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The Politics of Equality:
Negotiating Reproductive Rights in Highland Guatemala

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

by

Marianinna Villavicencio Miranda

Committee in charge:

   Professor Nancy Postero, Chair
   Professor Suzanne Brenner
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   Professor Saiba Varma

2021

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

University of California San Diego
2021

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DEDICATION

To all the mujeres in my life who inspired me and who made this possible, thank you.

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There are many who helped me along the way on this journey, and I want to take a moment to thank them. First, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my dissertation committee for their continued support and constructive advice. Dr. Gloria Chacon, for her motivating assistance and invaluable introductions to Indigenous artists, scholars, and activists throughout the years. Dr. Christine Hunefeldt and Dr. Suzanne Brenner whose enthusiastic encouragement and patience throughout the duration of this project helped me in an immeasurable way. Dr Saiba Varma, who has helped me grow as a social theorist, for her practical advice and insightful suggestions on my work. I am especially indebted to Dr. Nancy Postero, my Chair, for her unwavering guidance throughout my graduate career. You have set an example of excellence as a researcher, mentor, and instructor.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Politics of Equality:
Negotiating Reproductive Rights in Highland Guatemala

by

Marianinna Villavicencio Miranda

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California San Diego, 2021

Professor Nancy Postero, Chair

Reproductive health has gained new ethical and political significance in post-war Guatemala with the increasing participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the pursuit of gender and racial equality. This dissertation is concerned with the way young, marginalized women understand and re-articulate ideas about power and equality as they participate in reproductive health initiatives organized by NGOs. I analyze the political nature of this vernacularization of reproductive health by looking closely at how global discourses of social

equality, human rights, development, empowerment, and decolonization are vernacularized by ordinary women in their everyday practices. As a political project, reproductive health interventions decenter questions of development and female empowerment, leading to an ongoing negotiation over the very nature of equality and rights themselves. I draw from extensive ethnographic fieldwork that traces the intimate conversations and debates between women participating in spaces of rights-based reproductive health interventions organized by both grassroots and NGOs in the highland departments of Sacatepéquez and Chimaltenango.

My research critically examines ethical practices of world-making in reproductive rights workshops to ask how they act as a form of politics for marginalized women to imagine and construct a valued future. I argue that reproductive health interventions are a site where equality and the right to a "good life" are reimagined. In a region marked by significant socioeconomic precarity and religious taboo, women's ability to assert their reproductive rights hinged on both appropriating and contesting global discourses of social justice. These intimate negotiations are a political practice rooted in Guatemalan women's embodied experiences of gender, race, and class. My dissertation clearly illustrates how negotiating a "good life" resulted not only in emancipatory but also ambiguous realizations of these rights. This ambivalent political process raises new questions over what it means to imagine and pursue a fulfilling and valued life in neoliberal contexts, marked by the increasing relegation of social justice to apolitical and depoliticizing NGOs.

Prologue

We pulled up to Santa Ana Mixtan's[1] community gym around 8:15 am. The mobile clinic belonging to the NGO I had volunteered to help that day was already there, with the two nurses and José, the driver. We had been warned about the heat and mosquitoes, but as we got out of the car, it felt like walking into a wall of solid heat, I could feel the beads of sweat starting to form at the nape of my neck almost immediately. We were all wearing jeans and an NGO t-shirt, I had sprayed my clothes and bare arms with mosquito repellant before leaving the house.

Once the heat registered and we had gathered the equipment we were bringing in with us, I became aware of the thundering noise coming from the gym, a combination of poorly adjusted microphone and speakers which were blaring music, whistles, yelling, laughing, clapping, and general cacophony caused by hundreds of people packed into an enclosed building. Once we walked through the double doors into the gym, the noise was deafening.

It took a while for me to take in everything that was happening: there was a stage with two male models wearing tight clothes yelling on the microphones, I could not make out what they were saying. There were tables behind the models, up on stage, with gift baskets, pink and white balloons, umbrellas, and a variety of other pink swag items from some of the organizations and companies present. Meanwhile, many of the stalls around the gym were already set up, and one of them had a line of women, all wearing similar colors (red, white, or pink shirts) snaking to the back of the gym and back to the front near the door. The stall was handing out free prescription

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[1] The names of people and places throughout this dissertation have been changed to protect the privacy of those whose stories I share here. With the exception of Chapter 1, which draws from a public PhotoVoice project, the names used throughout are pseudonyms.

medications without the prescription. They had asthma medicine, diabetes medications, different types of antibiotics, analgesics, etc. The women lined up could ask for different medications, without prescriptions. The directions for taking them were posted on hand-written pieces of paper behind the workers handing out the medicines. Stray dogs strolled about the gym openly.

The NGO was given a stall location on the other side of the door from the free medicines, with a storage space behind it to set up the clinic. The space was narrow, with no roof, no door, and a pile of discarded Christmas and miscellaneous items in the back. The nurses worked to set up curtains, cots, disinfecting stations, etc., and then sterilized the whole area. I had been to enough public health clinics throughout my life that I knew this makeshift clinic inside a noisy gym was probably cleaner than a lot of rural health outposts.

I helped the NGO staff set up a table in front of the storage space-turned-clinic with stools around it where we were going to take everyone's information down, make sure they were not pregnant or had any underlying conditions that would prevent them from receiving a method. Groups of interested women started coming up to us as we were setting up, inquiring about the types of "*métodos*" (contraceptive methods) the NGO offered, others would come up asking for the free medications or other medical services, but that day the NGO was limited to serving only those who wanted a method.

After a couple of minutes, one of the nurses got on stage to tell the women about the Jadelle (a hormonal implant placed in the upper arm) and copper IUDs (intra uterine devices). Not long after, more women started to come over, and we began the whole intake process needed to send women to the back room where the nurses would administer cervical cancer treatments and place contraceptives.

The first step was to give the women a number (a system that quickly derailed) and then send them to the bathroom to do a pregnancy test. At first, the pregnancy test involved asking women to pee in a small dixie cup, and then I or another worker would open a strip, give it to the woman to hold in her own cup, and record the result. It quickly became apparent that this method was not going to work, as we now had a small group of women holding cups of their own pee standing around our stall, near the door to the gym, asking us what they were supposed to do now. No one complained about having to walk around a crowded gym with the cups, but we decided to move the pregnancy test station to the bathroom.

I stood at the entrance to the women's bathroom with a bag of new test kits and clean dixie cups and would hand them to the interested patients. Women would go into the stalls pee in their cups and then I would hand them the stick and have them hold it in the cup. Not long after I moved to the bathroom, José, who was used to helping out during these temporary medical drives came over with a table. He had brown paper to cover the table and a bio-hazard trashcan to deposit the used cups and tests. He came into the bathroom to set it up, and I was concerned about having a man in the women's bathroom but nobody else seemed bothered by it and soon women began to ask him for cups and tests (he was also wearing an official NGO shirt). After giving women their negative tests back (only two had positive ones, and one of them paid separately to take the test because she was not interested in a method but wanted to confirm that she was pregnant) they would head back to the stall where someone else would take down their information and relevant medical history, charge them Q25 if they were over the age of 19, read them an informed consent form, explain how Jadelle and copper IUD's work, go over possible side effects, give them ibuprofen tablets, and then send them in with one of the nurses when they became available. Despite the commotion inside the gym, we soon developed a streamlined process that, while slow,

seemed to be moving efficiently. Everyone seemed content to be there though, they were chatting with friends or family members, often coming up in pairs, and regularly pleased that they would be getting a contraceptive method *today* rather than having to get a referral and make an appointment to go another day.

While I was working the pregnancy test station, I was asked to take a young girl to get her pregnancy test done. I led her to the bathroom, gave her the cup and waited for her to come out, while handing out strips to two other women who had already brought me their urine sample. The girl was wearing a tight-fitting black satin mini-dress, shiny silver pumps, and heavy makeup, but still looked young. Perhaps 15 or 16 years old, I thought.

José had already taken out a strip, set it on the table and written the patient's name down, he then handed it to the young girl, and I waited next to her. I was looking at her strip to see how much longer we would have to wait when I saw two bars materializing on the strip. It was positive. Heart racing, I turned to José and whispered, "it's positive–what do we do??" he whispered back, "positive?" but was interrupted by two ladies asking him about the tests and wanting cups, so I turned back around, unsure of what to do and decided to ask her to take the test again, hoping perhaps that placing the strip on the table (even if it was sterile) had interfered with it.

Beads of sweat were starting to form on her upper lip. She did not wipe them away. I opened a new test, gave it to her to hold and stared at that tiny strip, hoping for a different result. Two bars again. I turned to José again, knowing he went on these medical interventions every week for the last 5 years. "Did you use a new sample" he asked?

"No, just a new test," I replied sheepishly. A woman was tapping him on the shoulder trying to get his attention to her own test.

It was hard to hear with the commotion going on outside, but he handed me a new cup and I sent the girl back in for a new sample. She came back out, and held it up, still not saying anything. I could see her hand shaking a little as I handed her the strip to hold. I had just taken it out of the packaging, making sure nothing come in contact with it. My hands were sweating profusely under my latex gloves. I could see more sweat accumulating on the girl's face, she still wasn't wiping it away. We stared intently at the strip, our heads coming together, as the color slowly appeared, revealing once again two little bars.

