making it evident that a "third space" is needed in order to fully explain what is produced by this exercise of power. In order to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework that includes the possibilities beyond the erasure of indigenous identities and the formation of "*indios permitidos*" I include a consideration of the authors' positionality within their research and their writing.

Meanwhile, my own work analyzes the ways that various forms of governmentality associated with *superación* can have both negative effects on indigenous identities and livelihoods, while at the same time creating spaces for other, more positive practices to develop within a community. This latter became especially clear while working two development programs in Guatemala City: ITA and UVG, both of which provided scholarships for underprivileged rural students[7]. Focusing on the experience of this group of students as they entered development institutions that not only uphold, but also instill neoliberal values, makes clear how mainstream conceptualizations of indigeneity affect the students' understanding of what it means to be indigenous in Guatemala. I describe some of the experiences indigenous youth had with these programs in the sections that follow. As I interviewed program directors, undergraduates and graduates of the program, one word was repeatedly used to describe what the students

---

[7] This fieldwork was part of an undergraduate senior thesis project, funded by the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts at the University of Notre Dame, which took place in the summer of 2013. This research is supplemented by a second summer of "official" research during the summer 0f 2015 thanks to a grant from the Tinker Foundation as well as my own lived experiences as a Guatemalan.

were accomplishing for themselves: *superación* (betterment or overcoming)[8]. The reason this term is troublesome is that people—both ladinos and indigenous—would use it to express the low expectations originally had for indigenous youth. It is related to what Hale (2006) argues when he analyzes an informant's desire to be "M*ás que un indio*" (More than an indian). Since being "indigenous" is associated with poverty, backwardness and inferiority, the notion that these students can have such neoliberal accomplishments—that is, attending prestigious, private universities; having good positions in major companies in Guatemala City; and just the fact of having escaped the cycle of poverty—signifies that they have exceeded the expectations for being indigenous.

Furthermore, the emphasis on *superación* creates a notion that anyone can improve their situation in life through hard work, a concept that does not take into account the structural inequalities and lack of opportunities in the country, (again the notion of victim-blaming). Due to the apolitical nature of development, many of the students did not criticize or denounce larger structural problems during my interviews, but rather blamed the nature of Guatemalans as a whole (suggesting the image of the wounded body politic). They spoke of Guatemalans as a divided nation, thus creating people who are competitive and selfish and consequently cannot "progress."

My research takes into consideration the idea that, "Culture has often served as a 'therapeutic myth, meant to explain why we fall ill and why we get well'— (and) in

[8] For a more detailed clarification of the term please see intro section, footnote 1.

Guatemala, poverty, backwardness, and other social ills have been blamed on indigenous culture" (Nelson 1999: 125; See also Merry 2003: 64). In the case of the students in this development program, they were taught that part of "succeeding" in the elite economic sphere was adopting westernized habits, such as styles of dress and eating customs. As part of the program they underwent etiquette classes, where they were told how to eat "properly" with a fork and a knife, as well as how to have "powerful" handshake and dress accordingly for business interviews. Moreover, living in a Catholic residency in the City changed their diet, from tortillas to bread, from pure coffee to the sweeter kinds, and to a larger quantity of meat and desserts than any of them was accustomed to. It placed them in spaces of elite power, while reminding them, through their habitus— including their limited purchasing power, their darker skin, their different clothes—that they were never fully part of this elite. In this way, *superación* can work in subtle ways, suggesting to students in bodily and intimate ways, that their own culture is "backwards," that their upbringing is what marks them as "un-civilized." It is important to take these negative conceptions of "indigenous culture" into account when considering the formation of indigenous identity and to understand the way indigenous people are affected by, and react to, the associations and implications of belonging to this ethnic minority. Something that involves considering how my own identity as a Guatemalan anthropologist from a foreign university influences their reactions to questions about indigenous and rural upbringings.

As such, part of describing my methods includes setting up my own positionality within the research as well as comparing and contrasting this to the ways Nelson (1999), Smith-Oka (2013) and Radcliffe (2014) position themselves. In many instances, however, it is challenging to situate myself within the text without detracting from the larger theoretical analysis. For this reason, I have often chosen to make myself present in the text through the use of footnotes (a tool Nelson also utilizes, among many others) in order to offer a deeper understanding of how my own identity as a Guatemalan influenced and transformed the relations I had with other (both indigenous and *ladino*) compatriots during my research. Moreover, such an examination makes evident that the lines between research and everyday life are very much blurred, making the ethnographer's positionality both (necessary and a challenge) to understand where the analysis is coming from. By this I mean, taking into account how one's personal biases might influence research as well as how one's identity shapes the types of (power) relations between the ethnographer and those who become the subjects of her ethnographic study.

Considering the position of the researcher within the field is something that varies significantly from piece to piece: in some it is a reference in passing, in others there is a stronger sense of acknowledgement, and yet in others, this positionality becomes an ethnographic method in and of itself. As a Guatemalan, I believe that it is important to add my "voice" to the group of academics writing and thinking about the country. Introducing my own bias into the conversation will hopefully bring to light new arguments and different ways of conceiving previous ones. Anthropology has been

accused of having a colonial history of “othering” (Trouillot 1991). I suggest that diversity within the discipline and academic institutions breaks down these categories. Rosaldo reminds us that in diverse university classrooms, “the question of “The Other” begins to dissolve. Who gets to be the we and who gets to be the other rotates from one day to the next, depending on the topic of discussion” (1994: 406). The same is applicable to settings broader than the classroom.

Thinking about the different ways that my position as a Guatemalan interacts with my writing and the contributions I bring to this discussion has prompted me to consider the ethnographic genre. In his book about writing ethnography, Clifford (1986) asserts that conceiving the production of anthropological texts in this new light allows us to examine what is produced by our writing: “culture”. By acknowledging the contested nature of ethnographic texts and their authors, and pointing to the fabricated nature of cultural accounts, he presents culture “as composed of seriously contested codes and representations; [it assumes] that the poetic and the political are inseparable, that science is in, not above, historical and linguistic processes” (2). In this way he argues that ethnography is very much constructed within different and powerful meaning systems. Moreover, by focusing on textual theory and form, Clifford brings to light another aspect of what writing about culture produces: the self and the other. That is, the production of ethnographic texts involves both positioning the “other”—as an object of anthropological study—and also a “self— as the mediator between that “other” and the public reading the ethnography.

An important part of this methodology then, is positioning oneself within the ethnography, particularly because "knowing the analyst's location matters deeply not because it dictates conclusions but because it engenders an enriched, more critical reading of the analysis that results" (Hale 1997b: 836). I would argue that in a sense, the location of the analyst can, perhaps not dictate, but certainly heavily influence the results. That is, the type of questions we (as researchers and social scientists) choose to ask are related to both our positionality within our field of study as well as directly linked to our conclusions. In her ethnography, Diane Nelson (1999) details her position and her relation to Guatemala through her fieldwork "as being *in solidarity* as a researcher and activist" (42). In situating herself clearly within both her fieldwork and her writing, Nelson demonstrates not only the heterogeneity present in Guatemalan society and the porousness of the state, but also the "partial" and incomplete nature of her accounts (46). She uses the term *fluidarity* in order to describe both this partial knowledge and the relational quality of any identification. This latter is something that joins the larger theme of the book, establishing how the articulation of identity is relational and contingent, thus problematizing any conception of identity as solid or fixed. More importantly, however, her own positionality exemplifies the "bleeding boundaries" prevalent in Guatemala: "My ethnic and national identifications feel brutally crosscut by my gendered subject-position, and I am reminded that no body politic is whole and unchanging: the are all open and contingent, wounded" (48).

In presenting herself as a fluid, wounded body Nelson brings to light the different power relations that arise between a researcher and activist, and the people she works with. For Nelson, one cannot get out of power asymmetries. More significantly, it is the power-filled nature of these relations that help us understand why identities are full of complexities and how these complexities come to be articulated. They make clear how victims, friends, enemies, etc. are all fluid categories that are constantly being remade. More importantly these relations of power also help us understand our own contradictory emotions during fieldwork and the process of making sense of the story we are telling as anthropologists. Nelson establishes fludiarity as a practice (73) and a method that helps us comprehend oppression and discrimination against national, ethnic, and gender lines in a context where these same overdetermined categories are understood as illusory. Using fluidarity allows us to see the power-laden nature of a process of identity formation that is highly contingent and relational. Moreover, this practice brings to light another issue in the fight against oppression: that "the struggles over unity and difference within the field are fierce and problematize any attempt at a solid intervention" (57).

The contested unity that Nelson identifies here is something that has also troubled my own attempts as researcher in solidarity, particularly because being from Guatemala, I am extremely familiar with just how contested any form of cooperation is and how fragmented and fleeting unification for a cause can be. In considering these questions and how to address them I also considered the work of Audra Simpson in her recent ethnography (2014). Her position as a "native ethnographer" intrigued me, although it is

important to understand how even this identity is highly complex and contingent. Simpson's work is one that also questions the ethnographic genre itself, calling for a refusal of the traditional ethnography focused on culture, and instead emphasizing the importance of sovereignty. Her writing is not concerned with culture but with what has been *produced* by this process of creating culture. However, she is not only concerned with analyzing what writing culture has created, but is also advocating for a new form of representation that does not bring into play—and so that refuses—"race" or "culture" (and the colonial baggage they entail). This is where sovereignty comes in, both as a method and a form of representation that brings the juridical and the textual together (loc. 2139).

Simpson, like Nelson, also "acknowledges the asymmetrical power relations that inform the research and writing about native lives and politics, and it does not presume that they are on equal footing with anyone" (2160). By making use of refusal as an ethnographic form and method and focusing on sovereignty, social scientists can not only be conscious of the historical processes of dispossession and misrepresentation of indigenous peoples and their lands but also situate "each subject within her or his own shifting historical context of the present" (loc. 2320). Only then, Simpson argues, "we might be able to produce forms of analysis that move away from cultural fetishization and timeless tradition into the ambit of politics and critique that Indigenous peoples are articulating" (loc. 2307). The struggles over unification and differentiation that Nelson highlights in her book (and that are also present in my own research within Guatemala)

are also present in Simpson's book. In many instances she details the struggles and fights that different members of the Mohawk community engage in when fighting for sovereignty. It becomes clear that there can be no one definition of "indigenous rights" and no way of presenting "the indigenous community" as a solid group.

While the notion of letting the people we speak of speak for themselves sounds like a noble cause—particularly because for most of the history of Guatemala indigenous peoples have lacked a voice of their own—putting this into practice is a lot more complex. Even now, when Maya politics and indigenous rights have taken a more prominent role in the country, it is hard to distinguish what exactly indigenous peoples are articulating from what NGO's and government officials are presenting as indigenous rights. Moreover, with the large diversity of indigenous groups and Mayan activist groups in Guatemala, it is difficult to simply let people speak for themselves as this begs the question: which people? As these authors show, any representation we make will be a partial truth, a choice on what to present and what to withhold (Clifford 1986) thus evidencing that incompleteness is a condition of knowledge (Nelson 1999: 69).

MOVING TOWARDS A THEORETICAL BASE: INCORPORATING FOUCAULT AND BOURDIEU'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Foucault's genealogy of power is useful not only because it makes visible the power inequalities at play in the interaction between indigenous women and NGOs, but also because it illuminates how the bodies of indigenous women are disciplined as part of

the larger mechanism operating within development work. Michel Foucault has allowed us to understand how biopower and techniques of the self are used to govern and control populations through the body. The human body is often a contested site of power and dominance, where subjectivity is formed. Throughout this thesis, I use Foucault's notions of biopower and techniques of the self in order to show how bodies are policed through forms of governmentality in Guatemala. That is, I focus on how power is exercised on the body of indigenous women and young students to mold them into ideal neoliberal citizens through their participation in development programs. In order to examine how Foucault uses the concept of power (and particularly bio-power), it is noteworthy to understand how he traces the history behind power (especially the types of power: from monarchical to carceral) to arrive at his conclusions.

In Discipline and Punish he does precisely this and explains the relationship between power and knowledge in such a way as to present a completely new form of power. One that is invested in a new way throughout society, immanently present in relations so that there is no one person or state in charge, but rather, there are various forms of power. These can be prisons, schools, armies, governments and even ourselves. This latter is power exercised by the self, such that it is the actor who exercises it over him or herself due to the threat of surveillance. This fear of being continually observed (which Foucault explains through the metaphor of the panopticon) is a coercive mode of exercising power that results in techniques of self government (1977: 201, 216-217). Finally, Foucault's historical genealogy raises a very important question that will remain

fundamental throughout his work: what is produced? In this case, he is arguing that this shift in politics, from one sovereign/monarch to a distribution of the power to punish produces a subject: the delinquent. Moreover, this subject formation is twofold, producing both those who are intelligible and those who are not (i.e. the delinquent).

Foucault also writes of the body as a site of power and explains how the body is disciplined (1977: 129-131, 136). First, as mentioned before, there is surveillance and gaze: the panopticon. Yet, there are many other techniques that aim to normalize populations, such as the development of a work ethic or a time schedule, documentation and examination, space, and even the development of efficient bodily motions. Foucault recounts how throughout (Western) society these forms of practice and discipline are being used to create docile and functional bodies needed for capitalism. This new form of normalizing power makes the disciplining of our own bodies a form of power that feels natural, in such a way that those who are outside of it are considered dangerous and unintelligible[9]. Here, the term unintelligible is used to refer to the "abnormal individual" such that "all the mechanisms of power […] are disposed around" the unintelligible subject in an attempt to alter her (Foucault 1977: 199). Again, this is where power becomes productive, as it produces a whole set of categories or subjects, as well as institutions, technologies, and practices.

---

[9] "Generally speaking, all the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution (who he is; where he must be; how he is to be characterized; how he is to be recognized; how a constant surveillance is to be exercised over him in an individual way, etc.)" (Fouacualt 1997: 199).

In The History of Sexuality Foucault describes power as immanent in every relation. That is, individuals, like states, never actually hold power, but rather power emanates from the relations between people. In this way, power is both an effect and a strategy. Again, Foucault delineates what he means by power, concluding that "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (95). To this definition, he also incorporates the importance of discourse which is where, Foucault argues, power and knowledge come together" (100). Moreover, it is in discourse that power is both reinforced and exposed "render[ing] it fragile and mak[ing] it possible to thwart it" (101). As a system of shared representations, discourse not only produces resistance, but it also produces subjects by making certain people visible. In this way, discourse and power/knowledge, like normalizing power, differentiate between docile bodies (or intelligible subjects) and those who are outside of intelligibility and who must be disciplined.

By tracing the shift from sovereign power to penal power, Foucault shows how the latter is centered on taking charge of life and thus, with living beings. Ultimately this results in power gaining access and control over the body (1978: 143). This control over the body and over living populations is what Foucault terms "bio-power" or "the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life" through "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations" (1978: 40). In this regard, bio-power is very much hegemonic and as such it reinforces existing relations of power (1978: 141). Moreover, while in this scenario

discipline is enacted on individuals, bio-power is conceiving these individuals in terms of populace, as members of a whole heathy population.

This new form of normalizing power distributes subjects around a standard in such a way that it qualifies, measures, appraises, and hierarchizes. Moreover, Foucault argues that these bodies and populations are regulated through political technologies or techniques of life which make use of "disciplines of the body" as well as surveillance to police populations (1978: 145). His objective in tracing how sexuality is tied up to these techniques "is to show how deployments of power are directly connected to the body" as well as all that is connected to it—bodily functions, sensations, pleasures, etc. (1978: 151-152). In order to access intelligibility the body must be subjected to these technologies and so become disciplined and normalized. Because power is not an institution or a structure—nor does it stem from a central point or actor—it is ultimately individuals themselves that exert these disciplining techniques of the self on themselves (as opposed to a dominant class or government). Producing a category of bodies that falls outside of this intelligibility means that they become the object of a gaze (or surveillance) so that the power associated with these techniques is intense and overt.

This management of populations is something expanded in *Governmentality*, where Foucault builds on the notion of how individuals get turned into docile bodies and how people are governed through non-state apparatuses. He is speaking of an instrument of governance concerned with populations: a power fundamentally concerned with the management of the body politic, which has "as its principal form of knowledge political

economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security" (1978: 102). Thus, Foucault argues that it is through security and economic *savoirs* that populations are policed and bodies disciplined. In this way, he comes to describe that what "is really important for our modernity […] is not so much the étatisation of society, as the 'governmentalization' of the state" (1978: 103).

Governing through non-state mechanisms is something that can be particularly applied to NGOs, who are not part of the government, yet still govern and manage populations and families. This is evidenced when NGOs take up the concept of *superación* in the neoliberal attempt to "better" rural indigenous peoples and overcome their rural, underdeveloped dispositions. By analyzing *superación* as a discourse two different subjects are produced: the first is the underdeveloped, poor (and in most cases, female) indigenous target of NGO *capacitación*[10], the unintelligible subject. The second is the "modern," urban (and in most cases, male) ladino who is seen as the ideal citizen, the intelligible subject. While NGO technicians themselves may not necessarily be male (or in a few cases ladino), the discourses of improvement make it clear that, as subjects of development, being poor, indigenous, and female means you are at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. Moreover, in the interaction between NGO workers and their indigenous counterparts, what emerges are systems of power inequalities that continually reinforce both beliefs and behaviors that promote ladino and male superiority. In this

---

[10] The word *capacitación* is not exactly like training, and carries a connotation of development, especially or preparing oneself to improve. For a more detailed explanation see section on Erasure of Identity

discourse, indigenous people are brought into development as docile bodies, a category that immediately marks them as lesser—i.e. not as full citizens or “Guatemalans”.