I asked the girl, like we asked everyone else, to dump her pee in the toilet and then deposit the used cup in the biohazard wastebasket. Her three positive tests were laying side by side on the brown paper covering the table. "What do we do?" I asked José, "Take her to one of the nurses" he told me. I asked her to follow me, not sure if I should be offering comforting words as we walked through the crowded gym, thanking the deafening noise in the gym for covering my silence. Four young girls wearing black miniskirts and white t-shirts were twerking to reggaetón on the stage, being encouraged by one of the adult male models with a microphone. I looked back at the girl as I walked to the stall, her face shiny with perspiration. She had still not said anything.

The nurses were busy answering people's questions or inside the makeshift clinic providing services. There were women who already had Jadelle implants who wanted to make sure they were fine, others who wanted to ask if they could get their old implants changed for new ones, babies being handed over between family and friends as women walked around the stall, waiting for their turn. I tried to discreetly get the nurses attention, but it was clear she was already overwhelmed. I then told the director, Hannah, who got the nurse, but the nurse told us we should get the girl's mom.

"Have you ever done this before? Hannah asked me,

"Nope," my eyes opening widely. The young girl, still silent, was waiting for us next to the table. We led her over to the side, of the stall hoping it would be quieter. It was not. But at least it would be very hard for anyone else to overhear our conversation. We asked the girl if her mom was there, "no, but my *suegra* (mother-in-law) is" she replied.

"Do you want to tell her the news, or do you want us to tell her?"

"You" She smiled a bit, looking down, then left to get her mother-in-law. Before she had gotten too far, I managed to ask, "*y tu, cuantos años tenés*?" How old are you?

"14," and turned back around to keep walking.

The legal age for marriage in Guatemala is 18 (as of very recently), but many couples "unite" before getting married in their church or town hall if at all. Once she got back, suegra in trail, we went over to the side of the gym again.

"Are you this *jovencita's* mother-in-law?"

"Yeah, she united with my son this weekend" the mother-in-law replied curtly.

Four days ago. It takes at least two weeks for a test to determine pregnancy with a urine test. Hannah informed the suegra that this girl was pregnant, the suegra broke out into a wide, predatory grin and turned to the girl,

"So, you were sleeping together before, then?"

"No" the girl replied, staring at her feet.

They stared at each other, the suegra still grinning, "*Bien*," she said, meaning *yes*, you were. Hannah informed the girl that it takes two weeks for a pregnancy test to be accurate, later we realized perhaps we should not have disclosed this information in front of her mother-in-law.

"Do you have any questions you'd like to ask us" Hannah asked the girl,

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"No." She wasn't making eye contact, but her face was still held high, face emotionless, the only thing visible on her face was still the beads of sweat, now covering most of her face. She still didn't wipe it off.

"Do *you* have any questions?" Hannah asked the mother-in-law,

"No…" she hesitated and then asked Hannah, "well I hear there might be some complications when a girl who's so young has a baby…"

As Hannah explained some of the risks, and precautions that could be taken, I asked the girl to step aside slightly and asked her how old her boyfriend was,

"17," she said.

Hannah called us back over and asked again if the girl had any questions. She did not. Hannah then asked the suegra to help the girl convey the news to her own mother, and make sure that the girl's mother and boyfriend would be supportive of her now. The suegra nodded and they left the fair together, leaving us behind to wonder if we could have done anything differently.

"You know what her suegra told me?" Hannah asked me, "when I said what are you going to do now, that she's pregnant, '*do*?! Well, I'm going to congratulate her because she's carrying my grandchild!'" We shook our heads.

I tried to shake off the unsettling feeling that I still had in the pit of my stomach, knowing there was a lot of work to be done, and returned to the bathroom, were there was a fresh set of faces awaiting their test results.

Not long after, I took in another 14-year-old girl's information at the main stall. Her mother had brought her in. The mother was also getting a hormonal implant and had brought in her daughter because she did not want her to be pregnant as a teenager. The mom told us that her

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daughter was seeing a young man from their town and that rumors said all he wanted was to get a girl pregnant so he could "*burlarse de ella*" (mock her), and she didn't want that for her daughter. The 14-year-old had been taking contraceptive pills for the last three years.

Introduction

The Discourse of Development

The goal of this dissertation is to establish how reproductive health organizations recreate a particular discourse of development by staging interventions in a precarious healthcare landscape, and the effect this process has on the lives of the women and youth they reach. My focus is to explore some consequences of how the efforts of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both grassroots and foreign, (inadvertently) impact gender and generational relations, practices of reproduction and sexuality, and the core identities of those with whom they work. Ultimately, the work of NGOs can have distinct local impact, not because of the intrinsic value of the information and modern goals they aspire to—about human, sexual, and patient's rights—but rather because of what is produced during day-to-day interactions. This ambivalent and gradual cultural change occurs through new ways of imagining subjectivities and possible futures, and the communities that are brought together through an organizations' *modus operandi*.

NGO interventions occur mainly through *capacitaciones* (trainings), and medical procedures (field clinics) and aim to address the high rates of inequality in the field of reproductive health. While much of this inequality can only be rectified by addressing structural violence that marks the lives of Guatemala's poor and indigenous communities, many involved in NGO-led development are convinced that culture is to blame. This latter is much easier—and cheaper—for NGOs to address, so they focus on changing *machista* (sexist or patriarchal) notions and medical misconceptions surrounding reproductive health. Both local and foreign NGOs also open up spaces of quotidian solidarity for young people to come together and address common issues in a "safe space", away from nosy neighbors, concerned parents, and ever-present churches. Here, they teach

youth a new language to define both rights and personhood. By this latter I mean a language to make sense of challenging experiences they have had as well as the imagined future they could have (whether these are realistic or not). Ultimately, I analyze how NGO training sessions and medical procedures impact the lives of ordinary women by examining these interventions in terms of women's subjectivities, relationships, education, and behaviors.

What is loosely referred to as "Development" is a billion-dollar industry, according to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). In 2015 Guatemala alone received over $278 million from public international organizations for the purpose of aid and development[2]. An expanded statistical view of this number, including other forms of transactions (such as those carried out by private entities like banks), places the number at $596.7 million. This number reflects only what was officially disbursed by foreign governments for the express purpose of "economic development and welfare" (OECD 2018). As of 2018, the United States government alone declares it gave $257 million to Guatemala, with $196 million coming directly from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID 2018). This does not include the amount of money processed by NGOs domestically.

Money aside, the idea of development continues to be a way to rank countries worldwide in terms of quality of life. In its simplest form development is synonymous with "good change" (Thomas 2000). It signifies an intentional aim towards "increased living standards, improved health and well-being for all, and the achievement of whatever is regarded as a general good for society at large" (*Ibid.* 23; See also Ferguson 1994: 15). How to effect change, or even *if* such change is possible, to bring about these notions of "progress" is a question that has yet to be

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[2] In 2017 $34 million was for the purpose of "health and population".

answered. In his detailed review of the many faces of development, Alan Thomas (2000) complicates this simple definition by adding on four additional implications to it: development encompasses change across-the-board in society, it is a self-building and continuous *process*, it necessitates concurrent change at a societal *and* individual level, and finally, it does not always have a positive connotation (*Ibid.:* 24).

In its current form, development has moved away from a post-WWII focus on an economic model of transitioning towards a capitalist industrial economy, though still drawing on (and often conflating with) this capitalist idea of "progress". It has come to represent a more human-centered utopic goal of raising the "quality of life" by combating poverty, famine, illiteracy, material want, etc. (Thomas 2000). Development is, as Amartya Sen (2000) popularized it, *freedom*: it is "the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency" (xii). Sen's work expanded the definition of development from its economic roots to include what he views as essential civil and human rights and has come to be widely influential both in academic and lay circles (Corbridge 2002). What I refer to here as the "discourse of development" encompasses two concepts behind this idea of 'development': first as a *vision* towards an enticing idea of what it means to be a 'good' society[3] and the transformation that entails. Second, as an *intervention* or what Thomas refers to as "deliberate efforts aimed at improvement on the part of various agencies" (Thomas 2000: 29). I focus here on non-governmental agencies of varying backgrounds in Guatemala, though these are always related to national goals set by governments and international organizations. I emphasize the way the ideas

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[3] As many have pointed out, what it means to be a "desirable" society is by no means a simple thing to define, and can vary depending on political and cultural ideas, lifestyles, etc. (Thomas 2000: 30). What's more, how one defines this vision "carr[ies] implications about one's view of the world that can lead into wider-ranging political, moral and theoretical disputes" (*Ibid.* 42).

behind the discourses of development are not static, nor are they solely a globalized framework imposed on local landscapes, but rather are constantly (re)interpreted and impacted by the way local communities vernacularize[4] them.