Having been imagined so, indigenous women are disciplined: the discourses of superación are tied to the apparatus of governmentality which, using a wide range of technologies, attempts to normalize alterity into ladino forms of being. In this scenario, the aim of development work is to manage this population, of unintelligible (indigenous) subalterns and shape them into intelligible subjects. This is possible, in part, due to the constant surveillance that occurs in the uneven interactions between NGO workers and their “target populations.” In this process, technologies of discipline comes in the form of hygiene training, etiquette classes, self-esteem talks, and generally promoting practices and ideas that arise from, and reinforce, the superiority of the Westernized ladino elite. Those subjects who fail to become docile bodies are labeled recalcitrant, backwards, underdeveloped and are blamed for their own poverty and precocity. As I show in the background section, Guatemala’s history is filled with a seemingly contradictory desire to ignore its indigenous populations while at the same time working hard to manage them.

A Foucauldian analysis is certainly helpful for understanding power and its workings. However, the literature I analyzed (Nelson 1999; Smith-Oka 2013; Radcliffe 2014) as well as my own preliminary research made it clear that the indigenous body is a site of both discipline *and* resistance. Foucault’s model however, leaves little room for agency and individual resistance. In this regard, Bourdieu’s model—albeit, while still restricting individual agency—is useful in his use of habitus, which is helpful in

conceptualizing how certain structures such as the past, political economy, racism, poverty, culture, etc., shape individual behavior. In a way, Bourdieu's framework has more room for an analysis of subjectivity where the "third space" is present. Here, I outline the concept of habitus more carefully and state how informs my analysis of power relations between NGOs and their indigenous subjects.

Although Bourdieu describes habitus in many different ways, we can understand it to be grounded in practice and defined as "systems of durable, transportable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (1980: 52-53). As a system of dispositions, habitus is also a consequence of history, meaning that it is shaped by past experiences. Habitus, Bourdieu adds, is also generative: it is "embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history—is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product" (1980: 56). By using past experiences to shape these structures, habitus conditions and shapes practice in a way that, despite being slightly unpredictable, is also limited. In this way, Bourdieu introduces the concept of structures, and how these govern our practice through habitus (1980: 55). This does not mean that the social actor has no agency, but rather that it is through habitus that we are both constrained and given the independence to act in different manners[11]: "the habitus is an infinite capacity for generating products—thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions—whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production" (1980: 55).

---

[11] It is important to not that this is a rather restrained notion "freedom" to act, as it must always be in accordance with the structuring structures already in place.

Additionally, Bourdieu also differentiates between class habitus and individual habitus (1980: 60) and argues that class habitus is the product of people having been conditioned by similar conditions and thus practice is structured in a similar way. Moreover, habitus, because of all that it encompasses, shapes and is shaped by, sanctions behaviors (even in ways that are not to our benefit). This attests to habitus' power within the systems of relationships, or the field, such that social relations that arise from symbolic domination come to be taken for granted. Bourdieu writes that through these relations group or class habitus is a homogenizing agent, that "tend[s] to transform instituted difference into natural distinction, produces quite real effects, durably inscribed in the body and in belief" in a way that recognizes and complies "with the demands immanent in the field (58). Habitus can be used as a strategy for adapting to the field produced by the dominating group's doxa. Bourdieu asserts that "the tendency of groups to persist in their ways, due inter alia to the fact that they are composed of individuals with durable dispositions that can outlive the economic and social conditions in which they were produced" can lead to strategies (habitus) that—being shaped, as they are, by the past—create future strategies other than adaptation: such as misadaptation, revolt and resignation (1980: 62). In the end, he suggests that the future is limited by the particular ways in which power is enacted and the forms of government at play. As such, what is possible (or impossible) to practice in reality is appropriated and established in advance both by "others and what one can reasonably expect for oneself" (1980: 64).

Furthermore, Bourdieu shows us how practice and practical sense are both also "produced by experience" and understood as "orienting change" (1980: 66). This is what he labels "a feel for the game" which has several characteristics: first, it is something one is born into. Second, it is tied to belief—for Bourdieu, practical belief is a state of the body or a bodily hexis that is acquired "beyond the reach of consciousness," through enculturation. It is an embodiment, a permanent disposition that is naturalized and thus carries with it the symbolic efficacy that reinforces belief (and identity). Third, one of the most important characteristics is the inseparability of habitus to the relation to the body and even to inhabited space (1980: 71-76).

For Bourdieu this domination is established through habitus, which reinforces the established social order. It does so by creating practices that make it "unthinkable" to conceive of reality in a different manner. Moreover, Bourdieu argues that "habitus and its strategies in setting up and perpetuating durable relations of domination is once again an effect of the structure of the field" (1980: 130). Once again, we find the question of structure versus agency: how much of our habitus is structured by doxa and the dominating field? How much agency is allowed within habitus to a variety of practices? How much power do individuals have to notice and struggle against the institutionalized and symbolic strategies that give dominant groups control over social structure and consciousness (1980: 138)? This struggle, Bourdieu acknowledges, gives social science its objective: making it "a reality that encompasses all the individual and collective struggles aimed at conserving or transforming reality, in particular those that seek to

impose the legitimate definition of reality, whose specifically symbolic efficacy can help to conserve or subvert the established order" (1980: 141).

Using Bourdieu to deconstruct *superación* makes evident how important the role of habitus is when it comes to establish and sustain relations of ladino domination. While habitus is structured by one's socio-economic status, family, religion, education and ethnicity, NGOs can also have an effect on it. I argue that development works first, to internalize the inferior position of indigenous peoples in the country's class and ethnic hierarchy. Second, to reinforce behaviors that either erases indigeneity or police it so that it does not threaten the current order of things. Analyzing development in Guatemala makes clear use of how habitus works (or does not work), how it comes into existence, how it is propagated by institutionalized modes of domination, and how it affects future behavior or practice. As I expand throughout the thesis, ladino superiority is reinforced through practices and bodily hexis that build on Guatemala's long history of racial hegemony.

Moreover, Bourdieu's notion of the interplay between structure and habitus as something unconscious yet subject to change is useful in forming the analytical base of this "third space" model. As many NGOs work to change indigenous peoples habits in specific ways (regarding bodily practices such as hygiene or psychological conceptions of self esteem). The result is not a simple equation where input and surveillance from NGO's is taken up by their subjects to conform and adapt habit is to this regime. Rather, the resulting practices that emerge can have unintended consequences on the subjectivity

its of the participants. Thus, while in most cases NGO's teach submission and conformity with the hegemonic world order that places indigenous ways of being at the bottom of the social ladder, it also gives these people tools that can be used to challenge this same order. By changing bodily practices that, while on the one hand erase indigenous practices with ladino ones, on the other hand it also makes people more intelligible in the eyes of that same ladino society. In this way, they enable traditionally disenfranchised people to make demands according to the conventions of the ladinoized political society.

This is exemplified by some of Smith-Oka's accounts, where indigenous women are taught (often through coercive and violent means) how to become "proper" mothers something that can be both negative towards indigenous forms of motherhood, but that also reminds women that they are being wronged by the state. Additionally, in many instances what development programs attempt to teach (in terms of behavior modification) and the actual results are quite different. In some instances people can react against the impositions of NGO's by asserting their own ways of being and not conforming to the hegemonic conceptions of social difference and hierarchy that are being imposed on them. In these instances spaces where NGO's work becomes sites of resistance, where people can come together to protest the harmful ways that mainstream *mestizo* society's treat them.

To summarize, Bourdieu and Foucault provide lenses and analytical models by which we can make sense of society, particularly the way power and discipline affect a persons understanding of the self and the behaviors that are accorded to such a person

through habitus. However, their theories leave little room for explaining the work that occurs at the interstices between habitus and field, and outside of binomial classifications of normal/abnormal individuals. The framework that arises from combining Foucault's notions of discipline provides an conceptual model that effortlessly explains how the forms of governmentality associated with development produce *indios permitidos* and erasures of indigeneity, suggesting that a third theoretical conception must be added to this base in order to build an analytical model that can account for all that is being produced by *superación*: something I outline in *The "Third Space"; Forming Communities and Finding Resistance at the Interstices.*

Background: Indigeneity and Difference in Guatemala

> "History often has less to do with how things 'really were' than with the ability to articulate the past to a political project in the present"
> DIANE NELSON, *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*

> "When we look closely at the construction of past time, we find the process has very little to do with the past at all and everything to do with the present."
> MARY DOUGLAS, *How Institutions Think*

As the two quotes above suggest, analyzing the past and the way history is used to justify the present has significant consequences for conceptions of race and ethnicity today. For these reasons, before proceeding onto the different parts of this paper, I think it is necessary to establish a brief background on the subjects that this study will touch upon. These include an understanding of what indigenous or Maya means in this context, as well as a short historical account of interethnic relations in the country. Both of these are not only pertinent to the discussion but also inform the way all of us—my friends and coworkers, authors I am citing, and myself as the researcher—understand these issues.

To begin with, it is important to take into account the diversity of Guatemala's population in order to establish my desire to stay away from "a cultural essentialism—a tendency to ignore or deny variation in favor of an abstract type...as opposed to a population of diverse individuals" (Rodseth 1998). Even when used for conscious tactical reasons, essentialism is problematic due to its lack of critical analysis and

tendency to gloss over identity (Hale 1997: 578). Thus, I do not wish to lump those I worked with into easily reducible categories, nor present their struggles and successes as recurrent and communal but rather I hope to emphasize their heterogeneity. Moreover, I wish to stay away from the "political economy of suffering" (Scheper-Hughes 1995; Hale 1997) by not focusing solely on the negative, policing aspects of governmentality work, but instead include the formation of strong community bonds and small moments of resistance that arise along with, and as a response to, the challenges of development. Part of this move against essentialism and an economy of suffering is making sure the diverse voices I worked with (including my own) are heard, conveying the importance of difference in bringing about change in development work. As Radcliffe (2014) points out, the postcolonial heterogeneity that indigenous women contribute to development is highly important in knowledge production and shaping resistance.

Indigeneity is a central category of difference in Guatemala. Statistically speaking, the last governmental census in Guatemala identifies around 4.4 million people of Mayan descent out of a total population of 14 million, and despite the somewhat unreliability of census numbers due to the self-identification variable—which may vary depending on factors such as how the question is framed—these percentages do convey a sense of just how sizable this minority group is. It is also exceedingly important to note that, although the term *the* Mayas is used to talk collectively about them as a single indigenous group, this obscures the degree of linguistic, social, and cultural diversity possessed by the different ethnic groups within Guatemala. Nor should it be considered

that their own ethnic consciousness and culture as a group are homogenous and static. To name one example of the rich ethnic heritage of the country, there are twenty-three *recognized*[12] languages other than Spanish, twenty-one of them being Mayan. There is still constant debate between policy-makers "as to whether the Maya people are to be considered as only one nationality or many" (Stavenhagen 2002: 40). Regardless, it is clear that with the end of the military dictatorship in 1986 and the rise of Maya cultural rights movement, the Guatemalan state has become a site of demand, where Maya activists and popular groups can petition and claim certain rights (mostly regarding citizenship) from the state (Nelson 1999).

It would be impossible to analyze the current affair of ethnic relations and identifications in Guatemala without taking into consideration the long history of nation-building practices and policies that have been enacted in the name of building and consolidating the "imagined community" (Anderson 1983). Much of the perceived power of the state comes from first, presenting itself as clearly bounded and second, the way it is able to associate itself with modernity. This fetishized state comes to be shaped through "struggles over culture and history, over modernity and tradition, and over Mayan and national identity [which] articulate the state, modify its identity, and penetrate the apparent boundaries between state and civil society" (Nelson 1999: 76-77).

[12] The emphasis here is on the word *recognized*, as the number of Mayan languages varies depending on the criteria used to calculate this number, with some scholars suggesting figures as high as twenty-seven (Similox 2005).

As early as the nineteenth century, and certainly throughout the twentieth, Central American states adopted liberal ideas that prompted a variety of reforms in the name of modernization (Hale 2002). During this time nation-states developed discourses of *mestizaje* as a tool of nation building, seeking to address "the indigenous question" which presented indigenous cultures (and their status as "other" or different) as a hindrance to development and modernity. Fundamentally, the indigenous "problem" boiled down to the issue "that 'the Indian question[ed] the very existence of the nation' and did not allow it to be a unified entity (Sanz Jara 2009: 262)" (in Smith-Oka 2013: 33; See also Nelson 1999: 181). Ultimately, *mestizaje* discourses maintain "that indigenous culture is inevitably, almost naturally, destined to disappear, replaced by a hardy and unique hybrid national culture that draws sustenance from both indigenous and European traditions" (Hale 2002: 500). Thus, in everyday practice and policies, such discourses[13] tend to be quite discriminatory against indigenous cultures, valuing European and ladino identities above indigenous livelihoods (doing very little to alleviate the marginalization of these populations).

Through such measures, "everyday practices regarding the mestizo body also inform the political discourses of *mestizaje* in Quincentennial Guatemala, which are linked to calls for national unity" (Nelson 1999: 231). Hale (1997) documents how such discourses of hybridity are used by elites as a way to delegitimize the Maya cultural

---

[13] Including *indigenismo*, the political and cultural movement that arose in the twentieth century as a response to such qualms about the divided nation. It was contradictory in that it sought to elevate or defend indigenous cultures but was carried out by non-indigenous elites in often paternalistic and racist ways (see also Smith-Oka 2013: 31-33).

rights movement and combat the activism that seeks to change the hegemonic and divisive power structure that has dominated Guatemala's history since the conquest[14]. As part of these discourses, the twentieth century also saw an attempt at liberal "modernization" which tended to aggravate the problems of discrimination and poverty issues already present in rural and indigenous communities. This endeavor is described by many as "a homogenizing political and cultural project" (Similox 2005)[15] which promoted assimilation by discouraging communal life and confiscating communal lands, and by encouraging monolingual education (in Spanish) and liberal economic policies that stressed the importance of developing a market economy (Similox 2005; Stavenhagen 2002). Many of these "modernization" plans became policies of exclusion, the most notable being the "asymmetric distribution of land and the unequal access to the territorial property[16]" (Cayzac 2001: 39, translation. See also Casallas and Padilla 2004; Stavenhagen 2002), which led to the systematic impoverishment of not only indigenous populations, but also of the ladino rural populations, with over fifty percent of the population living below the poverty line. Indeed, some scholars suggest that this

---

[14] Even after independence in 1821, the country has mostly ignored its mixed heritage and has openly discriminated against its indigenous members (Bastos and Brett 2010; Cayzac 2001; Hale 2006). Discrimination of the indigenous people have included the confiscation of communal farming grounds by the latifundistas (Cayzac 2001), the systematic exclusion of indigenous individuals from the formal economy, especially from any position of importance or leadership , and from important governmental offices, even local ones (Hale 2006; Similox 2005). Although there are many more instances both personal and institutionalized of such acts of prejudice, not all are as easily recorded, quantified or exemplified as the ones mentioned before, and which will be expanded on subsequently in this paper.

[15] "un proyecto político y cultural homogenizador,"

[16] "La marginación de importantes sectores de la población empieza por una repartición asimétrica de la tierra y el desigual accesso a la propiedad territorial."

economic factor played one of the most significant roles in the uprisings against the government that began the Civil War (Cayzac 2001; Stavenhagen 2002).

In this way, *mestizaje* joins discourses of modernization to create a "narrative of progress" that was reinforced through political tracts, educational textbooks, and even novels (Stephenson 1999: loc. 809). In most instances such progress was equated with the three basic themes of modernity: "the great divide between nature and culture (or society), the colonial difference between moderns and nonmoderns, and a unidirectional linear temporality that flows from past to future" (Blaser 2010: 4). This colonial divide is particularly important for the maintenance of current power imbalances and the implementation of state power. As Ferguson reminds us, the state is not an actor but rather a mode of exercising power, suggesting both that the state is by no means a bounded entity and that as it expands, its bureaucratic power diminishes (1990: 273). More importantly, however, "with any strategy of power, to resist it we must see how it is productive as well as repressive" (Nelson 1999: 96).

Mestizaje and nation-building are very much a gendered process such that, "national progress is thus understood in relation to masculine and feminine embodiments that naturalize understandings of racial-ethnic difference and processes of biological-national reproduction" (Radcliffe 2015: 299). Without this binary, the state (and *ladinos*) cannot define themselves as modern. Indeed, scholars argue that a feminized indigenous identity is necessary for the ladino state to position itself as opposing tradition and embracing modernity (Smith-Oka 2013; Stephenson 1990). In this sense, gender is

important to consider because “the race and class inequalities […] must be understood as constituted by the social regulation of gender and sexuality. Ignoring this runs the risk of falling victim to an ‘ideological subterfuge’ blinding us to the centrality of gender in the production of race, class, and national identification in Guatemala” (Nelson 1999: 235). Thus, gender does not mean fixating on women per se (although their cases are important) but rather, on understanding the power relations between men and women, transposed onto relations between ladino and indigenous. The fixation on controlling racial, (and later, in the neoliberal era of multiculturalism, ethnic) identities leads to an overdetermination of these. The result is, a fantasy that both overplays differences—especially bodily ones—and confers in them an illusion of rigidity in the production of gender as well as race, class and even a national identity (Nelson 1999: 235; 127).

Thus, despite the strong attempts at forming a single ethnic identity within the country and uniting the nation under a homogenous imagined community (Anderson 1983), the Guatemalan nation-sate is still characterized as a broken body politic (Nelson 1999). This fact carried on after the civil was, and led many to fear that Guatemala’s next conflict would be a violent ethnic confrontation—especially with the rise of the Maya cultural rights movement (Hale 2006; Nelson 1999). Indeed, “the failure of Ladino elites to construct a cohesive national identity and constitute the majority of the population as citizens” lead directly to the “ideological struggles surrounding national identity” (Grandin 2000) that characterize the subsequent rise of multiculturalism.

It would be impossible to analyze the current indigenous movement in Guatemala without first considering the armed conflict that ravaged the country for over thirty years (1960-1996). With over 200,000 people dead or disappeared—the majority of them indigenous—the atmosphere that pervaded was was one of terror. Arising from an oppressive and monopolized power scheme, Guatemala entered a period characterized (even more than ever) as one of intolerance and exclusion, as well as by a lack of accountability, legal order and respect for the law; e.g. in a span of thirty years, from 1954 to 1982, there were three coups with three respective changes of the constitution (Cayzac 2001). The war has been labeled genocidal[17] due to the brutal repression against indigenous communities, even when it was not solely indigenous peoples who were the subject of ruthless killings. Indeed, "the counterinsurgency discourse that justified killing off peoples 'to the last seed' targeted indigenous people, but primarily as they were seen as subversives and thus subsumed in the larger category of adversary to the health of the body politic" (Nelson 1999: 95). Thus, examining the vicious atrocities and aftermaths of the Civil War is crucial to understanding both the rise of a Pan-Maya identity and the cultural rights movement as well as understanding how indigenous peoples see themselves and are seen in relation to the Guatemalan body politic.

---

[17] A term that is still widely and vehemently debated both in the public spheres (from newspaper articles and television shows to governmental press releases) as well as in the private domain (such as Facebook, Whatsapp groups, and everyday conversations). In fact, during my first fieldwork experience in 2013, General Rios Montt was tried for genocide, found guilty and sentenced, only to be acquitted three days later, leaving justice hanging until further notice. Currently, he is scheduled to re-appear at court to face the same charges in January of 2016 (source: http://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2015/10/08/5616e52222601da84f8b4634.html).

Maya organization started after the 1944 Revolution, when indigenous peoples began (slowly, and in very limited ways) to be a part of civil society (Bastos and Camus 2003: 18). By the end of the 1970's, indigenous peoples had established their presence in a growing number of local municipalities—usually aligning themselves with the Christian Democracy Party or cultural organizations, mostly put together by indigenous students (2003: 19). After 1974, the growing violence terrorizing Guatemala (especially its indigenous peoples) closed away any possibilities of change through institutional means. After which, the 1980's only bought about an increase in military violence in a brutal attempt to subdue the wave of protests and guerrilla campaigns that had also been growing.

The result was "massive violence against indigenous communities in general,"[18] which resulted in more than 200,000 deaths and aimed to completely squash Maya mobilization (Bastos y Camus 2003: 23; Vogt 2015: 33). After the ruthless Rios Montt era came to a close, the late 80's saw a transition into democracy, with the rewriting of the constitution taking place in 1985 and the election of the first civil society president since 1970: Vinicio Cerezo. This change, unfortunately, did not mean a reduction in the military surveillance and policing of the population, leaving once again, little room for civil participation or active citizenship. Up to this point, the majority of indigenous leaders and activists had been killed, disappeared, exiled, or forced into hiding leaving a space (*vacío*) for a new generation of Maya leadership. Indeed, despite the continuing

---

[18] "una violencia desmedida sobre las comunidades indígenas en general"

threat and presence of the military, the late 80's saw a resurgence of indigenous organizations, including CUC, CERJ, and others like CONAVIGUA and CONDEG (Bastos y Camus 2003; Brett 2006) . Finally, the internationally mediated peace process (between the Guatemalan State and the revolutionary forces of URNG) began in 1992, with la "*Paz Firme y Duradera*" (Firm and Lasting Peace) signed in December of 1996.

Previously, in 1992, the Coordinadora Maya Majaww Q'ij was formed, bringing together the plethora of groups that had formed under URNG and so marking more clearly their participation in national politics as well as their union with the larger Pan-Maya movement (Brett 2006: 97-99). At the same time, those who were previously unaligned with the revolutionary party came together under COMG (Coordinadora de Organizaciones Mayas de Guatemala), in an attempt to extend true citizenship rights to the Maya peoples. The increasing levels of Maya organization meant that "the idea of a Mayan People" surged as an ideology, something that marked a big step away from being subjugated populations to being subjects of a Maya nation which predated the Guatemalan State (Bastos y Camus 2003: 24, 28). After various attempts at introducing Mayan demands into the signing of the accords—which the revolutionary forces saw as a class based struggle with "the enemy"—the Maya movement split in two: the populist and the Mayanist groups (Brett 2006; Bastos y Camus 2003).

The first group, CONIC took up the peasant struggle against the state, using both coercion and negotiation to make their demands felt. The second group—focusing more on Maya spirituality and born from the larger Latin American counter-movement to the

Quincentennial—relied on collaboration with the state. Throughout the next two years, the stage was fraught with tension, as different Maya organizations (both populist and Mayanist; state sanctioned and independent) came together to propose the "Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples" component of the peace accords (which was proposed to the Assembly for Civil Society in 1994). The final document was signed by the state in 1995, in what many consider the "first institutional signal of, literally, a 'seizure of consciousness' about the necessity to break with the monocultural and discriminatory national project that prevails from the conquest" (Cayzac 2001: 37).

In recent years, the neoliberal era has brought about an age of NGO professionalization and multiculturalism which have taken over the nation building project and are now charged with dealing with indigenous peoples (that is, in managing difference, including gender). While the end of the Civil War made it impossible to deny that indigenous peoples have been oppressed and discriminated against since colonial times and that their socioeconomic marginalization continues today, the question of how to redress thousands of years of mistreatment is still spiritedly debated. While some disagree on how to carry out this compensation—with minority rights, government ministries, women's rights groups, land compensation, to name a few—others with more neoliberal agendas still dispute the very idea of collective rights.

Most often, those who object invoke neoliberal justifications argue that it is the government's role to assure the freedoms and rights of *all* individual persons. As such, indigenous peoples should "have the same universal human rights as everybody

else" (Stavenhagen 2002; 37) instead of a special set of collective laws protecting them. In such considerations, "individual liberty is portrayed as one of the great moral achievements of capitalism" (Castles and Miller 2009). Even when neoliberalism acknowledges difference (cultural, ethnic, linguistic) "the hierarchies upon which they rest—gender, race, and sexuality—remain firmly in place (Wade 2009: 217-8)" (in Radcliffe 2015: loc. 324). What's more, the discourses of development and human rights need the modern-traditional dichotomy—with culture and indigeneity falling into the latter—just as much as the discourses of nation-building do (Merry 2003: 58).

For this reason, an important issue to consider is the possibility that political and socio-economical restructuring has been shifting away from indigenous concerns since the signing of the piece accords and the ushering in of the neoliberal era. This notion is furthered by the fact that, despite the increase in indigenous participation in governmental offices, cultural activities, universities and other such places, there is always a question about the degree of social and economical advancement that the indigenous people have achieved. Many scholars fear that this type of involvement, often very specific (usually related to culture, education, language etc.), is merely superficial, and that nothing has changed in the past decade and a half (Alcantara 2005; Hale 2006; Plant 2002). Other scholars even go as far as to suggest that the "peace talks and agreements were more or less imposed upon Guatemalan society by the international community" (Rettberg 2007), and as such there is a lack of interest by a majority of the national community to follow through on the peace accords.

Moreover, the era of multiculturalism brought with it a new version of Foucault's (1997) panopticon in the form of the professionalized NGO (Hale 2002: 496). The governmentality exercised by development experts and NGOs is deeply tied to colonial legacies of racism and hegemony[19], something that most deeply affected indigenous women. A recent study done by the National Survey of Living Conditions (Encovi, Encuesta Nacional de condiciones de Vida) carried out by the National Institute for Statistics (INE, Instituto Nacional de Estadística) and the World Bank shows how indigenous women continue to be disproportionately impoverished and uneducated[20]. Beyond statistics, "the biopolitics of postcolonial intersectionality bring power relations down to the scale of the body, linking identities to bodies, thereby naturalizing routine exclusion" (Radcliffe 2014: p. 300). Radcliffe also describes how, in Ecuador, "*Indígenas*' poverty, racialization and abjection in postcolonial hierarchies remained yet again outside the factors to be considered in policy that focused excessively on their

---

[19] Racism especially is something that continues to be very openly prevalent. In one occasion Franz, an engineer of German descent I had been in contact with in order to interview a couple of Congresswomen, compared the current situation of racism in Guatemala, "exactly the way the situation was in the United States in the sixties, *aunque la segregación racial acá no es tan ordenada como lo fue allá con sectores específicos en buses y demás*." He also recounted—in a way reminiscent of Hale's argument about how racism is prevalent yet disguised as "cultural" in Guatemalan society—the following story:
"Para ilustrártelo, te cuento que en tiempos de Berger, pusieron a una señora muy fina, del círculo de las amigas de Wendy de Berger, como Secretaria de la SAE (Secretaría de Análisis Estratégico, o sea, el equivalente guatemalteco de la CIA). El director anterior tenía apellido indígena y pocos meses antes, había comprado una camioneta Toyota Fortuner para uso de quien fuera Secretario. Cuando le dijeron a la señora que estaba ese vehículo a su disposición, le dijo al administrador de la SAE que se llevara ese vehículo a algún lugar y lo guardara, para que ella pudiera estacionar su propio carro en la SAE, porque ella no iba a andar en el mismo carro que ya había usado el indio ese (y esta es una cita literal). En la actualidad, hay personas que te dicen con toda claridad que pueden hacer negocios con cualquier indígena, pero que ni sueñen en que les darían permiso de salir con sus hijas."
Stories such as this one make it apparent that any discussion about "progress" brought about by the end of discrimination based on so-called racial differences or by the peace accords are superficial at best.

[20] From "Siete datos que debes saber para debatir sobre Guatemala" (or Seven Facts You Need to Know to Debate About Guatemala) in the independent newspaper *Nómada.*

bodies and reproduction" (2014: loc. 327). She asserts that in the Ecuadorian case, neoliberalism has maintained both colonial racial categories and the sexualized conceptions of these, something that is also true of Guatemala (2014: loc. 339).

Indeed, she argues that "postcolonial elites' association of indigenous populations and women with a problematic fertility and mortality profile permeates Ecuadorian policy on sexual and reproductive health" while at the same time denying these racialized populations any form of validity, thus labeling them "undeserving of care" and excludes/neglects them proper healthcare (Radcliffe 2014: loc. 339; See also Smith-Oka 2013). In this way, the narrative of development—much like that of nation-building—begins with this juxtaposition of subaltern-traditional to state-modern.

While such sobering interpretations may appear as major setbacks, there is no denying the fact that the stage has changed dramatically in regards to both articulating and negotiating an indigenous identity, as well as negotiating with the state. Nelson reminds us that, the rise of cultural identities can be used for political gain (to make demands, to gain power, etc.) by arguing that culture can be both a technique of governmentality used by the state and a strategy of resistance used by Maya activists (1999: 115). Indeed, she argues that "the very terms of the debate, like the use of *Maya*, are part of the appropriative-resistive dialectic of their work, which wants to maintain difference but organize a more pan-indigenous identity" (Nelson 1999: 133) Likewise, Mario Blaser argues that activist movements involving indigenous groups can have powerful results: "Indigenous peoples' agency and their alliances with wider movements

themselves can have, and sometimes have had, transformative effects on the emergence of alternative structures of governance that are not rooted in globalizing development" (Blaser 2004: 2). That is, while discourses of indigeneity, in all its formulations (as part of mestizaje or multiculturalism) can have very clear negative effects on indigenous identities and livelihoods, they can also have positive consequences for these same communities.

Indio Permitido

As suggested in the previous section, the way government (both the state and NGOs) has managed difference has had a lasting effect on indigenous identities and subjectivities.

While governmentality can certainly produce a complete erasure of identity, in the neoliberal context certain applications of this exercise of power can also retain Maya subjectivities while impeding significant social reform. Hale (2002) describes a form of governmentality he calls "neoliberal multiculturalism", that conducts behavior and is enacted through non-state transnational organizations. In the case he describes, the normalizing effect of discipline and power-knowledge (menacingly) produced two types of indigenous subjects: the neoliberal Indian (or "*indio permitido*"[21]) and the dangerous, revolutionary Indian (or "*indio prohibido*"). By "endors[ing] some facets of multiculturalism, so long as it does not go too far" (2002, 490), multiculturalism shapes Mayan subjectivities and aims to "re-activat[e] the community as [an] effective agent in the reconstitution of the Indian citizen-subject" (2002: 496). In this way, through various power relations (or structures) indigenous bodies and behaviors are disciplined by professionalized NGOs, which Hale describes as the new panopticon (2002: 491; Foucault 1997).

---

[21] While Hale and Millamán have fine-tuned the term (Hale and Millamán 2006), they acknowledge that it is a phrase was first used by Rivera Cusicanqui: reminding us that, "the phrase "indio permitido" names a sociopolitical category, not the characteristics of anyone in particular. We borrow the phrase from Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, who uttered it spontaneously, in exasperation, during a workshop on cultural rights and democratization in Latin America" (Hale 2004: 17).

The result is a recognition of difference that does not translate into tangible rights or privileges. Instead, the state and its allies "re-constitute [indigenous culture and civil society] in its own image, sheering them of radical excess, inciting them to do the work of subject-formation that otherwise would fall to the state itself" (Hale 2002: 496). As I discussed earlier "ladino identity is closely tied to notions of modernity. Speaking Spanish, wearing 'western' clothing, and enjoying access to advanced technology has historically defined ladinos as against the tradition, superstition, and backwardness of indigenous culture" (Nelson 1999: p. 78). Consequently, when indigenous peoples perform these "modern" behaviors they are seen as leaving their indigenous identity behind in favor of a ladino one. Alternatively, there are also people who choose to assert their indigenous identity while at the same time integrating themselves into ladino cultural spheres. In these cases, their indigenous identity is perceived by the ladino elites as non-threatening due to their endorsement (but openly and implicitly) of neoliberal and multicultural ideals.

Many NGOs work with these ideas in mind, aiming to "modernize" the indigenous, impoverished, and oftentimes, rural populations they work with. In many instances this is seen as a socioeconomic question, where empowerment is achieved to economic integration and the adoption of westernized customs. The notion that *superación* is about class is also touched on by Nelson (1999)[22], who suggests that for many, "Indians will be freed from their chains when they unite behind the battle fatigues

---

[22] Drawing on C. Smith (1991)

of the guerrilla (for neoliberal ladinos, behind a three-piece Armani business suit)" (p. 233).

During my work with the ITA and UVG scholarship programs, most of the workers and the majority of the students who were part of the program appeared to feel that a rise in class would erase the low status of their indigeneity. Take, for example, Carlos, the first student to become part of the UVG program. Dressed in a sharp business suit, he was one of the few indigenous informants to openly speak about his Mayan descent from the very start. His office, which was located in one of the many high-rises that make up Guatemala City's business district, provided a stark contrast to any of the stereotypes commonly held about Guatemala's indigenous populations. The building was extremely busy, with men and women in suits or company uniforms bustling about, and private security workers visible everywhere. Upon arriving there, I presented my ID at the street entrance, walked through a metal detector while a security guard wrote down my information, and then waited ten minutes for an elevator to arrive. After getting off the elevator in the tenth floor, another security guard, this time sitting at a desk in front of what clearly looked like a bullet-proof glass wall, wrote down my information. He buzzed the front desk so another security-guard-turned-receptionist could open the door and let me in to the waiting area. Once inside, I was pointed to a tiny sitting area in between two thick, bullet-proof doors where I was to wait. The security guard then informed Carlos through an intercom that I had arrived.

Such increased security has become commonplace in the elite business world of Guatemala City. With the rise in violent crimes and murders throughout the country[23], privatized security has become yet another means by which the poor are segregated from the rich. Those who can afford it surround themselves in armored cars, armed bodyguards and the ever-increasing amount of private security corporations[24]. The consequences of such segregation only exacerbate the rising levels of income inequality in the country by making those who cannot afford private security vulnerable to extortions and theft at the hands of violent gangs and criminals. Moreover, security procedures such as the one in Carlos' high-rise mark a clear divide between those who belong inside the air-conditioned buildings and those who are left outside to face the harsh realities of the Guatemalan capital.

After a few more minutes of waiting for Carlos in this setting, he came to this second, also bullet-proof glass door and let me in to where the offices were. The elegant, double ceilinged hallway leading to his office was lined with professionally taken pictures of Mayan people in traditional clothing. As we sat down to begin our interview, a uniformed employee brought us glasses of water and asked if we would be needing anything else. We thanked the *señorita* for our water, he silenced his blackberry, turned

[23] Both in part of the police and army as well as in the growing violent threat presented by gangs and drug cartels. The newspaper Prensa Libre reported that there were 5,259 homicides in 2013 alone (from *El 2013 cerró con 2,259 homicidios*, in *Prensa Libre*, Guatemala January 2nd, 2014) a number that surely does not represent the cases of people who disappeared at the hands of cartels, or as victims of police corruption.

[24] Earlier this year (2015) *Prensa Libre* reported that there are 128 legal private security firms and over 30 clandestine ones. Between them they employ over 88,000 private security agents (police records show that only 28,000 of these are legally registered with the National Police, or PNC).

down the air conditioning, and we began our interview. Carlos was an alumni of prestigious, private universities in Guatemala City. Unlike most of the people graduating from these institutions, however, he had grown up in an underprivileged family, in a rural area of the country. Like many of the indigenous students I interviewed, Carlos had been the recipient of a comprehensive scholarship meant to give bright, disadvantaged students the opportunity to attend college in the private universities of the City. His story is remarkable: not only was he the first student to have received the scholarship and attended UVG with it, he was now both a professor there and held a very successful job at one of Guatemala's largest and wealthiest corporations.