Scholars interested in development have pointed to the analytical benefits of examining development as a discourse. Arturo Escobar and James Ferguson in particular have demonstrated what is produced by "doing" development, and how these consequences affect the lives of those involved. Drawing on Foucault, their works have shown how discourse operates as a social practice that shapes reality in accordance with dominant power structures (Ferguson 1990; Escobar 1995). Ferguson deconstructs the strategies and technologies behind the management of what he calls LDC's, *Less Developed Countries* within the industry of development to show their unintended political and economic consequences. For them, it is in the very production of terms like these, (LDC's, the *Third World*, *Developing Countries*) that the colonial power behind the discourse of development emerges. Both scholars detail how it produces and organizes knowledge about the way the world works in accordance with a circular logic that ranks countries according to the very ideas that led to the ranking in the first place. That is, it creates categories to classify countries based on an a priori classification of these countries that stem from 'Western' ideas about what it means to be developed. In his analysis of discourses and the production of "the West," Stuart Hall (1996) examines how being Western implies being "developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular, and modern," while those seen as "Other" or "the Rest" lack these 'good' associations (186). Statistics play an important role in this power mechanism, as they provide the means to organize peoples according to this dual system of representation (Escobar

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[4] Vernacularization (Goodale and Merry 2007) refers to the ways that local actors, particularly women, use global and international ideas about (women's) rights to envision and work towards a valued and equitable way of life within their own communities (c.f. Levitt and Merry 2009).

1995: 213; Thomas 2000). For many Guatemalans, development has come to be synonymous with attaining a better quality of life in accordance with these statistics. As I expand further below, this notion is tied to overcoming poverty and a "backwards" cultures, and with being "modern" citizens.

It is not my intention here to define what sorts of development interventions would be best for Guatemala; instead, in this dissertation, I analyze how the idea of development as a discourse, defined below, impacts people in the communities I study. For instance, as a "developing" country, Guatemala is home to a growing number of NGOs that aim to impact people's lives in accordance with goals established by Western institutions, *e.g.* the United Nation's (UN) Human Development Index (HDI). Under this lens, Guatemala has one of the highest inequality rates in Latin America, along with some of the worst poverty, malnutrition and maternal-child mortality rates in the region[5], especially in rural and indigenous areas. Despite the growing commitment of many organizations to address this inequality, the healthcare landscape in these regions remains precarious. This is especially true for reproductive health. Almost two decades after the establishment of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Millennial Development Goals, Guatemala's maternal mortality has doubled[6]. A quick look at the country's latest reproductive health statistics revels the continuing challenges rural women face when it comes to healthcare[7] (INE 2017). These facts continue to encourage the interventions of NGOs, funded both locally and globally. Beyond statistics, the effects of development initiatives in the field of reproductive health have powerful and intimate consequences for people, raising the stakes for the women involved.

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[5] Especially when GDP is taken into consideration.
[6] Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) is 273 deaths per 100,000 live births.
[7] INE statistics.

Development and Human Rights as Discourses of Modernity

To analyze the discourse of development and its effects, I draw on the field of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to deconstruct the social processes behind NGO attempts to redefine the concepts of human and reproductive rights. I look specifically at this within the context of small urban towns in the Sacatepéquez and Chimaltenango departments of highland Guatemala, and the effects this has on those involved. Grounded in critical social and linguistic analysis, CDS takes its theoretical and methodological base from an eclectic and inter-disciplinary team of social scientists such as Foucault, Bourdieu, and Habermas. It emphasizes the ubiquitous role of power in understanding discourse as a social phenomenon with both hegemonic consequences and subversive potentiality. I chose to adopt an analytical framework based on CDS because of the way it brings together an understanding of power, ideology, and knowledge in deconstructing discourses in everyday (verbal and non-verbal) interactions. My goal in this introduction is to examine what discourses are and how they are *productive*—that is, how they represent things, position people, mediate social action, and create and discipline subjects. For the purpose of this analysis, I view reproductive health as one strand within the larger plane of development discourse, which in turn is linked to both discourses of global human rights and biomedicine, as well as a neoliberal ideology. This section will define what each of these terms means, while the following section will apply this framework to the context of non-governmental organizations in Guatemala.

I take as a starting point Stuart Hall's (1996) definition of discourse as a system of representation that produces knowledge and subjects, and shapes perceptions and social practice. Discourses are always linked to power and consequently, resistance (*Ibid.*). Drawing from Jurgen Link's work, CDS scholars Jager and Maier expand a Foucauldian theory of discourses by

examining discouses in terms of their power effects and the workings of iconographic, linguistic and nonlinguistic actions[8], as well as the way they legitimize and maintain hegemony (2016: 111; Link 1983: 60). Such an understanding affirms the following beliefs about discourses as a social practice (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258): they are institutionalized; they are interwoven with knowledge and its production (Wodak and Meier 2016; 13); they shape social material[9] reality (Reisigl and Wodak 2016: 30) and produce subjects (Foucault 1982; Althusser 2006). There is a double understanding here of what "subjects" means that assumes an ongoing dialectical process or relationship between discourses and actors[10]: subjects produce discourses and they are also produced—or subjectivized—by discourses (Jager and Maier 2016). Similarly, just as discourses shape social reality, institutions, and structures, the opposite also holds true: social reality, institutions, and structures shape discourses. Consequently, discourses are both "socially constituted and socially constitutive" (Reisigl and Wodak 2016; see also Bourdieu 1991[11]).

Discourses can come to have many different properties that lend it their power. First, they are semiotic in nature, intricately tied to the meaning-making process different individuals and groups engage in within particular contexts of social experience and identity (Purvis and Hunt 1993: 474). Second, discourses can be recontextualized, that is transferred to new contexts (Reisigl and Wodak 2016: 27). Third, discourses can be *operationalized* through the following dialectical processes: enacted as new ways of (inter)acting (*genres*), inculcated "as new ways of being" (as

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[8] These non-linguistic actions include "the creation of material objects" something Foucault also theorized about in his later work (Jager and Maier 2016: 111)

[9] By material, here I refer to the argument that "discourse cannot be reduced to a notion of 'false consciousness' or 'distorted view of reality', as in some orthodox Marxist approaches to 'ideology critique'. Discourse is a material reality of its own" that goes beyond sheer ideas (Jager and Maier 2016: 111: See also Link 1992).

[10] Following the Foucauldian understanding of Critical Discourse Studies, I use these terms, actor and subject, interchangeably, as others have noted "using the former when we want to emphasize more the active and the latter when we emphasize more the passive side of actorhood and subject creation" (Jager and Maier 2016:112). Subjects/actors are understood to be individuals (or groups of individuals) as socially constructed, thus there is a separation between the person as an individual and the socially and historically construed "subject".

[11] Bourdieu (1991) presents discourse as a symbolic practice, a "structured and structuring" medium.

styles or identities), and materialized, physically, "as new ways of organizing space" (Fairclough 2016: 88). Though always interrelated, discourses do have boundaries and it is important to learn to differentiate between them. This call to differentiate in no way implies discourses are bounded entities—on the contrary, they are quite dynamic, and open to constant (re)interpretation and overlap. Rather, this call for interdiscursive analysis that examines discursive limits underscores what types of social action are considered 'acceptable' and how acting otherwise challenges social structures.

Discourses exercise *power* and as such are productive. I view power as invisible and ever-present and, to borrow Foucault's definition, as a "whole series of particular mechanisms, definable and defined, that seems capable of inducing behaviors or discourses" (Foucault 1996: 394). This understanding of power serves as a window into how power operates in society especially in terms of *technologies*. Foucault did not consider power something that individual actors "possess" or wield (Geèienë 2002: 119) and although this might seem contradictory, I expand his definition here to incorporate Bourdieu's notion of 'symbolic power' in order to examine how power operates at the level of the individual actor (Bourdieu 1991). In addition to being ubiquitous and socially constitutive, symbolic power is directly tied to forms of economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991: 164). As such, power takes on the characteristics of a resource, one that is socially legitimized and possessed. From this concept stems the notion of symbolic violence, which maintain relations of power favorable to ruling classes, though not without constant struggle over these symbols.

For both theorists, power is intricately tied to the social construction of reality and the production of knowledge. Foucault and Bourdieu's differences stem not from an irreconcilable view of power, but from the research questions they are asking. As sociologist Ingrida Geèienë

puts it, "Bourdieu tries to describe the resources of power" while Foucault focuses on "the functioning of power" (2002: 123). The uniting of these two theories of power allows us to examine how discourses exercise power and how there is also power over discourses. This latter emphasizes the influence on discourses different actors and groups of actors have. This does not negate the fact that discourses go beyond the individual, nor the fact that both elite and subaltern peoples can effect change on a discourse (Jaeger and Maier 2016).

Finally, I examine the ways discourses are ideological. Scholars drawing on Gramsci and Althusser see ideology as a way of understanding and representing the world based on culturally constructed set of beliefs, doctrines, and statements that constitutes subjects, produces knowledge and are shared by members of a social group. Ultimately, ideology is about power; it serves the interests of a specific (usually dominant) group or class by maintaining hegemonic power relations (Hall 1996; Thomson 1990; Fairclough 2003; Ramos 1982; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). While Foucault shies away from the term 'ideology' (preferring instead "regimes of truth" within which power, normalization, and surveillance occur [1977a]), Hall's theory of articulation[12] encourages us to embrace the social process behind ideology in order to understand how *agency* and *resistance* operate. For him, it is not the term "ideology" per se, but its effect: "the relative power and distribution of regimes of truth in the social formation at any time—which have certain effects for the maintenance of power in the social order" (Hall 1996b: 136).

In CDS, ideology is analyzed as a form of social cognition, organizing identity, activities, goals, norms and values, group relations, and resources through the production of shared attitudes and mental models (Van Dijk 2013; 1998). Discourses are ideological in that they are the means

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[12] For Hall, "a theory of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjectures, to certain political subjects" (1996b: 141).

by which ideologies are reproduced, expressed, and acquired. Van Dijk (2013) emphasizes the importance of a CDS approach as "crucial to understand[ing] the ways ideologies emerge, spread, and are used by social groups" (*Ibid.:* 176). Moreover, for him, ideology is not solely grounded in domination, there can also be ideologies rooted in resistance, such as feminism, pacifism, environmentalism, etc. (*Ibid*: 175). The role of resistance is thus again brought to the forefront of ideology through detailed discursive analysis. Van Dijk emphasizes the relation between ideologies and Gramsican hegemony[13] to underscore how prevailing cultural norms seem natural and inevitable (1993: 258). Deconstructing the power effects of discourses that draw on dominant ideologies reveals how this cultural hegemony (Gramsci 1999 [1971]) is both perpetuated and resisted. Building on this sociocognitive approach, Reisigl and Wodak (2016) identify two levels at which ideology operates: first, at the individual level, as "a worldview and a system composed of related mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes, values and evaluations" (*Ibid.* 26). Second, at a societal level, in what they refer to as "grand narratives" or "fully developed" ideologies such as communism, socialism, neoliberalism, etc. and which guides subjects' worldviews (*Ibid.*)

Arturo Escobar has shown how a discursive analysis of development illuminates the way it is complicit in a hegemonic Western project that created the very idea of "the Third world" as 'underdeveloped' and 'backwards' (1995) and the role of anthropology in perpetuating this discourse (1991). His focus on the "articulations of alternatives" in everyday life, however, also highlights the growing resistance to this form of disciplinary power. For him, "changing the order

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[13] In his work, Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci examines the relationship between force and consent. He shows how the ruling class exercise power mainly through cultural (moral, intellectual, etc.) means. This cultural hegemony—part of a ruling class' instruments of social domination—are critical in what he calls the war of position, which exists in addition to coercion or force in political society (Gramsci 1999 [1971]).

of discourse[14] is a political question that entails the collective practice of social actors and the restructuring of existing political economies of truth" (Escobar 1995: 216). In a similar manner, Ferguson (1991) examines the unintended "side effects" of the apparatus of development to show how it both expands bureaucratic power and depoliticizes poverty. Both scholars expand on a Foucauldian analysis of knowledge, power, and discipline to demonstrate how this "anti-politics machine," as Ferguson calls it, works to "colonize reality" in an ahistorical way (Escobar 1995: 4).

Analyzing development as a discourse, as Escobar and Ferguson do, illuminates five consequences: first, the ways in which it produces knowledge about the world in a way that separates those who are "developed" (that is modern, advanced, capitalist, free) from those who are "underdeveloped" (that is, backwards, outmoded, poor, incapable). Second, how this worldview subjectivizes those perceived as "underdeveloped" and so justifies intervening in the name of progress. Third, these interventions are an exercise of hegemonic power that negatively affects non-Western ways of being and knowing. Fourth, though the discourse calls attention to the 'suffering' of the so-called 'Third-World' it does not critically challenge the massive structural inequality present in these countries. Finally, a discursive analysis makes clear that these interventions are a constant site of resistance and struggle (Escobar 1995).

Ferguson emphasizes that the many "failed" development interventions should be understood in terms of what they produce in local communities. He draws attention especially to the sociopolitical and physical impact of development projects in the lives of local peoples. In the end, analyzing the dialectical way the discourse of development shapes reality leads Escobar to

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[14] By orders of discourse I mean particular configurations of different social practices: ways of being, acting, talking, etc. To borrow from Fairclough (2016) once more it is the "social structuring of semiotic difference" (88).

imagine the end of development (1995; 2006). This "postdevelopment," as he calls it, is a call to move away from a Western apparatus of development and embrace "alternative" epistemologies and subjectivities. Such a decolonial approach entails going beyond an anti-neoliberal model to consider challenging Western hegemony from a pluralistic and truly intercultural social process (Escobar 2010).

Though Escobar and Alvarez (1995) underscored the many "voices" calling for an end to development decades ago, and development has certainly been transformed by these decolonizing challenges, I continue to find it relevant to understand how people's daily lives are impacted in Guatemala. Ultimately, the discourse of development I analyze here does not stem solely from Western hegemony, though it does rely on certain discourses about "the West" and "the Rest" (Hall 1996). The multitude of institutions working in the name of development in Guatemala are extremely diverse. Some are what Escobar (1992; 2017) would call pluralistic grassroots movements, established firmly within local culture and social difference—but most of them are not[15]. Grounded in Escobar's notions of cultural hybridity (Escobar 1995), many of these organizations draw both from global discourses of human rights, local popular culture, and imaginations of a "good life" to create their own vision of what development should be. Some organizations are rooted in a Catholic and Evangelical ideal of society, others in a post-colonial feminist one, others still in a neoliberal vision of progress. The heterogeneity of the NGO field in Guatemala makes it hard to imagine a solely postdevelopment context, as thousands of livelihoods,

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[15] I believe part of the reason why many, many organizations continue to exist outside of what Escobar calls postdevelpment is because in the end, organizations need resources to operate. Much of the foreign aid Guatemala receives does not go towards organizations based on radical alterity and transformations (despite how beneficial these might be to local communities), but to those that conform to ideas behind the global Human Rights discourse and so with Western notions of individual freedom, choice, etc. I think development alongside capitalism, as Thomas (2000) calls it, continues to grow and that is why it is still a relevant topic today.

identities, and efforts continue to be poured into the discourse of development—both as a *vision* and an *intervention*.

Before moving on to the next section, I consider the methodological implications of adopting a CDA approach in an ethnography. Though the theoretical context of CDS is well suited to an ethnographic analysis of the ways NGOs operate in the field of reproductive health in Guatemala and the effects it has on the everyday choices and identities of people, applying the methodologies of CDS is a bit more challenging. Despite being quite flexible and interdisciplinary in terms of its methodological "toolbox" (Wodak and Meier et al. 2016; Foucault 1977), in the end CDA is most qualified for linguistic analysis (Keller 2005). For sociological scholars such as Keller (2005), the emphasis on linguistic analysis makes it harder to properly examine "the larger dimensions of knowledge and knowledge/power which Foucault was interested in". He proposes to close this gap by combining CDS with a sociology of knowledge (*ibid*). I believe Jager and Maier's (2016) take on a Foucauldian approach to CDS addresses Keller's concerns by incorporating an analysis of the power effects of discourses, including subject positions, dispositifs/apparatuses, knowledge, and the historical context where such discourses are situated, as well as the way discourses relate to each other. Following Hall (1996b), I examine the way social practices and interactions "operate *like* a language" without necessarily emphasizing a *linguistic* analysis (*Ibid.* 146).

Beyond its linguistic roots, the critical methodological aspect of Critical Discourse Studies is, for different reasons, something I find the need to address. For many proponents of CDA, the critical nature of the discipline aims to disrupt hegemony. This critical aspect of CDS makes it abundantly clear that the critique social scientists create exists within particular (Western) discourses and power configurations. There is also a constructive aspect to it: CDS argues for

critique as a way to challenge hegemony by exposing "the contradictions within and between discourses, the limits of what can be said, done and shown, and the means by which a discourse makes particular statements, actions and things seem rational and beyond all doubt, even though they are only valid at a certain time and place" (Jager and Maier: 120). Some, though not all, branches of CDS however, go beyond critique and take on more of an activist, even normative, approach.

For example, Fairclough defines the critical nature of CDS methodology as one of "explanatory critiques", from Bhaskar's (1987) notion of the term[16], aiming to address social wrongs (2016: 88). Such an approach seems suspiciously like those taken up by NGOs in their goal to encourage development. While I acknowledge the value of critique, I am wary of taking up a normative stance. Yet, there is no denying that as anthropologists we often do look at 'social wrongs' and how to address them, as well as social change. Fairclough (2016: 89) affirms a view of social change as a shift in the structuring of semiotic difference, that is, shifts in orders of discourse. That is, changes in the relation between specific configurations of genres, discourses, and styles. I complicate this by arguing that such change does not necessarily mean social structures are shifting in the 'right' direction—if we can even define what the 'right' direction means or establish who gets to decide that, as Lila Abu-Lughod reminds us (2017). Indeed, she points out the way discourses of development and human rights have enshrined notions of "freedom" and "choice" based on Western ideologies that often fall short when applied to non-Western peoples (Abu-Lughod 2017; Abu-Lughod 2002). I thus remain skeptical of a normative narrative of social change both as a methodology and an object of my ethnographic research.