Coming from a rural area of the country and born of indigenous parents, his profile was markedly different from the rest of Guatemala city's top executives. Carlos recounted the challenges and pressure he felt growing up to quit school to work and start a family (both direct pressure from his family and societal pressure from his peers). After having failed out of school and working as a carpenter for a couple of years, Carlos decided to go back to school. After winning first place in a national science championship, he was chosen by the scholarship program, JBG (a privately founded non profit that had decided to expand by finding talented youth and providing scholarships for them). As he sat there in front of me dressed in a blue suit and tie, playing with his blackberry, it was hard to imagine him in any other context, much less a small rural town. To those who had introduced me to Carlos, and the JBG and ITA programs, he was living

proof of how development through education can break the cycle of poverty and backwardness associated with being indigenous.

He repeatedly told me how his success, and that of other JBG students, was a question of attitude, emphasizing that the combination of high self esteem and hard work he had developed during his years with the program had led to strong “self-empowerment”. Carlos insisted on distancing himself from those indigenous activists he saw as “*tajantes*” (stubborn or backward)[25] and instead embodying the “modern businessman” (Hale 2002). On one occasion he denounced the notion of collective rights, and argued vehemently against the government providing special rights for minorities:

“I don’t want, just because I am indigenous, I don’t want to be gifted a job or be gifted a house, or be gifted a piece of land, like, if my being indigenous is the reason you want to give me all these things, just because I am from that place, then you are cutting off my feet and my hands! I want to be recognized for my talent and my capacities and for what I am.”[26]

In this way, by embodying the Indio permitido role Hale described, Carlos was able to openly admit he was indigenous, and that he came from a rural background, while at the same time distancing himself from the perceived negative stereotypes of being associated with such identities. Moreover, distancing himself from the “extremists” of the

---

[25] A word with strong negative connotations, it is usually utilized to describe people who are stubborn in an extremist way, closed to any form of negotiation.

[26] “Yo no quiero que a mi, por ser indígena me puedan regalar un trabajo, o que me puedan regalar una casa, o que me puedan regalar un pedazo de tierra pues, ósea si por indígena me estas queriendo dar eso solo porque yo soy de esa parte, me estas cortando los pies y las manos pues! Yo quiero que me reconzcás por mi talento, por mi capacidad y por lo que yo soy.”

Mayan rights movement served to promote[27] the notion that development truly is the solution to the poverty and marginalization of Guatemala's poor.

[27] I use the word promote as he still had strong ties with the JBG program and continually endorsed their efforts to help impoverished youth "*superarse"*.

Erasure of Identity

While discourses of development have the potential to mold indigenous identities into neoliberally permissible categories (see above, Hale 2002), this is not always the case. Governmentality work can also come to stamp out—often through very violent and intimate ways—an indigenous livelihood and identification (though these are hard to define in and of themselves). In this sense, NGOs take up "the indigenous problem" in such a way that Guatemalan society's ambivalence towards its indigenous components leads to "the pervasive sense that Indians must be brought out of those spaces, assimilated into a larger community and national project […] the state and urban ladinos in general exhibit a profound ignorance and contempt for indigenous culture and life" (Nelson 1999: 87). This means that on many occasions, the work of development NGOs pressures and urges people to abandon their indigenous identification altogether in favor of assimilating into the ladino majority. For many, including both NGO professionals and those they work with, development is seen as a linear project with indigenous, rural, backwards at one end (the beginning) and ladino, modern, prosperous on the other (the goal). Moreover, keeping indigenous peoples at the beginning of this linear progress myth means that "as long as this catching-up process remained incomplete, Indians could be considered legitimate objects of intervention" (Blaser 2010: 50).

The strength of this push to erasure was clear in an interview I had with Rafael, an indigenous entrepreneur who ran a very successful and profitable business in the city. While he was not a graduate of the ITA or JBG program himself, I had been introduced

by two former JGB students who regarded him highly. Though his last name and accent attested to his being considered indigenous, I was still very careful about bringing up the subject of his ethnic identity. (I had been warned by a fellow Guatemalan anthropologist that this could be a source of discomfort for people who might feel the negative connotations of being indigenous). When we finally touched the topic of his hometown in the highlands, I attempted to ask a question that would go into more depth about his background, however his answered provided the background to how he had managed to establish his business in the city. Thinking I had been misunderstood, I rephrased the question to ask a question related with his learning of Spanish (something that other informants had brought up when talking about being indigenous). Again, he avoided the question and proceeded to talk about more specific aspects of his commerce.

Though I was puzzled at the moment, understanding this as a desire to distance himself not only from an identification as "*tajante*" (Hale 2002) but from an indigenous identity altogether, indicated more than a mere misunderstanding of a question (as I had originally thought). By blatantly refusing to even acknowledge my question, Rafael was in fact communicating that he did not wish to elaborate on the topic of his hometown or the language he spoke because they are both clear indications of, or ties to, being indigenous. In a country and particularly a city that juxtaposes indigenous and ladino negatively, it would make sense for people to want to distance themselves from being indigenous and thus from all the things that indigeneity can come to evoke. Moreover, there is also an influence from a "cultural discourse" (*discurso cultural*) which

"associates the indigenous with a fixed series of 'cultural' attributes and supposes that when these attributes fade or change, indigenous identity decreases accordingly"(2004)[28].

Rafael and many of the other students' hesitation to identify as indigenous can be interpreted first, as part of this cultural discourse that suggests economic success and urban life as incompatible with indigeneity. Second, it can also be considered as an aversion to being associated with the stigmas related to being a minority in Guatemala, exemplifying how the "subtle assumption of superiority permeates–not automatically, but as strong, diffuse propensities and patterns—the entire range of life experiences" (Hale 2006). It is no surprise then, than with the added pressure of NGO discourses and technologies of development—explicitly stating that they aim to improve and train (*capacitar*) those who are seen as inferior, and producing the practices it deems necessary to achieve such an improvement—the desire to leave an indigenous identity behind intensifies.

"*Nosotras no somos castellanos, pero con la ayuda de GuateAyuda lo estamos logrando.*"

I was sitting inside a darkened, small meeting room in a village close to Tecpán, Guatemala. Magdalena, the woman I was speaking to, had just completed the first phase in a two-part women's empowerment program run by the Guatemalan NGO GuateAyuda and we were celebrating her graduation (along with nine other women). We had left the city early in the morning, and after stopping for breakfast in Tecpán we met up at the

---

[28] this "Asocia lo indígena con una serie fija de atributos 'culturales' y supone que cuando estos atributos se desvanecen o cambian, la identidad indígena disminuye en consecuencia," my translation.

local office with the rest of the team's technicians and Tecpan's priest. We followed GuateAyuda's pickup truck through the unpaved, bumpy road, eventually arriving at the village community room, amid breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains. During our journey up the director and co-founder of the program, Esteban, had been explaining to me how the ceremony was the culmination of a year and a half of *capacitación* or "training"[29] as well as distancing GuateAyuda from the various other NGOs that worked in the same village (as evidenced by the many posters and flyers on the road advertising a myriad of development agencies around the area).

During multiple occasions both volunteers and workers told me that the organization's goals were "to leave the women's culture intact." Esteban said that this meant that "we don't want to influence the women's language or dress or really their culture." For this reason most of the *capacitación* the women got was taught in their native languages, in their own villages. It was interesting, however, that he had specifically mentioned language and dress as the main component of women's culture and did not consider how habitus, household organization, or any other component of daily life could be considered a part of culture. The associations' separation between what they perceived as "secular" hygiene and nutrition instruction and the racialized indigenous bodies they aimed to work with was not clear in real life however. That is,

---

[29] The word *capacitación* is not exactly like training, and carries a connotation of development, especially or preparing oneself to improve. Upon asking a couple of people to define what *capacitatón* meant to them, one of them explained that it was meant "to overcome (*superar*) educational differences…in education, or technical, like they can't even cook or sow." ("para superar diferencias educativas… de educación técnicas, que no pueden ni cocinar ni coser algo"). Usually *capacitación* is used in either development or business training settings.

there was no way to talk about these topics (hygiene, nutrition, an childcare) without touching on cultural traditions.

Moreover, when I asked who was able to participate in the program, or who counted as a "socia," a businesslike term used to describe the women that chose to work with GuateAyuda, I was told it was "mothers—or future mothers!" Thus exemplifying again the way indigenous women's bodies are both gendered and radicalized as they are chosen to be the targets of elite development organizations. In this case the indigenous maternal body was seen as faulty and as such "needing help" or improvement. For it was on the body of the mother, "la mujer encinta" (the pregnant woman), and of the mother's children that the organization focused. A woman who was not a mother, or a future mother, was not even considered as existing by the program. In addition, there was also a patriarchal relationship between the organization itself and the "*socias*" (business partners), apparent in the language with which the women expressed their fear of "graduating" from the first phase of the program and being abandoned. More specifically however, it was clear in the (often condescending) way the organization's technicians and volunteers regarded and spoke of these women.

This is emblematic of the larger hegemonic system within the country, which places indigenous women at the lowest rung of society. Moreover, it also reinforces the idea that in order to superarse, even in the domestic realm, there needs to be an adoption of white, western customs and values. Furthermore, the structuring of the program seems to suggest that, in order to achieve economic advancement and independence, women

must first be taught how to become “castellanas.” This implied correlation—perhaps even causation—between household and bodily improvement and economic growth again reinforces the notion of indigenous inferiority and victim-blaming. What's more, it also reinforces the patriarchal belief that women's value and productivity lies merely in her household work and reproductive body (an ironic fact considering that the organization strictly avoided any topics regarding reproductive and sexual health).

Similarly, Smith-Oka describes how in Mexico, the conditional cash program *Oportunidades* provided to most indigenous mothers around the country has the “consequence of erasing the women’s indigeneity by purposely replacing indigenous forms of mothering with mainstream and *mestizo* forms” (2013: 4). By participating in this program indigenous women are obligated to enter into professional health environments with skewed power dynamics that place the women, their knowledge, and their mothering practices as inferior. The book provides many examples of the ways biopower and surveillance, as well as overt power from the state, are used by the *Oportunidades* program to suppress indigenous forms of mothering and promote mestizo culture as superior. In this way, Smith-Oka shows how being indigenous, poor, and female creates an uneven relationship between these women and the state. Particularly when those states seek to shape and control women’s bodies, reproduction, sexuality, and maternity (2013: 96).

The "Third Space";
Forming Communities and Finding Resistance at the Interstices

"These men have murdered many people![30]" I was sitting in a crowded basement theatre at the University of California, San Diego. We were all a little wet from the atypical downpour going on outside, and stragglers were still coming in even halfway through the play. But as Mercedes Francisca took center stage as Ixkik, leader of a Maya community, the audience fell silent. Her strong voice carried across a clear message of female, indigenous leadership as well as a denunciation of the increasingly neoliberal and industrialist practices in Central America. "I had to cut those electricity cables so the machines would stop, they are contaminating our hair, our bones, our blood and our womb![31]" The play—called Ixkik after its main character—was put on by the Guatemalan Maya women's group Ajchowen and it revealed in a creative way the dichotomies and problems with the rise of neoliberalism in Guatemala.

It was truly inspiring to see women from an ethnic minority that has for so long been oppressed in Guatemala portray themselves in such influential and powerful roles. Additionally, the insightful responses from the actresses themselves after the play were an amazing opportunity for the exploration of these overarching themes. Julia Ines Mucun Iboy, another one of the actresses, summarized it perfectly during an interview when she said that "through the theatre, we make known indigenous culture, traditions

---

[30] "¡Esos hombres han asesinado muchas personas!"

[31] "Tenía que cortar los cables de electricidad para que las máquinas pararan, ¡están contaminando nuestro cabello, nuestro huesos, nuestro sangre y nuestro vientre!"

and worldview[32]" Maya. It was truly inspirational to watch Ajchowen perform. It not only evoked passionate feelings from me but also from many members of the audience, some of whom were moved to tears by the end.

As I found myself sitting at this play I realized that indigenous pride and anti-capitalist movements were not confined to the outright "political sphere", but could take powerful shape through the arts (which tend to take on political themes). Theatre, in this case, provides just one example to analyze in order to understand how these identifications (being indigenous and anti-capitalism) can bring groups of people together in a community of resistance. After the play and during the next day I was able talk to the performers and the director about the powerful message of Ajchowen's performance. During our conversations it became clear that these women had formed strong bonds with each other beyond the relationship of coworkers (or co-performers).

While development certainly works in a separate dimension than theatre, I hope to show that there are parallels in the formation of meaningful bonds between people that identify in similar ways. By identify, I mean in the articulation of indigenous identities that have the power to contest and call into question hegemonic forms of elite, ladino, and capitalist power. I argue that, throughout women's involvement in development projects, it is in collaboration and practices of community formation that spaces of possibility open up. That is, while examining the ways in which Mayan women are

[32] "A través del teatro damos a conocer sobre la cultura, tradiciones y cosmovisión."

affected by state and NGO efforts to create the category of"indigenous woman"[33], it is also important to analyze the ways that they use their identity, their difference, and their knowledge to create meaningful communities that resist the oppressive power of the inequality that governmentality fosters.

The struggle to mediate and define an indigenous identity encompasses both the long history of colonialism and marginalization, and the way that *indigenous* is associated with poverty, backwardness and inferiority, especially for those coming from rural areas of the country—which has similar connotations of "underdevelopment" and "traditional". These associations are necessary in order to present ladinos and the state as "developed" and "modern", thus creating a codependent relationship between feminized indigenous tradition and masculine ladino modernity. Despite these negative and neo-colonial connotations ascribed to indigeneity however, culture can also provide a "third space" beyond the binomial of oppressor and oppressed (Hale 1997; Bhabha 1990; Nelson 1999; Radcliffe 2015, loc. 302). In such a way, Hale reminds us, "the term 'subversion' sheds its former meaning of 'conspiring against the system' and refers instead to the art of working at the interstices, finding the inevitable cracks and contradiction's in the oppressor's identity, discourse, or institutional practice, and using them to the subaltern's advantage" (1997: 581).

---

[33] This is something that is further explained later on in the paper, but that denotes a category created by governmentality and nation-building practices and that conceives indigenous women to be "traditional" and "backwards." It is different from actual indigenous women and the way they carry out their daily lives. (See also Nelson 1999; Radcliffe 2014).

In Bhabha's original conception of the term is tied to representational strategies of hybridity, where he analyzed "hybridization as subversion of authority in a dialogical situation of colonialism" (Wolf 2000: 133; Bhabha 1990). For Bhabha, understanding the power relations at play in postcolonial contexts makes evident an "in-between space" of hybridity between the elite and the subaltern other because these categories are continually influenced by each other (Bhabha 1990). Thus, the possibility for the renegotiation of these oppositional and seemingly binary categories exists in this third space of hybridity. Building on this, Wolf establishes that "the space in-between [...] exists in everyday life [and] It is in this everyday encounter that new meaning can be produced" (2000: 137). In her analysis she adds to Bhabha's understanding of the "third space" by drawing from feminist theory[34] to argue away from a "clash of civilizations" and into one of intertext (in the sense of a semiotic transformation) which consciously creates an in-between space. By bringing together Bhabha with feminist and linguistic theory, Wolf demonstrates how this concept of the "third space" remains useful for ethnographers (and translators), in order to conceptualize the ways in which subalterns can find spaces beyond the damaging binaries of oppressor and oppressed—of ladino and indigenous. More importantly, she shows how this space contains the potential for an intervention of hegemonic dominance (2000: 140).

For Hale, the "third space" (1997) can be a transformed way of "doing politics" such that subversion exists outside the of the elite and subaltern categories in what he

---

[34] Feminists have taken up this concept of the "third space" in order to locate spaces beyond the male-femail dualism.

cites as a space of "multidimensional political subjectivity" (Bhabha 1990 in Hale 1997: 581). For him, this space-in-between (the interstices) contains possibilities for new strategies and tactics that subaltern groups can use to challenge hegemonic power and assert their subjectivities (Hale 1997). Hale applies this to Guatemala, citing how Maya cultural activists "have found ways to hack out[35] a space within the national political arena, subverting the traditional-modern dichotomy that has always been used against them, and at the same time helping to dispel the impression that they are engaged in radical, frontal opposition to 'the system'" (1997: 281; Nelson 1999). Taking all of this into consideration, here I take the "third space" to be both material and discursive, located at the interstices of development such that the uneven power relations between NGOs and the subjects they discipline creates the possibility for subversion and resistance. This space can take the form of challenging elite discourses and practices as well as producing certain bodily habits[36], both of which help in asserting indigenous subjectivities, producing indigenous knowledge and forming meaningful subaltern communities. Hale (1997) and Wolf (2000) inform this framework by showing how subalterns can find productive and political ways to challenge hegemonic structures[37] and

---

[35] In reference to Nelson's metaphor of the "Maya hacker", analyzed in the section below (1999).

[36] Bodily habits that are not prescribed by the NGOs per se, but that were reformulated and reworked in assertive, bold or confident manners to support indigenous subjectivities, indigenous knowledge or the formation of meaningful subaltern communities. For example, Andrea's politically conscious decision to use *traje* or Mayan greetings in our email exchange and to make sure I knew she was proud of that.

[37] Here, I take "structures" to be influenced by Foucault and Bourdieu's notions of the unconscious apparatus that guides habitus and the behavior of the social body.

damaging conceptions of indigeneity from within the political and socioeconomic system by asserting politicized identities.

In the following sections I will analyze how this “space-in-between” is illustrated in the works of Nelson (1999), Smith-Oka (2013) and Radcliffe (2014), whose writing provide me with the ethnographic data necessary to evaluate the validity of the “third space”. By using their ethnographies to further analyze and delineate how subversion at the interstices is played out, I can then apply this concept to my own work in Guatemala. Critically examining the work of these three authors suggests that the “third space” can occur in the form of “hacking” identity, as Nelson suggests, in order to undermine the “traditional-modern” dualism and disrupt power inequalities; with laughter as Smith-Oka describes, bringing people together into communities; and in producing subaltern knowledge about development, as Radcliffe illustrates. All of these examples show how certain articulations of identity bring people together in order to subvert the dichotomies between modern/traditional, oppressor/oppressed, ladino/Indian and so challenge power inequalities.