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[16] Based on Critical Realism, British philosopher Roy Bhaskar asserted that there could be normative value derived from certain kinds of explanatory accounts (1987: 177). For Bhaskar, these types of evaluations go beyond description, into the realm of ethical positivism.

Ultimately, I show how an ethnographic analysis of the way the discourses of development are vernacularized can be simultaneously a form of disciplining and of *politics*[17]. Attending to this framework in ethnographic terms emphasizes the very personal and emotional way such social processes play out in the everyday lives of ordinary young men and women in the Sacatepéquez and Chimaltenango region of Guatemala.

Modernizing a Nation: Understanding the Role of NGOs in the Discourse of Development

My work focuses on development as a discourse to understand and explain the complex social phenomena surrounding the work of NGOs in the field of reproductive health. Most of the NGOs I collaborated with upheld as their raison d'être the empowerment of women by way of social change. This meant they worked mainly with women and youth. As I explore in the following chapters, the discourse of development has very real consequences for the lives of those involved. Here, I take a step back to broadly examine what is produced when NGOs work towards such an illusory goal. In this analysis I view development in Guatemala as part of a "grand narrative" of neoliberalism (Reisigl and Wodak 2016). As Reisigl and Wodak suggest, in Guatemala, there are three interrelated imaginaries at work:

First, a model of what society looks like: Guatemala as "broken" or "backwards", in need of modernizing development. Second, a model of what society should look like in the future: a "developed" Guatemala, a very neoliberal vision of modern structures (paved roads, tall buildings, array of shopping centers) and responsible individual citizens that can improve their livelihoods through hard work and an entrepreneurial spirit. Third, a programmatic model of how to achieve

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[17] Political in the Rancierian way: as in challenging the inegalitarian "distribution of the sensible" (Ranciere 1995).

this path from present to future: NGOs stage interventions to teach "underdeveloped" populations to adopt modern behaviors. These complex interventions include, but are not limited to, encouraging family planning, improving medical practices (though not always changing the conditions that enable/dictate poor health practices), facilitating access to bank loans or educational programs, etc. Many of these attempts are directly tied to statistics that help to portray a country's "developedness": maternal mortality, literacy rates, etc. and where the model of Guatemala as "backwards" comes from. (*Ibid:* 26)

The current discourse of development in Guatemala is firmly situated in the complex historical context of earlier versions of the discourse and the social practices that accompanied them. This genealogy begins with the (oft recurring) theme of nation-building. That is, practices and policies that have been enacted in the name of consolidating Guatemala as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983; Nelson 1999). From a historical standpoint, much of the perceived power behind the idea of development as a state project arose from presenting itself as a bounded and homogenous community, and by associating itself with modernity[18]. This social process is described by many as "a homogenizing political and cultural project" (Similox 2005)[19] based on exclusionary practices (Cayzac 2001; Casallas and Padilla 2004; Stavenhagen 2002; Stephenson 1999).

Such discrimination can be traced back to colonial rule, during which the "Indian question" emerged—that is the debate surrounding the incorporation (*i.e.* exclusion) of indigenous peoples into Latin American nations (Postero and Zamosc 2004). Spanish law codified racial difference

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[18] For a nuanced definition of modernity, see Escobar 2008. Escobar uses the term "to refer to the kinds of coherences and crystallizations of forms (discourse, practices, structures, institutions) that have arisen over the last few hundred years out of certain cultural and ontological commitments of European societies" (2010: 9).

[19] "*un proyecto político y cultural homogenizador*," my translation.

between Spaniards and indigenous peoples through legislation like the Laws of Burgos in 1512 and the New Laws of 1542, which set up separate sets of laws, rights, and responsibilities for indigenous peoples (Munro 2014: 52). The goal of these discriminatory practices was to set up an agricultural system based on the exploitation and forced labor of indigenous communities to support Spanish rule. This "indigenous question," as it later came to be called, also had a philosophical component, which questioned whether indigenous peoples had the necessary qualities to be Catholic subjects of the Crown—that is, did they have souls[20]? Or, where they wholly "other" and so un-incorporable into the nation? The brutality of colonial rule on indigenous populations did not, as many historians have pointed out, imply consent. Indeed, it is the resilience and rebelliousness[21] of indigenous communities during these times (and really, throughout history) that have kept these diverse communities unified in their traditions (Patch 2002; Munro 2014; Grandin 2000). Guatemala has over 22 distinct ethno-linguistic groups[22] and these were treated differently by colonial authorities depending on a variety of factors such as their alliance with colonial forces early on, geographic location, population size and density, and economic strength.

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[20] This pinnacle of this was the Valladolid Debate (*Junta de Valladolid*) between Sepúlveda and de Las Casas in 1550. Drawing on a variety of philosophical and literary sources, Sepúlveda argued that indigenous peoples, which he considered to be natural slaves, did not have the anthropological capacities to be Christian, because they were not able to exercise self-government. De Las Casas, on the other hand, drew on his personal experience in the Americas to argue that indigenous peoples did have the capacities to become Christian if they had proper (that is, Spanish) teaching and instruction. Historian Lisa Munro recounts that "neither the Spanish crown nor the Catholic church reached any clear-cut conclusions on the matter, leading to a contradictory set of Indian policies that relegated native peoples to the status of dependent children while treating as sufficiently mature for purposes of taxation and economic exploitation" (2014: 54). Thus, in addition to paying tributes, Mayan communities were also forced to pay taxes to the Catholic Church, further exacerbating the burden placed on indigenous populations. Guatemalan historian Severo Martinez Paláez makes it clear that "the cruel treatment of the Indian was not a sporadic phenomenon" but rather it was "inherent in the social structures of the colony, absolutely necessary to maintain [the Indian] subjected to incredible forms of exploitation, a mass of serfs with enormous numerical superiority" (1979: 535 in Handy 1984; See also, Munro 2014).
[21] Historian Robert W. Patch asserts that the Maya went beyond organizing and staging revolts and had *revolutions*. He likens these to the French revolution or the United States' revolution in that they "challenged the colonial regime's legitimacy by asserting the right to rule themselves" (2002: 14).
[22] Historian Jim Handy reminds us that while most of these indigenous groups were Mayan, there were also other communities residing in the Guatemalan territories and Yucatan (some from the Chichen Itza regions) during the conquest (1984: 18).

After independence in 1821, the newly formed state continued to openly discriminate against its indigenous residents (Bastos and Brett 2010; Cayzac 2001). The legacy left behind by an increasingly exploitative and repressive colonial administration had set the stage for a society based on deep racial inequality, bitterness and oppression (Handy 1984). Many Latin American scholars have noted that the end of colonial rule in no ways meant the end of *coloniality* (Quijano 2007), some going as far as to suggest that Latin America cannot be described as post-colonial, only as neocolonial (Mignolo 2011). This 'coloniality of power' as Anibal Quijano calls it, implies control over knowledge and knowledge production, and semiotic construction of reality. It was through such cultural hegemony that the elite ruling classes in Latin America maintained control of indigenous populations as an expendable labor force in their quest for 'progress'. This form of domination was predicated on a racial classification—both in a biological and structural form (Quijano 1992)—that placed Europeanness as superior and all "others" as inherently inferior. These racist (and sexist) structures were so embedded in colonial cultural hegemony that, as Walsh (2007) reminds us, even when "colonialism ended with independence, coloniality is a model of power that continues"[23] (229). The following discourses of development can only be understood in relation to this coloniality of power and modernity that is ontologically categorized[24] (Escobar 2010).

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). Throughout the twentieth century, this attempt at liberal

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[23] Walsh argues this coloniality is especially entrenched in the forms of knowledge production, including critical knowledge, which continues to rely on Eurocentric theories and Western knowledge production.

[24] For Escobar, this ontological classification ranks "humans over non-humans (separation of nature and culture) and of some humans over others (the colonial divide between us and them); the idea of the autonomous individual separated from community; the belief in objective knowledge, reason, and science as the only valid modes of knowing; and the cultural construction of 'the economy' as an independent realm of social practice, with 'the market' as a self-regulating entity outside of social relations" (Escobar 2010: 9).

modernization tended to aggravate the problems of discrimination and poverty already present in rural and indigenous communities. Earlier iterations of the discourses of development originated with this attempt at establishing modernity through an emphasis on developing a market economy and promoting assimilation by discouraging communal life, confiscating communal lands, and encouraging monolingual education (Similox 2005; Stavenhagen 2002). Closely related to this discourse strand in Latin America was that of *mestizaje.* Mestizaje[25] was a racialized discourse that gained prominence in various Latin American contexts (most notably, Mexico) and came to be used as a tool for nation building and modernization.

Seeking to address 'the indigenous question' once again, mestizaje presented indigenous cultures and their status as "other" or different as a hindrance to development and modernity (Postero and Zamosc 2004). Many scholars have also pointed out the patriarchal nature of this discourse, emphasizing the critical role of gender and sexuality in the production of national and racial identities. Combined, discourses of mestizaje and development created a racialized and gendered narrative of progress that was reinforced through political tracts, educational textbooks, and even novels (Stephenson 1999; Radcliffe 2015). These power effects behind these discourses worked to internalize the inferior position of those populations they targeted in the country's class, ethnic, and gender hierarchy. Women, especially indigenous women, were excluded from exercising many of the basic rights given to ladino men. The result was, as Diane Nelson (1999) illustrates, a social *fantasy* that both overplayed differences—especially bodily ones—and

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[25] Ultimately, mestizaje discourses maintained 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). Grandin notes, however, that in Guatemala mestizaje was never taken up as it was in Mexico, where ideas about *la raza cósmica* (the cosmic race) were integral to post-revolution nation-building (2000; See also Martinez-Echazabal 1998, for a larger discussion about mestizaje accross Latin America).

conferred in them an illusion of rigidity in the production of gender, race, class and national identity.

During this time in Guatemalan history *ladino* (non-indigenous) nationalists continually blamed indigenous communities for their own political failures and "nearly uniformly wrote Indians out of their narration of national progress and destiny" (Grandin 2000: 128). Because of this, discourses of modernization tended to act as the supporting arguments for excluding Indians from actively asserting their rights as citizens and participating in elite and even local political life. In most instances discourses about progress continue to operate under this coloniality of power, particularly at an epistemological level[26]. There was always, however, a subversive component to these discourses as indigenous and rural communities came together to form their own understanding of nationalism (Grandin 2000). Here is the 4th element of discourse I analyze: resistance. To draw from Escobar once more, there is always room for struggle "to create alternative ways of being and doing" in local versions of development (Escobar 1995: 12; Escobar 2010: 11).

The cultural hegemony surrounding the process of nation-building was only intensified during the Armed Conflict that ravaged the country for over thirty years (1960-1996). With over 300 villages razed and 200,000 people dead or disappeared—most of them indigenous—the atmosphere that pervaded was one of terror. Drawing from an oppressive and monopolized power scheme, Guatemala entered a period characterized (more so than ever before) as one of intolerance and exclusion, as well as a lack of accountability, legal order and respect for the law. The brutal and genocidal nature of the war bolstered intellectual and cultural struggles against dominant

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[26] Mario Blaser describes the three basic epistemological themes of modernity as: "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). Today, modernity continues to have these implications.

groups (usually urban, *ladino* [non-indigenous] men) by Mayan social movements (see Bastos y Camus 2003; Brett 2006). Even in the postwar period, Guatemala is characterized by growing levels of violence that continue to threaten democracy and the everyday lives of Guatemalans[27].

The end of the Armed Conflict and Guatemala's approval of the International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of 1989 (ILO 169) meant a decrease in repressive powers of the state. Its newly democratic identity needed—and continues to need— legitimation that it is, in fact, democratic. This pressure to perform the duties of a democratic nation often come from international human rights groups (which gained prevalence during the solidarity movement during the Civil War), civil society groups (from all sides of the political spectrum), and international organizations (such as the OEA, the Organization of American States or the World Bank, for example). In practice, attempts at democratic legitimation are deeply tied to development and ideas about what it means to be modern. In recent years, the rise of neoliberalism[28] has meant a reduction in the visibility of the state apparatus. However, as Ferguson (1990) reminds us, the state is not an actor but rather a mode of exercising power. It is by no means a bounded entity and as it expands, its bureaucratic power diminishes (Ferguson 1990: 273) but its capacity for governmentality does not (Ferguson and Gupta 2005). The curtailing of bureaucratic state offices has brought about an age of NGO professionalization which has taken over the nation

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[27] For an in depth look at the growing levels of violence in Guatemala see Restrepo and García (2011). Their report concludes that, "[u]ltimately, at the end of 2010 there were 5,690 homicides registered in Guatemala. This is evidence that, fourteen years after the signing of the Peace Accords, there has not been a total reduction in violence. On the contrary, the postwar period is characterized by growing levels of armed violence and by the inability of the state in guaranteeing justice and security as public goods" (24, my translation).

[28] I use here Escobar's (2010) definition of neoliberalism "as 'market reforms' in Latin America, [it] entailed a series of structural reforms intended to reduce the role of the state in the economy […] some analysts believe that they have brought about a measure of success" for example, in "the introduction of social policies such as those of decentralization, gender equality and multiculturalism" (8).

building project. NGOs are now charged with managing—that is censoring—difference often in the guise of promoting multiculturalism.

The ever-growing presence of local and foreign NGOs in the Guatemalan region of Sacatepequez is part of a burgeoning apparatus of medicalized[29] surveillance[30], along with an expansion of medical training and clinics. In part, it acts as the coercive mode of power[31] which arises from the threat of constant NGO surveillance, much like the "panopticon effect" Foucault describes[32] (1977). Consequently, the discourse of development wields both biopower[33]—conceiving of individuals as members of a whole heathy population—and governmentality[34]—discipline at the level of the individual subject.

Neoliberal multiculturalism, as this management of difference has come to be known, produces "other" subjects through cultural, legal, affective, and discursive methods to regulate difference (Hale 2002; Povinelli 2002; Postero 2007, Radcliffe 2015; Hooker 2005). 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). What's more, the discourses of development and human rights need the modern-traditional dichotomy—with

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[29] What Foucault describes as the medical "gaze" in The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception (1963).

[30] As Charles Hale has pointed out, in the multicultural neoliberal era, professionalized NGOs have become the new panopticon (Hale 2002: 496).

[31] For Foucault, power is productive in the sense that it creates a set of categories or subjects, in addition to institutions, technologies, and practices. By tracing the historical shift from sovereign power to penal power, Foucault shows how the latter is centered on taking charge of life and thus, with living beings, (and ultimately, their bodies, [1978: 143]).

[32] In his work, Foucault examines how disciplinary power relies on the constant threat of surveillance, which he conveys the through the image of Bentham's Panopticon, which leads to the constant threat of potential punishment leading to a system where subjects are increasingly trained to regulate their own behavior.

[33] The control over the body and over living populations, what Foucault terms "bio-power" is "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).

[34] Or what Foucault calls the "conduct of conduct". In *Governmentality* (1978), Foucault examines how subjects become docile bodies and how people are governed through non-state apparatuses, reinforcing the role NGOs throughout this social process.

culture and indigeneity falling into the latter—just as much as the discourses of nation-building do (Merry 2003: 58). In Guatemala, this is evidenced when NGOs take up the discourse of development in a well-intentioned, neoliberal attempt to improve the lives of "other" peoples. Analyzing development as a discourse illuminates how two different subject positions are produced: first, the underdeveloped, poor (and in most cases, rural and female) target of NGO interventions. Second, the developed (in most cases, urban and male) individual who is seen as the ideal modern citizen. As social practices associated with development mediate between general and abstract hegemonic social structures, these subject positions take on the role of a *collective symbol*[35] or *topoi* (Jager and Maier 2016: 122; Drews et al. 1985: 265). These symbols often come in pairs, where disciplined subjects are often the foil to the negatively portrayed 'radical other'.

This stereotypical dualism, as Hall calls it, is "a discursive strategy that separates between two essentialized subjects, one 'good' and one 'bad'" (1996: 216). Like Gilman's (1985) noble and ignoble savage, Charles Hale (2002; 2004; 2006) describes how the normalizing effect of discipline and power-knowledge in neoliberal governmentality (menacingly) produces two types of indigenous subjects: the neoliberal Indian (or "*indio permitido*"), who abides by the constituting structures of the neoliberal world, like national sovereignty and global capitalism, on the one hand, and the dangerous, revolutionary Indian (or *"indio prohibido"*)[36], who makes radical, "inappropriate" demands on the state, who is considered unruly for demanding substantial changes to current power structures, on the other. Hale argues that neoliberal multiculturalism attempts to

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[35] A collection of cultural stereotypes that form the repertoire or images that allow us to interpret reality (or reality be interpreted for us by, for example, the media).

[36] 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).

shape Mayan subjectivities in a way that facilitates the disciplining of indigenous bodies and behaviors by professionalized NGOs, which include *some* into the nation as citizens but exclude many others (2002: 491; see also Postero 2007). Guatemalan historian and anthropologist Edgar Esquit takes this a step further, arguing that "both the assassinations in the eighties and current neoliberalism are different, but historically linked forms of disciplining or constructing domination over indigenous peoples" (2008: 123, my translation)[37]. He argues that multiculturalism (much like the genocidal years of the war) is based on a colonial legacy that seeks to integrate indigenous peoples into the nation, not just as apolitical or *permitido*, but as "servants, and an inferior race" (*Ibid.*).