This space of resistance is one where the system itself is not changed in a revolutionary manner, but rather where identity is used strategically to undermine the authority of those in power. More importantly, identity and culture are used to bring people together into meaningful communities where subalterns come together with a common cause: it can be to actively resist discriminatory power, as in the case of Maya activists, or it can be in smaller ways, in order to improve the lives of those who have

previously fallen into a category of non-agentive "other" in need of development. By illustrating how this happens in each of the three ethnographic works I am analyzing as well as in my own work, I demonstrate why the analytical frames of the *indio permitido* and of an erasure of identity cannot fully explain what is occurring when development projects attempt to police and discipline indigenous women and youth.

NELSON'S METAPHORS OF RESISTANCE: FINDING SUBVERSION IN QUINCENTENNIAL GUATEMALA

In *A Finger in the Wound* (1999), Diane Nelson presents us with an intricate account of body politics in Guatemala after the end of the Civil War (and the five-hundred-year anniversary of Columbus' voyage to the Americas) by analyzing the concepts of nation and ethnic identification. She does this by looking at how "the wounded body politic of Guatemala, modernity and tradition, nation and ethnicity are interpenetrated on every side—and the state, rather than trying to erase multiple identifications, is a productive site for their articulation" (1999: 2). Nelson's analysis takes place in a very particular moment of Guatemala's history: the end of the Civil War brought about both an acknowledgment of the terror of the previous three decades, as well as expectations about what Guatemala's body politic should look like. Additionally, the signing of the peace accords (however superficial it was) was tied to the rapid expansion of indigenous organizing around a Maya identity[38] as well as Rigoberta

[38] See Background section.

Menchú's 1992 Nobel Peace Prize. This era was also characterized by an international focus on Indigenous rights, where the United Nations declared the Decade of Indigenous People and many indigenous groups' attempted to ratify ILO-Convention 169 in their own countries.

Nelson establishes a very intimate way of addressing her questions about the wounded body politic, positioning herself clearly within her ethnographic research and her writing. She situates herself as a North American anthropologist in Guatemala, incorporating how her identity as "*gringa*" affects her solidarity and pain with the movements at he time. More importantly, she considers how her own fluid identity—as a *gringa* in solidarity—shaped her relations to the Guatemalans she worked with (journalists, indigenous rights activists, and other North Americans). She considers the power dynamics at play in these relations, acknowledging her privileged position in her research and solidarity work. As mentioned in the Methodology section, Nelson uses the term *fluidarity* to describe this method of analysis, which not only arises from her complex positionality but also allows her to remain politically productive. This articulation of the porousness of her own identity allows her to examine the lack of clear-cut boundaries in the rest of society. Thus, she extends this fluidary analysis to the anxieties, dreams, and desires of the Guatemalan body politic and its relations to the changing conceptions of Maya identities. In doing so she manages to analyze the state as both "terrain and praxis" by examining "the ways 'real' Mayas and ladinos articulate ethnic, class, gender and national identifications in relation to one another" (1999:127).

Moreover, Nelson's fluidary analysis clearly exemplifies how the in-between space of resistance is present in Guatemala through three different body metaphors: that of the Maya-hacker, Rigoberta Menchú as transvestite, and bodies that splatter (1999). All three "are meant to remind you of the representational labor occurring, while they problematize categories like 'Maya,' 'Guatemala,' 'identity,' and 'authenticity'" (35). In this way, all three of these analogies call into question the hegemonic conceptions of elite ladino power while at the same time exemplifying how culture became a "thing", a tool that could be used to make demands, to gain power, etc. within this "third space." Through these metaphors Nelson shows how "this instrumental notion of culture is both useful for a developing governmentality of the democratizing Guatemalan sate and appropiatable by Mayan activists deploying their own notions of culture" (1999: 115).

Nelson uses the term "Maya-hacker" to define those Mayan cultural rights activists who defy the binary identity of indigenous versus traditional and ladino versus modern. She uses this term to purposely challenge the notion that being indigenous is incompatible with certain livelihoods (like having an academic degree, a desk job, etc.) and technological expertise. Nelson asserts that she "deploy[s] the term as a caution against ethnostalgia—the romance of tradition, modernity's longing for sincerity, for a link to the ardor and mystery of the past" (249). In doing so she not only reveals the contradictions that arise with being a Maya activist and dealing with a conflicting relationship to ethnostalgia: in that it can bring both positive consequences for the movement while at the same time limiting it by tying them to Maya as traditional binary.

More importantly, however, this term also exemplifies the ways in which Mayas can rework this problematic binary identification system in order to formulate their own expression of what it means to be indigenous.

Indigenous identity is not all that is reconfigured, Nelson details how Maya-hackers use information technologies (language and information) to *articulate* in a way that links the Maya to the nation-state and in the process reconstitutes both identities. She takes this *articulation* to mean “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice” suggesting that “[b]oth the Maya-hacker and the nation-state are constantly being constituted through these doubled articulations” (1999: 250). In this way, we see how the interdependent relation between the nation-state and indigenous peoples opens up a space for contesting and reworking representation. This means, not a revolutionary reworking of the state and ladino power, but rather contesting the very notions of having a fetishized state (255) by “creating spaces for themselves inside the state—they are speaking in between, interdicta” (257). This taking control of how they themselves are represented and their identities constituted, shows how Maya activists have “hacked” the ladino power structure within the state, thus creating a new sphere for power reconfiguration.

Nelson maintains that the nation-state, as a space of Foucauldian power-knowledge, is founded on exclusionary principles such as citizenship that are based on class, race, gender, and sexuality, much like cyber-space (1999: 261). Using Maurer (1997) and Stolcke (1993), she shows how this configuration of the state reveals how

"fundamentally unstable" it is "as a result of the inherent contradictions between liberal humanism and capitalist antagonisms" (261) opening up room for potential contestation[39] (271). Because of this, the articulation of information technologies the Maya activists deploy serve to create flows of information that give rise to the Maya-hackers as "Inappropriate/d Other" (Haraway 1992 in Nelson 1999), with the power to disrupt the unstable nation-state to their advantage. Despite the potential resistance through articulation that Nelson posits, where does the metaphor of the Maya-hacker in the fetishized and unstable nation state leave Maya women? Are they merely used by the Maya cultural rights movement, a "prosthetic" to support the male dominated groups (272)?

Nelson describes how, just as the masculine nation state needs feminized indigeneity to establish its modernity, so too do Maya-hackers need the category of "*mujer maya*" to distance themselves from tradition (274). In this sense the term *mujer maya* is not representative of real Mayan women, but is rather a category created to represent the fantasy of a rural, illiterate, clothes-weaving, tortilla-making indigenous woman who is at the constant service of her male family members (272-274). Nelson recounts how the same constraints placed on women by government (state and NGOs) are also present in the activist, hacker sphere, continually linking women to the private sphere, the past, and tradition. While this situation has obvious negative effects on the

---

[39] Nelson points to the "illegitimacy of power" (1999: 190) held by ladinos in various occasions, marking it as a major source of anxiety for ladino power-holders when they are confronted by how fluid and heterogenous ethnicity and gender truly are and the growing visibility and power of the Maya rights movement (see also, p. 202).

participation and engagement of real Maya women in indigenous activism groups, viewing Maya women as prosthetic shows how it is not totally restrictive and oppressive.

This metaphor captures the complexities in the relationship between the Maya-hacker (seen as male) and his prosthetic *mujer Maya* as "a complex relationality with a somewhat active participant—not fully synthesizable, not a passive ground, and also not the rational free agent of liberal humanism—but a semiautonomous prosthetic in intimate connection with the self" (279). In this way, we understand the "double bind" that indigenous women find themselves in as part of the triple oppression of being indigenous, female, and from the "periphery" (as opposed to the "Western" world). However, the place that Mayan women occupy is not always hopeless or as negative as it seems; there is potential for change and resistance. Understanding that "the *mujer maya* is not opposed to modernity but is part of it, produced by it, and productive of it" (280) creates the opportunity to view Maya-hackers and the state as sites for rearticulation. Sites where new information technologies can work to resist hegemonic power by "captur[ing] the fluidary and hopeful possibilities of doing political work in the cyberspatialized nation-state and the prosthetic relations among gender, ethnicity, and activism" (282) and so reworking the very identities that it casts as inferior.

Nelson also creates the analogy of Rigoberta Menchú as transvestite, a tool that maintains gender as well as indigeneity in the forefront. She analyzes many of the jokes and dark humor surrounding the Nobel Prize winner as a way to delve into ladino[40] and

---

[40] both male and female.

male Mayan fantasies and anxieties (173) about the body politic. Nelson uses the metaphor both to show how bodily and social categories are thoroughly fluid (175) and, more importantly, to “help us see the ambivalence created when someone like Rigoberta Menchú crosses those identity lines (of gender, nationality, locale, and ethnicity) that are taken for granted and assumed to be solid” (176). The push for modern nationalism in Guatemala relies on these supposedly solid identities such that nation building practices promote a homogenous national identity[41] in order to bring people together into an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983). As an indigenous woman who chooses to wear *traje,* identifies strongly as an indigenous activist, and is highly visible in the public sphere, Rigoberta Menchú is a very real reminder of the fluidity of identity and the heterogeneity of the country, and as such a conscious challenge to the imagined (or often desired) homogeneity of the body politic.

Nelson interprets transvestism as something that problematizes binaries and discrete categories. Drawing on the work of Marjorie Garber, she describes how “the transvestite marks a ‘category crisis, a failure of definitional distinctions, a borderline that becomes permeable, that permits of border crossings from one (apparently distinct) category to another’” (1993: 16 in Nelson 1999: 190). Rigoberta’s abilities to cross these borders make her the aim of a (to a varying degree, racist and sexist) set of jokes, many

[41] A practice that led to the notion of *mestizaje*, which would unite ladino and indigenous identity. As history evidences, this was a problematic practice: In Mexico, as in Guatemala, “the result of this process [of *mestizaje*] was to “de-Indianize” the indigenous people while simultaneously exalting the pre-Hispanic indigenous past (Sanz Jara 2009:260)” (Smith-Oka 2013: 33). Mestizaje arose in conjunction with *indigenismo* which posed conceptualizing difference or the “other” presented by indigenous populations in the “imagined community” as the indigenous “problem”. See Background section for an elaboration on the subject.

of which depict her as a transvestite or as having traditionally masculine qualities. These jokes—a reaction to seeing an indigenous woman in a position of power, a sphere dominated by ladino men—reveal much about the fantasies and anxieties of the nation as a whole. They are symptomatic "anxiety about one of the important borders that Rigoberta crosses: the border that marks off women in *traje* as a silent ground on which national or ethnic identity can be fabricated" (193).

The metaphor (including what it reveals about ladino anxieties) exemplifies another way that affirming cultural difference disrupts elite hegemonic power. Guatemala is a country where ethnicity is defined by ambivalence (Nelson 1999; Hale 2006), meaning that people rely on other markers, such as *traje,* to determine difference. While, in the past, markers of ethnicity and indigenous identities themselves have been used against indigenous peoples, the Maya cultural rights movement has opened up indigenous identity to be potentially positively associated and powerful. I use the word potentially as a precaution, keeping in mind that racism and ambivalence against the Maya are very much still alive (and may have just changed the way they operate) (Hale 2006). However, this is an era where public and politicized conceptions of difference are very much inescapable (Nelson 1999: 203) and where an indigenous identity can be used, as Rigoberta Menchú shows, to challenge gendered forms of ladino power.

Finally, Nelson's metaphor describing "bodies that splatter" also expounds on the ideas of fluid identity categories. Building on Judith Butler's "racializing of gender and gendering of race (and class)" as well as reiteration, and an understanding bodies that

matter, Nelson (1999: 206, 210) analyzes ladino discourses about indigenous peoples and the reliance on the body (both biologically and as a metaphor) in ethnic identification. In this section, she primarily analyzes two discourses—one concerning racial difference, the other *mestizaje*—to show the complexities and contradictions behind how bodies are produced through discourses of desire and race (209). The metaphor of splattered bodies is twofold: first it alludes to the violence and terror that plagued both Maya and ladinos during the cvil war (and continues, to a lesser extent, today[42]). Second, the imagery complicates "clean" and discrete discourses regarding race, gender, ethnicity, and identity in general. In this way Nelson establishes how bodies (especially women's) "are always overdetermined by legal norms of reproduction, violence, racial grammars, and male (and female) fantasies" thus calling for a "fluidary analysis" that can revolve around "the materialization of those bodies" (221).

These two discourses present us with a notion of *superación* through *mestizaje* and the blood, bringing to mind the phrase "*mejorando la raza*[43]" (improving the race), that I have heard uttered multiple times throughout my life in Guatemala. It is important to note that in these sorts of discourses rely on the gendered and racial body of indigenous women as mothers. As Marcia Stephenson (1999) asserts, "the modern imperative

---

[42] Both in part of the police and army as well as in the growing violent threat presented by gangs and drug cartels. The newspaper *Prensa Libre* reported that there were 5,259 homicides in 2013 alone (in *El 2013 cerró con 2,259 homicidios*, Prensa Libre, Guatemala January 2nd, 2014) a number that surely does not represent the cases of people who disappeared at the hands of cartels, or as victims of police corruption.

[43] "Improving the race" usually said in a joking manner, it connotes the racist and social Darwinist idea that those with whiter skin and European or North American backgrounds can "purify" Guatemalans, making them "better."

requires a process of loss and replacement, specifically the loss of the indigenous mother and her replacement with the westernized mestiza through disciplinary practices that project the virtues of an idealized, acculturated body" (loc. 164). It is no surprise then, that so many NGOs are aimed at "empowering" women and "*capacitar*" (or training) indigenous mothers. These organizations work on creating idealized housewives who, confined to the private sphere, will reproduce the ideals of the nation onto their children[44].

Nelson also shows how this policing that arises from such discourses is closely linked to the policing of women's sexualities through various forms of social regulation (1999: 226). However, she notes that "the 'racial' difference version of ladino discourse on Indians ('You can always tell') lacks a stable body in which to ground itself" (229). While this contributes to the understanding of a broken body politic by most Guatemalans, the amorphous and complex nature of ethnic identifications in the country also signal the failure of the *mestizaje* national project. Thus, the very visual metaphor of bodies that splatter open up spaces of contestation because it embodies the "third space" by showing how "identity is radically contingent—open to articulation and reterritorialization" (244), meaning that negative portrayals of indigeneity can be hacked by Maya activists (and citizens) and be made to identify as positive.

Nelson's metaphors delineate more clearly the different ways that resistance can occur at the interstices, challenging elite power and changing negative discourses

---

[44] This is expanded on in the previous section, Erasure of Identity, dealing with development and the bulldozing of indigenous identities.

associated with indigeneity. Consequently, her ethnographic examples are ones that cannot be placed neatly under the model of *indios permitidos* and even less under that of erasure but rather can only be explained by using a different analytical framework. Nelson's work is ideal for conceptualizing a version of the "third space" that is perhaps closer to Bhabha's understanding of hybridity while still articulating a more nuanced interpretation that takes into consideration feminist understandings of the ideologies of gender, ethnicity, and class—by drawing on the theories of scholars such as Donna Haraway and Judith Butler (Nelson 1999). Moreover, her analysis of the "third space" in relation to the biopolitical economy of Guatemala sheds light on the importance of the body as a material manifestation of this space. Nelson's vivid metaphors all draw from this notion of the body as a site of *superación*, effectively showing how discipline and technologies of the self do not always lead to policed identities. In the three cases I have analyzed here the exact opposite is true: the body becomes a site of resistance to masculine ladino power.

While her work is certainly useful in these regards, it is necessary to also note that the Quincentennial Guatemala of her research can be markedly different from the Guatemala of my own work. First, the rise of violent drug cartels has changed the democratic political arena of the country, once again militarizing certain sectors, this time in accordance with the broader US-backed "war on drugs". In this era, civilians are terrorized by an alarming rise of violent crimes, not all of which are tied back to gangs and drug cartels. Second, the state—which Nelson accurately described as increasingly

open to demands—has been seriously challenged by civilian institutions (such as the UN sanctioned CICIG, The International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala[45]). The epitome of this challenge occurred during the midst of my second summer of "official" fieldwork in Guatemala, when thousands of nonviolent protestors took to the streets in a rally against corruption. The protests were successful in forcing the resignation of vice principal Roxanna Baldetti and later of president Otto Perez Molina, both accused, tried, and eventually charged with fraud and corruption. Third, while the state has indeed become more open to demands, the neoliberal multiculturalism that came to characterize the country has meant that "many of the functions of governance and development that were once assumed to fall under the responsibilities of the state have been privatized or otherwise automatized, that is, formally shifted into the nongovernmental sphere" (Cody 2009: 351).

This explosion of NGOs has changed the way governmentality is exercised by elites in order to police and discipline subalterns. Thus, while Nelson's metaphors are critical in situating the body within the subversive mechanisms of the "third space" it is important to position her analytical model within a specific historical framework. For this reason, in the next sections I have chosen to critically examine two more recently published ethnographies in order to achieve a more robust understanding how this space works. Additionally, both Smith-Oka (2013) and Radcliffe's (2014) books evidence

---

[45] *La Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala*

resistance from the interstices in other Latin American countries, revealing why and how such a framework is useful outside of the specificities of Guatemala.

Opportunities of Resistance in Rural Mexico: Challenging the System Through Solidary Communities

In *Shaping the Motherhood of Indigenous Mexico* (2013) Smith-Oka takes up the question of the forms of governmentality associated with development by describing in great detail the forms of discipline and surveillance that join larger national discourses of indigeneity (as backwards and inferior) to police indigenous mothers in Mexico. She analyzes the bi-monthly cash transfer program *Oportunidades* (Opportunities)—paying close attention to the asymmetric power dynamics in the relations between development officials and their female indigenous subjects—by looking at the indigenous rural village of Amatlán. Her ethnography looks at how practices of nation building and discourses of ethnicity (both of the past and in the present) impact the way that the state manages difference. Smith-Oka's analysis illuminates the ways in which the state utilizes biopower to manage indigenous populations, conceptualizing indigenous women as reproducers of the nation (what she refers to as "biopotentiality[46]"), creating institutions designed to impose "a certain type of body politic on their subjects" (2013: 62). This emphasis on reproduction makes the body, once again, an inescapable site of disciplinary power,

---

[46] that is, an individual's (in this case indigenous women's) "ability to turn the products of their bodies into potential citizens for the nation" (Smith-Oka 2013: 78).

where different techniques of the self are taught and forced upon indigenous mothers in an attempt to regulate their ways of being.

While Smith-Oka's book is permeated with ethnographic examples that clearly fall under the erasure of identity or *indio permitido* models, it is still clear that these two analytical frameworks cannot completely account for what is produced by *superación*. Thus, in order to fully understand how governmentality is used by development projects, it is important to take into account the times when the techniques of the self taught to modify the habitus of indigenous subjects is co-opted for their own benefit. That is, when these projects open up spaces for the formation of agentive subjects through the assertion of indigeneity, the creation of subaltern knowledge that can inform hegemonic development, and the formation of solidary communities that bring people together. In a similar vein, Smith-Oka's account incorporates an analysis of the "weapons of the weak" used by indigenous mothers to resist and challenge mestizo power (Scott 1985; Smith-Oka 2013). However, she does not romanticize this concept, and instead draws on Abu-Lughod (1990) to develop an analysis of these forms of opposition as "a diagnostic of power" warning against conflating these acts of resistance as agency (Smith-Oka 2013: 179).

Furthermore, and unlike Nelson (1999), Smith-Oka does not use her positionality as a framework by which to analyze ethnic relations and discourses of a homogenous body politic. Indeed, there are only a few occasions when she is truly present in the ethnography. In the moments where she does situate herself in her research, Smith-Oka

describes the impact that some of her identities have in her relation to the women of Amatlán. For example, at the beginning of the book she explains the significance of being a *xinola*: a married nonindigenous woman (2013: 15). Here, she argues that her status as such gave her access to conversations (about reproduction, motherhood, pregnancies, and births) from which unmarried women are generally barred. Moreover, Smith-Oka adds that in addition to being privy to such conversations, as an upper-middle-class Mexican herself, she had "insider knowledge" on the attitudes that the rest of the country has towards indigenous populations. As a consequence, she must "carefully navigating [her] duality" in order to "participat[e] with the women in their lives as mothers" (2013: 15). Although I would have liked to have more information on the power dynamics at play between herself and the women of Amatlán—considering her identity as a white, upper-middle-class Mexican woman—my own attempts at situating myself within my writing has proven very challenging. That being said, her ethnography is still a serious and detailed analysis of the biopolitics and governmentality behind *Oportunidades*' management of difference. More importantly, her account allows for different ways that indigenous women can come together in the "spaces-in-between" in order to contest elite discourses and practices.

Smith-Oka presents the "third space" in the form of laughter that brings together women from the community into relationships that call into question problematic power inequalities (2013). Moreover, it also shows the significance of becoming visible to each other, especially when historically, those with power have abandoned and ignored

indigenous women. Being able to recognize each others' grievances and plights can be a way for coming together in a community by establishing a common bond, and also for women to have a voice of their own that is heard. By looking at how development polices mothers and shapes motherhood practices in rural Mexico, Smith-Oka captures vividly the many of the problems that surround government. However, her book also situates the women as being beyond the binomial identities oppressed and oppressor, effectively showing how "the art of working at the interstices" (Hale 1997: 481) can work in small, but intimate ways.

After describing the many ways in which development programs affect women negatively, Smith-Oka introduces the concept of using humor as a mechanism that brings people together in a powerful way. She suggests that "instead of viewing humor simply as a way to manage difficulty, agency is contextual for these women—in some contexts they can be agents, while in others their agency is reduced or stripped" (157). Unlike Nelson—who uses humor to analyze the anxieties and fantasies that underlie ladino power to undermine their power and show how the elite's discourses, power, and identities are inadequate—Smith-Oka uses it to analyze, not the elite, but the downtrodden. Like Nelson though, she analyzes the relationships surrounding those who use humor in order to "understand the workings of power" (2013: 158). The differences between both authors arises, perhaps, from the different subjects they are engaging: Nelson is working closely with Mayan activists, intent on changing ladino power, while Smith-Oka is working closely with rural recipients of government health development

programs. Thus, unlike Nelson's analysis of Rigoberta Menchú—a Nobel Peace Prize winner and highly public figure—it is harder to identify how the women of Mazatlán can work in the "third space" and so present them in their (albeit limited) agentive capacity.

However, Smith-Oka manages to do this by presenting laughter as a "weapon of the weak" (Scott 1985), showing how these women have formed their own forms of agency through everyday practices. In these cases, humor plays several roles: first it can mock unequal power structures (160), as well as denounce them (161). Second, Smith-Oka also establishes that "humor therefore exists beyond coping and functions to build a community among the women—as if to say 'we have all suffered" (157). In a way then, humor is used to create a collective consciousness, something that also occurs with storytelling. She recounts how Nahua stories frequently use humor to depict tales of the underdog trouncing the oppressor[47] to make social injustices and power imbalances visible as well as "to make visible the ways —often ignored—by which their lives are constrained" (167). For example, Smith-Oka describes how the women come together after development agencies fail them to laugh together and bond over the disastrous state of rural health clinics.

While humor and jokes can certainly be a way to denounce power inequalities and form community bonds based on shared experiences with those injustices, Smith-Oka is

---

[47] Smith-Oka analyzes the popular Nauha stories depicting the Coyote and the *Conejo* (rabbit) to go beyond Christie Davis' (1990: 315) reflection that jokes "reflect the differential placing of ethnic groups within modern industrial societies" (in Smith-Oka 2013: 162). Instead, she argues that—much like in Keith Basso's portraits of "The Whiteman"—"the humorous situations and characters that emerge in these encounters thus become vehicles for people to poke fun, in a hidden manner, at those who have historically oppressed them" (p. 162).

also careful to not ascribe too much power to these “weapons of the weak”. Though she presents evidence of when laughter serves these resistant community purposes, she remains unconvinced that they are truly weapons against hegemonic domination, instead seeing it more as a coping mechanism for women who are constantly being oppressed to come together—warning us not to conflate agency with resistance (180). Indeed, she reminds us that, throughout her fieldwork in medical settings indigenous women were most often the aim of physician’s and nurse’s jokes. In this context, jokes are a way for doctors and nurses—who are for the most part not indigenous—to assert their dominance: “through this mocking phrase, the division between physician and patient, powerful and powerless, us and them, becomes all the more emphasized” (168). In many of the examples she provides, the condescending and power laden relationship between those who work in development and the subjects of their disciplinary power become apparently clear. The clinicians’ obsession with the body, their use of humor to establish their superiority (or undermine a subaltern’s identity) while portrayed in a critical yet pessimistic tone by Smith-Oka, bring to mind Nelson’s (1999) own analysis of humor.

Smith-Oka herself portrays these jokes as something that has the potential to “become a reflection of society at large” (171). Thus, while she remains a skeptic herself, using Nelson’s analysis as a framework helps us understand the capacity of resistance that such jokes have: by calling into question the oppressor’s identity, discourses and institutional practices (Hale 1997: 581). In this way, humor is seen as a tool where the system itself is not changed in a revolutionary manner, but rather that seeks to rearticulate

both *mestizo* and indigenous identities. In this way, both of these identities are changed in such a way that the new articulations work to denounce the hegemonic power of *mestizo* elites and erase negative stereotypes associated with being an indigenous woman in rural Mexico. Smith-Oka asserts that in many of the doctor-patient relationships (especially when the patients are female), humor plays a role in “the construction of subjects” (173).

In a paper dealing with similar construction of subjectivity through medical institutions, Sarah Horton describes how “civic institutions such as the public healthcare system are charged with inculcating normative behavior in immigrants and instilling in them different conceptions about their participation in civic society” (2004: 473). Though she is talking about Mexican immigrants and Cuban refugees in the United States, Horton illustrates a similar phenomenon to Smith-Oka’s, namely the way that health systems work as intermediaries between the state and minority populations to create differing forms of cultural citizenship. Horton analyzes how the medical system works with “a standard of individual responsibility and self-discipline by which immigrant groups’ worthiness of citizenship is assessed” something that has “profound material consequences for populations’ health and well-being” (2004: 485). This is something that Smith-Oka (2013) labels women’s “biopotentiality” or “their ability to turn the products of their bodies into potential citizens for the nation,” again signaling governmentality’s obsession with policing women’s bodies (78). Both Horton and Smith-Oka’s writing depicts the way that governmentality is wielded by those with power to control the livelihoods of those without. While this process works towards censoring indigeneity and

policing women's identities, it is not exclusively one-directional. That is, the women involved in these development programs can influence the way these organizations work.

Smith-Oka borrows the term "niche construction" from ecological and evolutionary anthropology (Fuentes and Oka 2010: 8, in Smith-Oka 2013:79) to indicate how "people respond to [their] environment and unconsciously develop their habitus, yet they also in turn—through their response to stimuli—will shape their environment and the institutions" (79). Drawing also on Mary Douglas' *How Institutions Think* (1986), Smith-Oka shows how—while modifying their environment might not work in a revolutionary manner due to the nature of larger institutions—the women of Amatlán do have a say in how they interact with developmental policies and practices. Such an analysis suggests that the women enrolled in the *Oportunidades* program are not passive recipients of development; they do not conform to all of its expectations and impositions on their habitus. Rather, "they grapple with them and play with them (Bonfil Batalla 1996). The women adopt the necessary changes or the ones they see as attractive; they modify them and do not accept them monolithically" (Smith-Oka 2013: 81). In this way, niche modification and humor are frameworks that let us analyze the way indigenous women's identities "splatter" (Nelson 1999) in a way that does not easily fit the binomial of oppressor and oppressed, instead going beyond it (Hale 1997; Bhabha 1990; Nelson 1999; Radcliffe 2014).

Drawing on both Foucault and Bourdieu, Smith-Oka's analysis illustrates what is produced by the form of governmentality used in development projects. Her work makes

it evident that such an exercise of elite *mestizo* power certainly works to erase indigenous identities as well as police them into retain indigenous subjectivities while obstructing any significant sociopolitical reform. While her works does a thorough job of condemning modernizing policies, it also reveals that not everything falls neatly into the categories of oppressor and oppressed; the women she worked with have ways of resisting ubiquitous power from above, using humor and shared grievances to come together in supportive communities. What I found lacking from her analysis is a more detailed elaboration on some of the frameworks she uses. For example, the idea of niche construction presents a model ideal for analyzing the relation between agency and structure when it comes to development projects. However, this idea is not given enough attention to fully conceptualize how it fits in with Bourdieu and Foucault's theories (which she is also drawing from), thus leaving a lot up to interpretation by the reader. The same occurs with her analysis of laughter, which at first appears to be a positive act of resistance, while at other times presented as a submissive bodily practice. As it happens, the notion of the "third space" as a product of *superación* helps situate both of these: explaining why laughter and niche construction arise as alternatives to the complete bulldozing of indigenous identities.

Decolonizing Indigenous Subjectivities: Locating the "Third Space" in Ecuador's Heterogeneity

In *Indigenous Women and Postcolonial Development: Social Heterogeneity, Rights and Socionatures* (2014), Sara Radcliffe analyzes development amongst the women of two different indigenous groups in Ecuador: Kichwa and Tsáchila. She considers the impact of social diversity on modernizing projects, considering the ways in which "lines of social difference—including gender, race-ethnicity, sexuality, (dis)abiltiy, location and class—come to be conceptualized and then acted upon in development (2014: 2). While Smith-Oka seemed wary of ascribing agentive qualities to the actions of Amatlán's mothers, Radcliffe's postcolonial framework and decolonizing methodology predisposes her to find certain expressions of subaltern subjectivities that more clearly contest elite power. Her account reveals the challenges presented by intersectionality (being indigenous and female, in on some occasions also disabled) as well as the neocolonial mechanisms of development, particularly when it comes to conceptualizing indigenous women. At the same time her framework exemplifies the different ways that *indígenas*[48] subvert postcolonial development "[f]rom a position within coloniality-modernity" (2014: 447).

Consequently, Radcliffe presents the "third space" in yet another manner: she analyzes postcolonial intersectional hierarchies and by focusing on poststructuralist accounts of subjectivities, develops a framework to critically analyze development (2014). Throughout the book she recognizes and underlines the power of subaltern knowledge in challenging the colonial nature of development. Radcliffe sees the power of

[48] This term is used to distance the actual women she is talking about from the created category of "indigenous women" (p. 270).

social heterogeneity in bringing about change in developmental practices because in the end, being the constant target of development, indigenous women are the ones with the most experience in this field. She uses subaltern knowledge to go further than criticize or point out crucial flaws in development, suggesting instead that this knowledge has the potential to decolonize development. Moreover, she suggests that only once we rid development of its colonial nature—which constantly overlooks subaltern knowledge and denies them a voice in generating the very "aid" aimed at them—can there be real political change, such as bridging the gap between development and citizenship (2014: 30). For Radcliffe this includes "transforming traditional affective disposition[s] associated with indigenous subalterns into a modern form of subjectivity" (271).

Like Smith-Oka (2013), Radcliffe also details how indigenous women can affect the very organizations that police their reproductive health: exemplifying how women "de-naturalize and hence politicize their expertise over healthcare in childbirth in ways that disrupt ethnic movement's appropriation of female knowledge" (331). Radcliffe remains cautious about the extent of change that indigenous women can bring to health programs—frequently citing how *indígena's* knowledge is discarded and looked down upon with disdain. Yet, by dissecting colonial binaries, she acknowledges Bhabha's "third space," agreeing that this is "where resistance to dominant biopolitics can be enunciated albeit on terms established under neoliberal multiculturalism" (302). In this way, she

describes the ways in which *warmikuna*[49] and *sonala*[50] challenge postcolonial health institutions and change (within the existing systems) the kind of subjects they can be. This challenge occurs in the form of "the postcolonial difference they […] articulate, [which] draws on their experience of epistemic violence within and across multiple scales from households, villages, regions and the nation-state, in order to speak back to the colonial difference that views them as exceptional" (317).

Radcliffe uses this framework to examine the ways that indigenous women *do* have agency when it comes to altering development (its nature, content and meaning) (2014: 349). Moreover, she considers how being indigenous affects and shapes rights and citizenship. She defines citizenship as fluid or porous (Nelson 1999) in the sense that "rather than a closed fixed property of political personhood, citizenship can be viewed as embodied, repeated and practiced through quotidian actions and in an interconnected set of local and informal spaces and practices of citizenship" (Radcliffe 2014: 350; See also Holston 2009). Similar to the way Nelson (1999) defines identity and ethnicity in a way that made clear they are not static or bounded categories, Radcliffe (drawing on Staeheli 2011) asserts that citizenship "is always in formation, is never static, settled or complete" (351).

The significance of this lies in the fact that Radcliffe analyzes how citizenship is experienced and performed or articulated by *indígenas* in relation to development. She

---

[49] Kichwa women, see previous footnote for reasoning.

[50] Tsáchila women, see footnote 11 for reasoning.

shows how this process encompasses both the landscape of unequal exclusion and abandonment while at the same time reflecting social heterogeneity. While in many cases practices of citizenship's (such as possessing an ID card) connection to power ends up restricting women's freedoms (354), it also exemplifies how women are able to reshape citizenship and subjectivities. In this way, she establishes precisely why the concept of the "third space" is necessary in an analysis of the ways in which development and elite discourses of indigeneity act as a form of governmentality.

Indeed, while Radcliffe details the many ways that development is problematic in relation to its treatment of *indígenas*' knowledge and public participation, she also shows how these programs can be channeled and co-opted by indigenous women in order to engage and make demands of the state through emerging social organization groups. She asserts that, "although often established under various development actors including NGOs, the state, and international agencies, indigenous women conceive and use these grassroots organizations as a practical and knowledge-producing arena within which to familiarize and apply forms of substantive citizenship" (365). In a similar manner, Francis Cody documents how development organizations working in women's literacy programs within the Pudukkottai District in India attempt to change the subjectivities of Dalit women so that they may be "full citizens of a modern state" (2009: 359). While this is a very complex process of representation, and the narrative of development-as-pedagogy has its problems, he shows how the women are able to make demands on the state: "By tracking the ambivalent experience of one group of women in particular, [his]

account focuses on how the logic of signature as self-representation has served to recontextualize the marginality of petitioners as something within the state's broader field of power" (2009: 372).

What both Radcliffe and Cody are suggesting is the development of an "'insurgent citizenship,' forms of political practice that challenge and transform the political status quo" (Holston 2009 in Radcliffe 2014: 365). This take on citizenship falls within the limits of the "third space," suggesting how Bhabha's original conception of the term has the potential to evolve into something useful for indigenous subjectivities today. Thus, Radcliffe's ethnography contributes to my development of an analytical framework of the "third space", even though she does not utilize the ethnographer's own positionality within the ethnographic text as part of this framework. That is, a model that takes into account the hegemonic, disciplining nature of development while at the same time asserting the unmistakably political praxis that can arise from such an exercise of power.