Scholars of neoliberal multiculturalism illustrate how liberal universalistic claims about human nature, freedom and the rights of man are qualified—have cultural and psychological preconditions—based on an anthropology of the subject. That is, there are specific *social practices* and *learned behaviors* whose status as 'necessary' characteristics circumscribe and order claims into liberal political inclusion (Mehta 1997; Cody 2009). From this discursive position, NGOs aim to teach those perceived as "other" the practices and behaviors of self-government[38] that encourage genres and styles which benefit the dominant classes of society[39]. Capacitaciones (training) that emphasize this self-disciplining comes in the form of hygiene, etiquette and public speaking classes, self-esteem talks, and other forms of training that encourage Western practices and worldviews. Subjects who, like the *indio prohibido*, fail to become docile bodies by conforming to this ideology are labeled recalcitrant, backwards, underdeveloped and are blamed for their own

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[37] "Propongo que tanto los asesinatos de los años ochentas como el multiculturalismo actual son formas diferentes pero, históricamente vinculadas, de discilpinar o de construir dominación sobre los indígenas" (2008: 123).

[38] These techniques of self-government can include (but not restricted to) the development of a work ethic or a time schedule, documentation and examination, space, and even the development of efficient bodily motions.

[39] I draw here once more on Foucault (1977; 1978) who reminds us how throughout (Western) society these forms of practice and discipline are being used to create docile and functional bodies needed for capitalism.

poverty and precarity. This form of normalizing power makes the disciplining of one's own body feel natural to avoid being outside of it and so labeled dangerous and unintelligible[40].

I argue this "will to improve[41]" as Tania Li (2007) calls this form of governmentality, is closely tied to what Bourdieu called 'habitus' (1980). I understand habitus as a system of dispositions, skills, and habits grounded in social practice and past experiences that structure how individuals perceive reality and behave (Bourdieu 1977). Habitus is generative: it is "embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history—[it] is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product" (1977: 56). This means that it creates practices that make it unthinkable to conceive of reality in a different manner, reinforcing the established social order. Habitus is structured by an individual's socio-economic status, family, religion, education, ethnicity and, I argue, by NGO interventions. The techniques of self-government NGOs encourage during their training sessions work to reinforce "modern" social behaviors and interpretations of reality that do not threaten dominant social structures and ideologies. Essentially, discourses of development erase politics from issues that are not only deeply political but have no hope of improving without political action (Ferguson 1990).

This has never been so true as with the topic of reproduction. As Bartky (2003) reminds us, gender is an essential component of modern disciplinary practices. The fact that discourses of development are deeply tied to colonial legacies of racism and sexism is something that most deeply affects rural women. The effects of such exclusionary exercises of power are closely related

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[40] "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).
[41] Situated in the field of power Foucault termed 'government,' the will to improve is ultimately an "attempt to shape human behavior by calculated means" (Li 2007: loc. 203).

to the reproductive body first, because women are seen as those whose bodies give birth to the nation and whose child rearing practices shape future generations of citizens (Meyer 2000; Das 2007, 2008). Second, because despite being so closely associated with nation-building, women (especially indigenous women) are constantly excluded[42] from access to reproductive justice[43]. For example, in her work in the Guatemalan highlands, Nicole Berry (2010) examines how, within the plane of global development, the use of medical discourses around birth produce "self-disciplining subjects that do not threaten State power" while at the same time challenging traditional semiotic meanings of birth in a way that negatively affect indigenous women. Similarly, Sarah Radcliffe (2014) argues that the biopolitics of post-colonial intersectionality render the reproductive body a site of power and discipline by linking bodies with "other" identities. She asserts that in Ecuador, neoliberal development has maintained both exclusionary racial categories and the sexualized conceptions of these, something I view as also true in Guatemala (*Ibid.*).

The chapters that follow analyze more closely the specifics of how reproductive health NGOs inadvertently deploy a variety of discursive techniques that aim to normalize populations and the subsequent effects this has on the identity and choices of women and youth. Despite this initial negative portrayal, my analysis of how the discourse of development operates in Guatemala makes clear that that, as a dialectical social process, it leaves room for subversive practices. The resulting social practices emerging with NGO interventions in the field of reproductive health have

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[42] The narrative of development—much like that of nation-building—begins with and necessitate this juxtaposition of subaltern/traditional to state/modern. These often support system of power inequalities that reinforce hegemonic notions of female inferiority and indigenous "backwardness".

[43] I understand reproductive justice to be defined as "the complete physical, mental, spiritual, political, economic, and social well-being of women and girls, and will be achieved when women and girls have the economic, social, and political power and resources to make healthy decisions about our bodies, sexuality, and reproduction for ourselves, our families, and our communities in all areas of our lives." Though this definition was provided by the Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice 2005, I believe it is an efficient description that encompasses many of the aspects related to women's bodies and reproduction that I wish to express.

unintended consequences on the subjectivity of those involved. Thus, while in most cases NGOs teach conformity with a neoliberal agenda, they can also give actors tools for challenging hegemony through the use of rights-based language that frames everyday struggles against inequality. This method allows us to consider the power effects of NGO interventions by deconstructing the knowledge behind the (linguistic and non-linguistic) practices and materializations accompanying the discourse of development.

In many instances, what development programs attempt to teach (in terms of knowledge and behavior modification) and the actual results are quite different. In some cases, people can react against the impositions of NGOs by asserting their own indigenous ways of being and rebelling against the hegemonic conceptions of social difference and hierarchy that are being imposed on them. In these situations, NGOs can become sites of resistance, where people can come together to protest the harmful ways that dominant society treats them. This is particularly true with many of the women's collectives and activist groups that often emerge from development initiatives. In other cases, the process is not quite so revolutionary. The ethnographic focus on "life as lived"[44] (Abu-Lughod 1993) makes evident the contradictions that exist within the discourse of development, challenging some of the hegemonic beliefs behind it.

Finally, I want to clarify that although I examine many "negative" effects of what NGOs and the discourse of development produce, this is not the conscious intent of most of the hard-working individuals within these organizations. As Jaeger and Maier remind us, "the power effects of discourses should […] not necessarily be interpreted as the conscious and manipulative intent of some individual or group" (2016: 118). On the contrary, most of the individuals working for

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[44] Abu-Lughod's term encourages the researcher to show how people are living, "going through daily life wondering what they should do, making mistakes, being opinionated, vacillating, trying to make themselves look good, enduring tragic personal losses, enjoying others, and finding moments of laughter" (1993: 27).

and with NGOs I met throughout my fieldwork were doing so because they believed their work was effecting positive social change. Their work required a deep commitment to this cause to endure the tough schedules and difficult nature of the job. These people, who throughout the course of over a year became my friends and co-workers, came from a variety of social, economic, and national backgrounds. Some had come from North American or European countries with the aim of empowering women and youth; others were local and though they believed in the cause, they were also working in NGOs as a means to support themselves and their families; and finally, some were from Guatemala City who, like me, were drawn to the growing and complex network of organizations promising to change inequality in the country.

Ethnographic Context: Understanding What NGOs Do in Guatemala

When it comes to the way NGOs operate, *capacitaciones* and medical procedures are two of the biggest techniques (re)producing the discourse of development. The former is dialectically related to a global discourse of human rights as proposed by the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the latter to a medical discourse which has been increasingly complicit in the medicalization of birth and reproduction (Hunt 1999; Cindoglu and Sayan-Cengiz 2010; Berry 2010). Both are fixed to a narrative of modernization with historical ties to colonial and patriarchal power that bring power relations down to the level of the reproductive body. In practice, however, both individual women and the institutions they work with see the discourse of development as one of female empowerment and emancipation. While seemingly paradoxical, an analytical framework grounded in CDS reveals this is a natural aspect of discourses: they maintain the status quo while also contributing to its transformation (Wodak and Meyer 2016). My focus lies in understanding what is at stake for people experiencing this

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process and finding intimate ways agency manifests itself despite (or in spite of) the hegemonic context.

Capacitaciones and *charlas* usually take the form of training sessions, production of material (flyers, posters, presentations), or social media campaigns (limited but growing). Training sessions are quite prevalent and diverse: from class-like structures where an expert shares information on a given topic, to hands-on activities where people acquire new skills, to collaborative exercises where a group of people come together to examine a topic in a creative way. Though I focus here on health-related capacitaciones, there are many more: related to micro-finance, nutrition, literacy, political rights, agriculture, etc. I use the Spanish term *capacitación* over *training* for various reasons: First, capacitation (noun), from the transitive verb *capacitar*, is defined as the act of making someone capable. It has the connotation of placing those conducting the capacitación as superior to those being capacitados (receiving the training). Capacitaciones are quintessentially about *experience* and *knowledge*. *Capacitacitadores* (training technicians) personify what Ranciere (1987) called a "stultifying master" or "ignorant schoolmaster". In his work he demonstrates how the ignorant schoolmaster, "having thrown a veil of ignorance over everything that is to be learned, [...] appoints himself to the task of lifting it" (*Ibid.*:6). This process reinforces a circle of powerlessness that makes development targets dependent on NGO training.