Academic Spaces of Superación: Finding the "Third Space" Amongst Guatemala's Elite Universities

In her work, Nelson argues that making such demands on the state is powerful in that it works to demystify the state as a fetish "and reminds us, as Foucault says, that 'power is exercised from innumerable points in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations' (Foucault 1980, 96)" (1999: 76). Ultimately, her argument is that the state is by no means solid and constant institution, but rather it—alongside civil society—

are constantly being reconstituted through their interactions in such a way that allows Guatemalans "to pull apart the weave of the state to examine, as well as act on, enter into, and contest" all of its different factions (1999: 76). Thus, while both Radcliffe and Cody (as well as Smith-Oka 2013) recount the many issues with development, they inform critiques of development to show how these cannot be considered solely as problematic purveyors of hegemonic power. Indeed, while the disciplining power of development—along with its damaging discourses on indigeneity—have been shown to be highly problematic (Ferguson 1990; Smith-Oka 2013; Radcliffe 2014; Blaser 2010) it would be a methodological error to analyze it using a binomial framework that characterizes it solely as villainous and problematic.

In a paper analyzing humanitarianism's relationship to politics, Hankins (n.d.) argues that "in allowing the political to be our presumed default, a set of processes claimed to be non-political […] cannot be anything but anti-politics" (24). Instead, he proposed that we shift the focus away from the so-called division between sympathy work and politics. While he is not focusing on development (but rather on sympathy), his paper suggests that analyzing development work merely as apolitical (à la Ferguson, 1990[51]), may obscure other processes occurring around caring and support labor. For example, understanding it to be solidarity work as well as "a form of humanitarian governmentality from below" (Hankins n.d.: 20) challenges the binomial associations

---

[51] This is not to suggest that understanding how development de-politicizes poverty and other structural problems (such as "questions of land, resources, jobs, or wages") in a hegemonic manner (Ferguson 1990: 256, 270) is not important, but rather that we cannot solely concentrate on pitting development as the anti-politics.

ascribed to both identities and institutions. Moreover, combining this analysis of development with a fluidarity (Nelson 1999) approach—outside dichotomies such as political-apolitical, oppressor-oppressed, nation-state-civil society, etc.—can make visible the ways in which governmentality work produces a "third space" where subaltern can "work at the interstices" (Bhabha 1990 in Hale 1997 and in Radcliffe 2014).

In my own research among development programs in Guatemala, I was able to witness this process of discovering the "third space" more clearly through my interviews with Carmen—a graduate of ITA's (*Impulso al Talento Académico* or Impulse for Academic Talent) development program and someone who now works for an NGO herself. During one of our interviews, she detailed the significance of both "hacking" her identity as a rural indigenous student and of forming a supportive community that brought new meaning to development work. She began by detailing the shame she felt about her socioeconomic background when she came to the city to join the ITA program, and the challenges of joining a private university in the city.

Carmen recounted how, upon first arriving at the Catholic residency where they housed scholarship students, she was embarrassed to realize that her background was completely different from the "modern" ladinos she was now living with. She recounted how being told to eat with a fork and a knife, and with bread instead of tortillas made her feel uncomfortable. Even the coffee, her favorite drink, tasted different, sweeter, making her realize that she was not "like the other students." Moreover, she recounted how her economic position set her apart, as she was not someone who could spend Q120 ($15) on

a meal at *Saúl*[52], the trendy café where other students would go for group meetings and study sessions. Carmen confided that she even felt ashamed that her clothing was not from *Zara*[53] or other Westernized luxury stores.

The pressure of becoming "*superada*" in these two forms, of joining the elite socioeconomic world of UFM (Universidad Francisco Marroquín) and the sphere of higher education in a private university are two things that ended up manifesting themselves in very real physical illness for Carmen. After a particularly bad episode that landed her in the hospital[54], Carmen told me, she realized how absurd her feelings were. By recognizing—and then refusing—her shame and her feelings of being "less than" (that is, needing to superarse) than the other students at UFM, she came to see herself as powerful and to understand her role in "constructing a city of honorable and responsible people (personas dignas y responsables)" the university's original motto. She had taken this neoliberal and policing phrase, understanding it to be "promoting a philosophy of life that is egocentric" and focused on the neoliberal individual, and given it her own meaning. For Carmen, this motto encouraged her to value her own worth and to acknowledge her privileged position by helping others who, like herself, had been born

---

[52] A chain of Cafés (as well as men's high fashion and suits boutique) throughout the City, they describe themselves as "combining European avante-garde with a solid Latin-American identity" (from http://www.saulemendez.com/site/es/gastronomia.html). While they have dishes inspired by traditional Guatemalan cuisine, they are best known for their crepes and passion for Nutella. Their all-male staff's uniforms as well as their upholstery frequently have "traditional" Mayan cloth sewn on.

[53] Spanish clothing , shoes and accessories chain, located in the elite shopping centers of the city, it models its clothing after European runway fashion.

[54] Her example exemplifies the ways in which governmentality work negatively affect those it works in very powerful, intimate, and bodily ways.

into structural poverty and lack of education. Another student from the same program summarizes this process of becoming proud of their background and of rearticulating notions about their identity perfectly, explaining how "On the way, one also changes certain mental structures and beliefs, transforming certain paradigms."[55] She recounted how overcoming the negative stereotypes surrounding her "story" had helped her become a confident public speaker, and now she gave encouraging talks ("pláticas") to other students to encourage them to find the self-confidence that she did.

Another student also spoke of breaking these "mental structures and beliefs" by changing the paradigm that structures relationships between *ladinos* and *indios* through eye contact. My experience with this subject began not with one of the students in the programs, but rather with a member of the UVG's (Universidad del Valle de Guatemala) board of directors. Recently, UVG has been involved in a series of legal battles to maintain control of their Altiplano campus, and during one interview with a member of the board of directors, Cordelia, who told me that they were fighting to keep the university due to the positive influence it had in the region. In order to substantiate her claim she gave various examples of how this positive change was taking place, and ended up telling me the anecdote of the time she found herself in a conversation with a female hospitality (*hotelería y turismo*) student who had proudly informed her that she was "twenty-seven and unmarried" and she planned to keep it that way until she found "the one". For Cordelia, the story was significant in showing the way education empowered

---

[55] "Uno en el camino también va cambiando ciertas estructuras mentales y creencias, se van transformando ciertos paradigmas."

young women in a society were there pressure is placed on young indigenous girls to marry and become housewives (often involving arranged marriages). Cordelia hoped that in keeping the Altiplano campus they would be able to keep inspiring indigenous youth "to be more progressive, to think critically, and to complete their studies." She was trying to convey the idea that the poverty and deprivation—of basic needs and freedoms that "real" citizens of a country enjoy—in rural (*i.e.* indigenous) Guatemala, was due to a lack of development. That is, she did not consider it an issue of race or even ethnicity, but a lack of education, women's rights and a more "modern" way of thinking—an idea that reinforces the pervasiveness of development programs in the country, especially those that deal with "*indigenous women*[56]".

During one of our meetings she said something that at the time I wrote off as nothing more than a stereotype, but later became one of the most interesting and influential aspects of our interview. During the story about the student she had conversed with during one of her visits to the Altiplano campus, she mentioned how "indigenous people don't really look you in the eye, they sort of speak down [at this she lowered her head and looked away] like this" (For more on eye contact, see Hale 2002: 515) citing how this pattern was changing in young women at the altiplano campus as well. Though at the time I ignored this comment and focused on other aspects of her story, I was reminded of her comment during my interview with the very religious Rafael, the indigenous entrepreneur who I interviewed after multiple people associated with JBG had

---

[56] The imagined racialized and gendered "other" rather than real women who are indigenous (See Nelson 1999, the "*mujer maya*" or Radcliffe 2014, "*indigenous woman".*

asked me to talk to him about his—albeit very neoliberally measured—success in the business world. It was curious that during the hour and a half that we spoke, he barely made eye contact with me and expressed discomfort at me (a young woman) interviewing him alone, so we invited my father, who had helped me navigate the winding roads of the labyrinth that is La Terminal (Guatemala's commercial district, where most of the merchandise sold around the country gathers to be shipped out or as part of incoming shipments) to Rafael's office to join our conversation.

Moreover, in an interview with Sebastián, who is a staunch indigenous rights activist working for an international development firm, also avoided eye contact for most of the time I talked to him. In fact, his voice was so low during our first talk that I was scared my recorder (which I was using for the first time since arriving in Guatemala to do fieldwork) would be unable to capture our conversation. It was such an unexpected phenomenon for me that from then on I made it a point to note the level of eye contacts my informants kept during our meetings as I did not know what to make of it. And despite the fact that none of my other informants seemed particularly averse to eye contact, and in fact were quite talented at public speaking (many of them citing how they now gave "*pláticas*" at universities or business conferences), the subject did come up in one occasion with Carlos, who told me the following story,

> When I came to Guatemala for the first time, I interviewed with Isabel Gutierrez, who had already given me a scholarship, but it was the first day I came to Guatemala City in order to meet her. That's where I was going to officially receive the scholarship, and you know- Doña Isabel was sitting on this side, and I went in and [blackberry vibrates] eh, and what I did was was, uh, I was like [imitates a meek-sounding tone 'eyes are downcast]

> 'Look, Doña Isabel, thank you, for, the opportunity, the truth is that I am very happy', and I never looked into her eyes. And that was a very important lesson I learned from her. Until she, at that meeting told me: [slaps table once, enthusiastically] 'Stop, Carlos, do you owe me something?' 'No'. 'Then why the hell do you not you look me in the eye'. And that's a- it's a behavioral factor that you bring from home you see, when one is- Especially among the indigenous populations, the famous beatings right, so beware if you look you grandfather in the eye! Or even your dad, because that's like … Almost that, it's a challenging right, like you get there and, [imitates a meek-sounding tone] 'goodnight' and lower your head. And one comes with these behavioral patterns right[57]

Anecdotes like these exemplify the way that *superación* is intimately tied to the body. For Cordelia and Carlos, the state of being *superado* is not relegated solely to economic prosperity or an academic degree. Rather, there is also an implied changed in bodily practices—in this case eye contact, but also meant to include GuateAyuda's personal hygiene training. Because the discourses of *superación* emerge from unequal power relations its disciplining nature is utilized by those in power to control and curtail difference, starting with the body. First, *superación* enacts power differentials because it produces both the inferior objects in need of improvement (usually indigenous, poor, and female) and those in the higher position of force relations, the superior subjects who

---

[57] "Cuando yo vine a Guatemala, la primera vez que yo me entrevisté con doña Isabel Gutierrez, ya me habían dado la beca, pero fue el primer día que yo vine a Guatemala a conocerla. Que es donde me iban a entregar oficialmente la beca, yo sabe como- Doña Isabel estaba sentada en este lado, y yo entraba y [blackberry vibrates] eh, y yo lo que hacía era, eh, hágase cuenta que es Doña Isabel, yo [immitates a meek-sounding tone', eyes are downcast] 'mire doña Isabel, muchísimas gracias, por, por la oportunidad, la verdad es que yo estoy muy feliz,' y yo nunca le miraba a los ojos. Y esa fue una lección muy importante que yo aprendí con ella. Hasta que ella, en esa misma reunión me dijo: [slaps table once, enthusiastically] 'Momento Carlos, vos me debes algo?' 'no'. 'Entonces porque chingados no me miras a los ojos'. Y eso es un- es una factor conductual que uno trae desde su casa vea, Cuando uno es- sobre todo en la población indígena, el famoso mento verda, usted cuidado que le vea a los ojos a su abuelo. O incluso al papá, porque eso es como.. Casi que le esta, lo esta retando verda, uno es como llega, [immitates a meek-sounding tone] 'buenas noches' y agacha la cabeza. Y uno trae esos patrones conductuales verda"

manage this path to improvement (usually ladino, wealthy, and male). Second, it limits difference by dictating which forms of cultural alterity are acceptable and which are not. That is, it conditions people into conducting themselves in ways that do not question the existing capitalist power structure or disrupt elite notions of indigenous inferiority. In this way, the management of the body is a strategy of the larger socioeconomic and political management of a population (Foucault 1977: 25-27).

Additionally, Carlos and the others are exemplifying (and even describing) here Bourdieu's notion that bodily practice—arising directly from habitus—reinforce belief, identity and domination. That is, they exemplify his argument that "relations to the body are charged with […] relations to other people, time and the world" (Bourdieu 1980: 70). In this case, eye contact serves to "reinforce belief in the prevailing system of classification by making it appear grounded in [a] reality" (1980: 71) where europeanized ladinos are considered naturally superior. Moreover, unspoken in his comments about bodily hexis is the notion of racial domination and Guatemala's long history of indigenous subjugation both by physically and psychologically violent means.

For this reason, the fact that the students had become proficient public speakers and looked people in the eye was taken to mean that they had overcome (*superado*) their inferior or antiquated behavioral patterns. While this belief may have arisen out of the policing power of *superación*, it also shows how powerful it can be to break these behavioral molds. As Carmen expressed, being part of this development program had transformed certain paradigms in her life, the first being that as an indigenous woman she

is submissive. For these students, eye contact can be seen as the first step towards being treated like equals and believing themselves to be on par with other citizens, regardless of socioeconomic background or ethnicity, overcoming the negative connotations associated with being indigenous and rural. Carmen and Carlos's stories can be interpreted both as "indios permitidos" (or even as *ladinoized* individuals) and also as examples of people challenging colonial stereotypes and problematizing ladino identities[58].

These are two very distinct approaches that nevertheless reveal important aspects of governmentality in development work, making it important to analyze what discourses of development produce in their entirety. That is, understanding that the same technologies of discipline can have different results amongst individuals: creating both *Indios Permitidos* and "third spaces," as well as completely erasing indigenous subjectivities. Deconstructing *superación* through a Foucauldian lens makes evident that, there are to types of government: self-government and government enacted by state and non-state apparatuses, both of which work to extend and reaffirm current power inequalities (Foucault 1977: 78). NGO's manage conduct through both of these means, first by virtue of being "the new panopticon" and making westernized ladino lifestyles the ideal that people should aspire to live by (but can never truly attain) (Hale 2002: 491). Second, NGOs manage indigenous bodies and populations by explicitly teaching their target populations how they should behave and perform their identities and making sure these instructions were followed (though systems of punishment or rewards). For

[58] Carlos often joked that he was an interesting candidate for many interviews as he broke down the stereotype of the traditional CEO of a company as white and from an elite Guatemalan family.

example, in the case of the students, one of the program managers explained how etiquette classes were a crucial aspect of the program so that students could adopt behaviors that were more in line with the elite sensibilities of those attending the university.

These exercises of power however, cannot be expected to produce the same type of docile bodies in the subjects of development. Indeed, the "double mode[,] that of binary division and branding" that Foucault describes accounts for the types of discourses surrounding *superación* but not the types of subjects produced (1977: 199). For this reason, it is important to analyze the spaces of hybridity and resistance that are created in relation to NGOs and development. This "third space" became evident in my own research, when, despite the heavy policing of these students during their participation in the scholarship programs, in many instances they reflected upon their journey through development as a process of self-discovery and identification. A process that really made them question and consider not only their distinct background but also their privileged position after having graduated from UFM and UVG. As part of this self-discovery and articulation of her own indigenous background, Carmen had joined CUFE[59] (a development program aimed to "empower" indigenous women in *La Limonada*, one of Guatemala City's poorest and most dangerous zones), and now worked at the development agency, bringing other women into this space of resistance. That is, she took a stand against being labeled as inferior and against being molded into a neoliberal

---

[59] Pseudonym.

businesswoman: she refused to work for the private sector, choosing instead to work somewhere where her talents can help others. Thus, despite the well-established problems with development NGOs, they cannot be seen merely as “bad”. This would be oversimplifying, ignoring the complex ways in which development joins nationalism, race, and class in the formation of intricate identities. By participating in this development program, Carmen and her classmates managed to form a community of solidarity.

Moreover, she was changing the trend where, as I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, it is foreigners and the elite who work in development. As Radcliffe (2015) suggests, such transformations open up space for development work that does not reinforce current inequalities but rather works to fight against them. Not only was Carmen now actively working to “improve” the lives of other indigenous women by helping them take development into their own hands, but she also told me the story of how the students from the scholarship program worked together to form a supportive community for themselves. After a particularly bad tropical storm during Guatemala’s rainy winter, one of the student’s childhood homes had collapsed. Immediately, the other students in the program came together and pooled their already limited stipends (limited because many of them were already sending most of it back home every month) and giving this young man’s family enough money to rebuild his childhood home. The irony, that the poorest students of the university would contribute their scarce income to this cause when the majority of UFM’s students come from the wealthiest families in the

country, demonstrates the way that this program brought people together in a powerful community—a space that resists hegemonic power through solidarity.

I argue that this type of community formation, even though it is arising from the "anti-political" machine that is development (Ferguson 1990), is still political. For me, it is a very clear sign of resistance, resistance to neoliberal values of the university, resistance to the larger society that has abandoned them to structural poverty and resistance against the very hegemony of such an elite institution. While being cautious, and understanding that development can also end in an erasure of indigeneity or in "*indios permitidos,*" it is important to remember that identities can be continually articulated to change what they mean and no identification is truly binomial or bound (Nelson 1999). The student's coming together, to raise funds for a fellow classmate, to recruit their neighbors and cousins to join these programs, and to take development into their own hands is a way to view these students in their agentive capacity, carving out their own subjectivities in a hostile environment.

In these situations they are by no means the "easily duped" or passive receiver of a problematic development program, but rather they are central actors in their own quest to create a better life for themselves, their families, and their communities. In these instances, the categories of *indios permitidos* or assimilated Indians[60] cannot explain why or how students such as Carmen contested the selfish, individualizing nature of a school

[60] That is, whose indigenous identities have been effaced and they can now "pass" as ladino.

founded after the Austrian School of Economics[61]. It cannot account for they way Carmen found dignity in her background despite being subject to etiquette classes that sought to erase her habitus as a rural, "backwards" student. It *can* be explained in terms of a semiotic and political transformation that allowed her to assert her own subjectivity outside of this problematic *india permitidia/asimilada* (permitted/assimilated indian) dichotomy and within the boundaries of the "third space".

---

[61] With auditoriums and conference rooms named after figures such as Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek, and where the entire front of an academic building is devoted to a statue of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged.* Interestingly enough, before graduating from high school in Guatemala I participated in a reading group put on by UFM for high school students where we were given copies of *The Fountainhead*. The feelings of outrage (and what I can now only describe as revulsion) I experienced made me quit the reading group early. The organizer for the group, our college counselor and a devout libertarian, expressed his dismay at my having quit—something that as a dedicated student and confirmed book nerd—seemed uncharacteristic of me. It took a while for me to understand why I disliked the book and the discussions so much. In the end, however, Carmen was able to put my aversion into words when she described her own process of first resisting and then challenging the individualistic and egocentric nature of such libertarian values. A school of philosophy and economics that continues to ignore the country's alarming growth of income inequality, promoting instead a linear, modernist path towards "development" (Blaser 2010).

Conclusions

Understanding how Guatemala has managed difference throughout history reveals the extent to which (male) ladino elites are preoccupied with controlling indigeneity (Smith-Oka 2013; Nelson 1999). While seemingly ignoring cultural difference (by denying indigenous peoples full rights and citizenship), this elite desire to form a cohesive nation-state has actually had the opposite effect: an obsession with controlling indigenous identities. Decades of assimilationist policies (in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century) and the subsequent multicultural policies have left behind significant consequences about the way being indigenous is conceived and policed. Part of this process has involved the "NGOization" of development (Cody 2009), which brought about a depoliticization of problems that are inherently political (Ferguson 1990). This process involves creating a discourse surrounding development that pits indigenous peoples as the "other" within the nation, as those who are traditional and backwards while at the same time presenting itself as the harbinger of modernity. In this way, development can negatively affect indigeneity in ways that can both erase strong articulations of Mayan identities and police those that are left in ways that depoliticizes their grievances and conforms them with multicultural principles.

I use *Superación* to account for both the discourses of indigenous inferiority as well as the disciplining of indigenous habitus by NGOs. The term is useful in its ability to encompass the complexities of development: the historically nuanced way elites conceptualize indigenous peoples "as the objects of debates, not as debating subjects";

the overt ways indigenous peoples are disciplined; and the types of subjects that are produced both as discursive categories and in praxis (Blaser 2010: 102; Smith-Oka 2013). This latter is extremely important, for it distinguishes between the *intended* subjects, indigenous peoples who have *superado* their backwards ethnic associations, and the *produced* subjects, which cannot be described as easily.

As such, an analysis of *superación* necessitates an interpretive framework that can account for this diversity of subjects. That is, a model that includes the erasure of identity, the creation of "*indios permitidos,"* and the space-in-between (Bhabha 1990; Hale 1997; Wolf 2000). Thus, analyzing development work merely as apolitical or problematic may obscure other processes occurring around humanitarianism and development. Analyzing development with a fluidarity (Nelson 1999) approach—that is, outside dichotomies such as political-apolitical, oppressor-oppressed, nation-state-civil society, etc.—can make visible the ways in which governmentality work produces a "third space" where subaltern can "work at the interstices" (Bhabha 1990 in Hale 1997 and in Radcliffe 2015). While the examples that I have provided do support the notion that governmentality both effaces indigenous identities or produces "*indios permitidos*," (permitted indians), they also support the idea that development has other, positive effects. In the case of the ITA and JBG students, these programs provided not only communities of solidarity but they were also a way for these students to gain agency, and take their futures into their own hands.

Consequently, what this analysis exemplifies is how techniques of disciplinary power (as a form of governmentality tied to *superación*) is not just a top-down exercise

of power, but rather they are reworked at every level, taken up in diverse ways by different people. In some cases, this process can lead to the formation of agentive subjects—as opposed to passive subjects or even objects. This fact opens up the complex process of *superación* to practices that end up contesting the very elite power that sought to discipline subaltern subjectivities. In these occasions, the techniques of the self enforced by NGOs become useful in asserting their rights and responsibilities as citizens; in crafting subversive responses to the hegemonic world order that casts them as inferior; and finally, in establishing a community of solidarity among other subjects of development. For these reasons, I argue that once development is co-opted by subalterns themselves to assert and articulate Maya identities, then it is likely that there will be many more examples of communities working in the "third space" against hegemonic power, and less "*indios permitidos*".

Thus, despite being critical of the programs at times, it is important to remember that the situation of the country in general is weak and the structural issues facing most of Guatemala's (and Latin America's) youth are overwhelming (Smith-Oka 2013: 190). For this reason, the programs stand out for their ability to provide an opportunity for bright, talented students to take matters into their own hands and substantially increase their agency. In the end, the students are the ones who craft their own road towards *superación* and give the term a whole new meaning. Their resilience in the face of what can be an overwhelming exercise of governmentality in *superación* suggests this form of power, while it may be ubiquitous or inescapable, does not always produce docile bodies. For

many subjects of development, the power and means gained from having been a part of these programs outweigh any negative connotations that, in analyzing the biopolitics at work behind these programs, are ascribed to the condition of being *superado*.

Finally, at the beginning of this thesis I established the importance of the ethnographer's positionality as a way to inform the critiques of power that arise from a Foucauldian analysis of development and modernity. While I described the nature of my own research (when and where) I was not able to do so in the more formulaic version that establishes with precision the number of months or field seasons and supplemental follow-up periods (usually along the lines of, "the research for this study consisted of…" followed by a number of weeks, months, or years, during which the fieldwork took place). Examining Nelson's notion of fluidarity, Smith-Oka's positionality as an upper-middle class Mexican, and Radcliffe's absence form the ethnography has compelled me to consider my own place within this research. As someone from the vilified upper class of Guatemala: see Hale for a discussion on "Euroguatemalans" (2006) or Nelson for remarks about the "the ruling class in Guatemala, they are people without very much in the way of redeeming features" (1999: 219). While I do not consider myself "of the ruling class," I was always made aware of my position of privilege within the country—denounced by Franciscan monks during Sunday mass; criticized by the young North American ex-pats who were always my favorite teachers in school; and attested by the

fact of living in an atmosphere were it is impossible to forget the "third world" status ascribed to Guatemala as a whole[62].

The inescapable reality of poverty and "backwardness" (as well as the NGOs that arise as superficial attempts to address these) continue to remind me of this privilege, but then again, Nelson's position as a "gringa in solidarity" illustrates how North Americans are just as implicated in these uneven power relations[63] (1999: 46). Her intimate account of "how being a gringa anthropologist is both power-filled and a wounded body politic" informs my own experience with similar issues (Nelson 1999: 41). For example, her work highlights the importance of being aware (and wary) of such colonial power, which can taint interethnic relations with notions of inferiority in relation to the racialized "other." However, as a Guatemalan, my identities pose a whole new set of questions and complexities regarding how I relate to "the field" and the people I "collaborated" with there. The former being my home, and the latter a combination of friends, family, co-workers, and classmates, in addition to the people I came into contact with while "officially" doing research both as an undergraduate and a graduate student.

The main question I am faced with is, what counts as "research"? That is, what is valid "material" for the development of an analytical framework? Is my friend's father, holding back tears as he narrated the story of his own father's death in the Spanish

[62] A status constantly suggested by newspapers, whose harrowing accounts of corruption, violence, and poverty are ubiquitous. Something that is only reinforced by growing number of foreign NGO workers that arrive in the country, the suspicions that Guatemalan politics are still controlled by US interests, or worse, by drug cartels.

[63] Thus making me eager to add my own "voice" to the literature on Guatemala.

Embassy fire of 1980[64] when I was twelve years old part of my research? Are my own father's recollections of the war and the divisions along political lines among my own family part of my "fieldnotes"? Is the constant sexism I witnessed and experienced growing up in Guatemala "material" for the conceptualization of gender in this thesis? That is, how does a lifetime of experience in a country shape the anthropological questions (and consequently the frameworks and answers that these lead to) that form the base of this research project? How do I frame the ever-present threat of violence[65] that comes with living in such a dangerous country, even after twenty years of "peace"[66]?

Ultimately, the answers to these questions lie somewhere in the middle, between avoiding the production of an ethnography that looks more like biographical narrative and one that arrogantly presumes that the ethnographer can provide an objective account. Where exactly this in-between space lies, or what it looks like is impossible to quantify; rather, the lesson that remains is the importance of the researcher's positionality in developing an analytical model. That is, the ethnographer's biases are crucial in establishing what kinds of questions will set in motion the long and complex process of

---

[64] The same fire that killed Rigoberta Menchú's father, along with thirty-five other people.

[65] This became especially true during one of my summers, when I met with Andrea, the former indigenous congresswoman introduced at the beginning of this thesis. As I sat in San Sebastian park waiting for her to arrive, I contemplated how little I visited the "El Centro". San Sebastián, the park, which was adjacent to an old, quaint church was peaceful and made me lament not coming here more often. As I sat on that bench, I resolved to come back and enjoy the tranquility of this place. The very next day, I got a rude awakening as my friends and family who had known I was in San Sebastian the day before frantically texted me about an article in the morning newspaper. Later that same day, a high school student had been killed in San Sebastián. The newspapers recounted stories of drug trafficking and urban violence in the very park I had found so serene the day before.

[66] The Peace Accords that ended the Civil War were signed in 1996, four years after I was born.

conducting fieldwork, leading to the production of a particular set of explanations and analyses which are directly tied to these same questions. For this reason, any future engagements with this theory of "third space" as it relates to development and *superación* must necessarily take into account one's positionality in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the way disciplinary power can generate resistance.

References

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1990. The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women. In *American Ethnologist.* 17(1): 41-55.

Alcantara, Manuel. 2005. "Politics and society in Latin America at the start of the new millennium." Social forces 83(4): 1659-1670.

Anderson, Benedict. 1983 *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism.* Verso Books.

Bastos, Santiago and Camus, Manuela. 2003. *El movimiento maya en perspectiva.* Guatemala: FLACSO, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales.

Bastos, Santiago and Roddy, Brett, eds. 2010. *El movimiento maya en la década después de la paz* (1997–2007). Guatemala City: F&G.

Bhabha, Homi. 1990."The third space: interview with Homi Bhabha." In *Identity: Community, culture, difference*: 207-221.

Blaser, Mario. 2010. *Storytelling globalization from the Chaco and beyond*. Duke University Press.

Blaser, Mario, Harvey A. Feit, and Glenn McRae. 2004. In the way of development: indigenous peoples, life projects and globalization. IDRC and Zed Books.

Brett, Roddy. 2006. *Movimiento social, etnicidad y democratización en Guatemala, 1985-1996*. Guatemala: F&G editores.

Butler Judith. 1993. Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”. New York: Routledge.

Casallas Diego A. And Padilla Pedrahita, Juliana. 2004. Antropología foresee en el conflicto latinoamericano. Estudio comparativo Argentina, Guatemala, Perú y Colombia. In *Maguaré* 18: 293-310

Castles, Stephen and Miller, Mark J. 2009. *The Age of Migration*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Cayzac, Hugo. 2001. *Guatemala, Proyecto Inconcluso: La Multiculturalidad, un Paso Hacia la Democracia.* Guatemala City: FLACSO.

Clifford, James. 1986. Introduction: Partial Truths. *In* Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, Jaes Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. Berkley: University of California Press. (1-26).

Cody, Francis. 2009. ”Inscribing subjects to citizenship: petitions, literacy activism, and the performativity of signature in rural Tamil India." In *Cultural Anthropology* 24(3): 347-380.

"El 2013 cerró con 5,259 homicidios" ["2013 Finished with 5,259 Homicides"]. Guatemala: Prensa Libre 2 Jan. 2014, Nacional: 2-3. Print.

Foucault, Michel. 1997. *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison.* Vintage.

Grandin, Greg. 2000. The blood of Guatemala: a history of race and nation. Duke University Press.

Garber, Marjorie. 1992. “The Occidental Tourist: M. Butterfly and the Scandal of Transvestitism.” In *Nationalisms and Sexualities.* Ed. Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Summer, and Patricia Yaeger. New York: Routledge.

Hale, Charles R. 2006. *Más que un Indio: Racial ambivalence and neoliberal multiculturalism in Guatemala.* School of American Research.

Hale, Charles R. 2004. ”Rethinking Indigenous Politics in the Era of the "Indio Permitido”. NACLA Report on the Americas. Report on Race Part 1: 16-21.

Hale, Charles R. 2002. "Does multiculturalism menace? Governance, cultural rights and the politics of identity in Guatemala." Journal of Latin American Studies 34(3): 485-524.

Hale, Charles R. 1997. ”Cultural politics of identity in Latin America." In *Annual Review of Anthropology*: 567-590.

Hale, Charles, and Rosamel Millamán. 2006. ”Cultural Agency and Political Struggle in the Era of the Indio permitido." In *Cultural agency in the Americas*: 281-304.

Hankins n.d. Humanitarianism, sympathy, and the limits of politics.

Holston, James. 2009. Insurgent Citizenship in an Era of Global Urban peripheries. In *City & Society.* Vol. 21(2): 245-267.

Horton, Sarah. 2004. Different subjects: The health care system's participation in the differential construction of the cultural citizenship of Cuban refugees and Mexican immigrants. In *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, vol. 18, no 4: 472-489.

Lemus, Silvia. "Crece seguridad privada ilegal" ["Illegal Private Security is Growing"]. Guatemala: Prensa Libre. 17 July 2015, Hemeroteca: Prensa Libre. Web. 22 Dec. 2015. <http://www.prensalibre.com/hemeroteca/crece-seguridad-privada-ilegal>.

Li, Tania Murray. 2007. *The will to improve: Governmentality, development, and the practice of politics.* Duke University Press.

Maurer, Bill. 1997. *Recharting the Caribbean: Land, Law, and Citizenship in the British Virgin Islands*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Merry, Sally Engle. 2003. "Human rights law and the demonization of culture (and anthropology along the way)." In *Polar: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 26(1): 55-76.

Navarro, Zander. 2006. 'In Search of Cultural Interpretation of Power: the Contribution of Pierre Bourdieu', in *Institute of Developmental Studies Bulletin* 37(6): 11-22.

Nelson, Diane M. 1999. *A finger in the wound: Body politics in quincentennial Guatemala.* University of California Press.

Oka, Rahul, and Agustín . Fuentes. 2010. "From Reciprocity to Trade: How Cooperative Infrastructures Form the Basis of Human Socioeconomic Evolution." *In* Cooperation in Social and Economic Life. Ed. R.C. Marshal. pp. 3-28. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira.

Padilla Vassaux, Diego. " Siete datos que debes saber para debatir sobre Guatemala [Seven Facts You Must Know Before Debating About Guatemala]." Nómada. N.p., 17 Dec. 2015. Web. 22 Dec. 2015. <https://nomada.gt/siete-datos-que-debes-saber-para-debatir-sobre-guatemala/>.

Plant Robert. 2002. "Latin America's multiculturalism: economic and agrarian dimensions." In Sieder, Rachel, ed. *Multiculturalism in Latin America*. Palgrave Macmillan: 208–26

Postero, Nancy. n.d. "Wedding the Nation: Spectacles of Indigeneity in Plurinational Bolivia."

Radcliffe, Sarah A. 2015. Dilemmas of Difference: Indigenous Women and the Limits of Postcolonial Development Policy. Duke University Press.

"Rechazan la solicitud de amnistía al ex general golpista Ríos Montt" ["They reject the request of

amnesty to the ex- general coup participant Rios Montt"]. España: El Mundo 10 Aug. 2010,

Justicia: n. pag. El Mundo. Web. 22 Dec. 2015. <http://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2015/10/ 08/5616e52222601da84f8b4634.html>.

Rettberg, Angelika. 2007. “The Private Sector and Peace in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Colombia.” In T*he Journal of Latin American Studies*. Vol. 39(3): 463-494.

Rodseth, Lars. 1998. “Distributive Models of Culture: A Sapirian Alternative to Essentialism” in *American Anthropologist* 100(1): 55-69.

Rosaldo, Renato. 1994. "Cultural citizenship and educational democracy." In *Cultural Anthropology* 9(3): 402-411.

Scheper-Hughes 1995. The Primacy of the Ethical. Propositions for a militant anthropology, in Current Anthropology vol. 36(3): 409-420.

Scott, James. 1985. Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Similox Salazar, Vitalnio. 2005. *Ri Maya’ Amaq’ pa Champomal: La Participación y Representación Política de los Pueblos Mayas.* Guatemala: Rukemik Na’ojil.

Simpson, Audra. 2014. Mohawk interruptus: Political life across the borders of settler states. Duke University Press.

Smith-Oka, Vania. 2013. *Shaping the motherhood of Indigenous Mexico.* Vanderbilt University Press.

Smith, Carol A. 1991. “Maya Nationalism.” In NACLA Report on the Americas. Washington D.C.: NACLA.

Stavenhagen, Rodolfo. 2002. "Indigenous peoples and the state in Latin America: An ongoing debate." In Sieder, Rachel, ed. *Multiculturalism in Latin America: Indigenous rights, diversity, and democracy*: 24-44.

Stephenson, Marcia. 1999. *Gender and modernity in Andean Bolivia*. University of Texas Press.

Stolcke, Verena. 1993. “Is Sex ti Gender as Race Is to Ethnicity?” In *Gendered Anthropology*. Ed. Teresa del Valle, London: Routledge.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 1991. Anthropology and the savage slot: The poetics and politics of otherness.

Wolf, Michaela. 2000. The *Third Space* in Postcolonial Representation. In *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era*. Eds. Sherry Simon and Paul St-Pierre, Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.