Second, there is a distinct local flare to the term capacitacion, one that encompasses the complex history behind development and nation-building in Guatemala. To capacitar is to teach the habitus associated with distinct genres—ways of acting and communicating (Fairclough 2016)—as modern/successful/empowered and the unmistakable socioeconomic component these imply. To learn these new dispositions and skills is an exercise in governmentality, and it requires a "will to improve" (Li 2007). In the field of reproductive health, capacitaciones train those

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involved the medicalized language of reproduction in order to "talk" like an expert (in addition to dressing and behaving like one), impacting the way women and youth conceive of their own bodies. For instance, one organization that aimed to place talented underprivileged students in elite urban universities ran etiquette classes. Here the students, often from rural backgrounds, were taught that part of "succeeding" in the elite economic sphere of Guatemala City was adopting westernized habits, such as styles of dress and eating customs. As part of the program were told how to eat "properly" with a fork and a knife, as well as how to have "powerful" handshake, make eye contact, and what is appropriate attire for business interviews. In addition to learning what 'business casual' meant in interviews for elite companies, a couple of the students confided in me that they felt pressured to adopt a Europeanized style of dress[45] for their everyday classes and activities, despite the steep costs this entailed.

Charlas, or talks, are a specific type of capacitacion that require less hands-on learning. Often charlas are carried out in formal locations (community centers, churches, etc.) and although they often leave room for questions, they are much more unidirectional. For this reason, they do not have the same impact as capacitaciones do in building a sense of community by bringing together a group of women facing similar issues. Capacitaciones and charlas are a growing industry in Guatemala. Though I focus here on NGO capacitaciones in the field of reproductive health, the most visible form of capacitaciones are those associated with the free market: business, entrepreneurship, and employee training. I say *visible* because many are co-sponsored by the *Cámara de Industria de Guatemala* (a bastion of neoliberal through and organization) and so are

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[45] For Marleny, one of the girls enrolled in the program, this meant adopting what at the time Zara (the Spanish retailer) deemed fashionable: fitted skinny jeans, flats, and neutral-toned blouses.

responsible for a variety of ads in different media (radio, billboards, newspapers, social media). They promote the genre of the modern businessman/woman.

To varying degrees, capacitaciones and charlas can have an affective component that draw on people's emotions and ideas of a "good life"[46] (Cole 2010) to strengthen the message being delivered. On one occasion, I was able to participate in a routine capacitacion put on by an NGO concerned with maternal-child health around Tecpán. During the activity the women were encouraged to take up daily hygiene practices that bordered on beauty routines. The young woman running the activity, Majo, confided in me that she had especially emphasized the need to brush and arrange one's hair, "because many of these women, they're so occupied by the daily grind of household chores they don't care for themselves." The women participating were often in charge of cultivating their small family plots or weaving intricate Mayan clothes (*cortes*, skirts and *huipiles*, blouses) to sell at the local market. Majo stated her goal was to "make the women proud of themselves." The activity of the day included asking each woman to come up and open a box that, they were told, contained something very valuable. Inside the box was a mirror. The first woman to open the box, Mercedes, let out a sheepish chuckle when it was revealed she was the valuable item all along.

Mercedes was here because the NGO provided her with occasional food for her small children and had facilitated a small loan from the local financial cooperative that had allowed her to buy threads for her weaving. The current huipil she was working on, a beautiful pale-yellow piece with intricately designed birds and flowers, would take over six months to complete. The mirror exercise was common in other types of capacitaciones teaching self-confidence and self-

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[46] The collective imaginary behind what it means to have attained a (culturally construed) notion of valued personhood, also described as an imagined future (Cole 2010).

love by other NGOs as well. It might sound corny, but it was very effective. Despite myself, when at last, it was my turn to open the box and I saw my reflection in that small mirror, I broke out into a wide smile. I could feel my face reddening as the women gathered there laughed along with me. At the end of the session, Majo gave out hair combs and clips for those interested in taking them.

The other most common form of NGO intervention are medical procedures. These are fast-paced and usually occur in makeshift or local public medical centers. They follow a ritualistic doctor-patient protocol, where medical staff (doctors, nurses, aides) set up a temporary clinic and work to attend as many patients as are present. Medical procedures provide much-needed medical attention to communities that have scarce access to healthcare, but this comes at a cost to patients' rights. The interactions between staff and patients are often short and formal, lending the former a lot of power and leaving little room or time for the latter to ask questions or learn new information. Scholars writing about the medicalization of women's health have extensively documented the way interactions between medical staff and underprivileged women in hospitals are often harsh and humiliating, subjectivizing the women as "uncivilized" others (Cindoglu and Sayan-Cengiz 2010; Berry 2010; Delaney 1991; Smith-Oka 2013; 2015). In my experience with temporary clinics, the utopic goals of those working for NGOs make the experiences a little less harsh. Though this makes the affective experience of women receiving care more pleasing, women continue to experience long wait times and issues with privacy and continuity. The subject positions in these interactions remain largely unchanged.

As my account of the Santa Ana Mixtan's women's fair demonstrates, the lack of privacy and the jarring way women receive care during such medical interventions serve to convey the "lesser" status of these women. The entire concept of this feria would be inconceivable for both doctors and patients among Guatemala's elite, and indeed in any Western health setting.

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Addressing the issues with fast-paced medical interventions is not so simple. The NGO I worked with that day was aware of the importance of a patient bill of rights, one that included privacy and acknowledged power, and had even asked me to help draft a bill for them. They were continually preoccupied with providing care according to global best practices and held capacitaciones and charlas to teach women and youth their reproductive rights. In practice, however, the structural and material inequality in the region makes it hard to enforce such principles. These quick medical interventions are designed to temporarily patch a gaping hole in the healthcare field, not to address the hegemonic social order that led to them in the first place. At the end of that day in Santa Ana Mixtan, over 30 women were given free access to pregnancy tests, a variety of contraceptive devices, and HPV (Human papillomavirus) screening, including cervical cryotherapy for those that tested positive. The response of these women was overwhelmingly positive, thanking the staff multiple times for their services and in a couple of occasions, running home to share the news with friends and relatives who might be interested in receiving care.

Finally, understanding the ethnographic context of this dissertation would not be complete without an analysis of my own positionality[47] as a Guatemalan and an anthropologist. "Where are you from?" was a question I regularly heard when meeting new people. Even before speaking, my clothes revealed that I was not a "gringa," but my brown hair and light skin-color marked a different kind of privilege. "*De la ciudad*" (from [Guatemala] City), I would reply, and people would nod, understandingly. Most people that "look" like me in Guatemala live in the City; another form of privilege. When I would introduce myself, people could usually tell I was Guatemalan because I did not have an accent, but some would still ask "where are your parents from?" Unlike

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[47] By positionality, I refer to how they relate to an analysis of the structures of power, privilege, and oppression linked to my own identity and interaction with my interlocutors.

in the US, where people are used to speaking about their ancestry, this was an unusual question and the first couple of times I heard this, I was unsure what to reply. "Well…. My mom is from El Salvador?" I would offer kind of hesitantly. Some would nod, satisfied by the answer, others would reply with an unconvincing "mmhmm."

These types of questions were a constant reminder of my whiteness and the accompanying socioeconomic privilege that came with it. Early on, one of the most common comments I would receive, however, was about how "nice" I was. I interpreted this to mean most people were expecting derogatory or condescending remarks from me based on this privilege—something that would not be unexpected given the high rates of racism perpetrated by ladinos across everyday social situations (CODISRA and Defensoría de La Mujer Indígena 2010; Hale 2006; Arenas Bianchi, Hale, and Palma Murga 1999). Throughout my fieldwork, I was always aware of my privilege and the way it was embedded in larger forms of historical oppression in the country. My positionality was something that foregrounded my initial interactions with people across social situations and I eventually came to develop some prepared responses to the questions asking me where I was from or why I was here.

"I am an anthropology student," I would say, "I am completing research as part of my *prácticas."* In Guatemala, students at all levels must complete prácticas, a combination of internships, work placements, and practical training before graduation (depending on the subject and educational level). This identification would usually make it easier for people to "place me" or make sense of my positionality and the way I would relate to them. For example, in one conversation with a midwife I had gotten to know quite well, I asked her what she had originally thought of me. I wanted to know because I had noticed the nature of our relationship change quite drastically from the very standoffish and formal conversations we had at first, to a more casual

companionship. She laughed and said, "I thought you were just here to tell me what to do, to judge me! (*calificarme*)[48]" I had worked hard to prove to her I was a student and was here to learn *from* her and was glad we could now speak honestly about it.

When I would mention that I was studying at an American university, in California, people would be excited to learn more about life *en los Estados* (in the US). Most of my interlocutors had family or new someone who had migrated to the US and would often long for a trip or a life in the US. This was another form of privilege. My ability to move freely between borders and the implication that I was fluent in English was especially interesting to the teenagers I worked with. Ultimately, the biases and perceptions of privilege, power, and deeply ingrained sexism and racism I have after a lifetime of being from and living in Guatemala shape the anthropological questions (and consequently the frameworks and answers that these lead to) that form the base of this research project.[49].

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[48] As I explore further in the dissertation, the "judgement" or evaluation of midwives in Guatemala is something that has been associated with ladino governance over indigenous women's bodies, particularly racialized practices of reproduction.

[49] Another difficult aspect of my positionality to navigate was a sense of personal security. "*Tan blanquita* (so white*),* you can't ride the bus alone! Can you imagine!" one of the NGO staff told me with a laugh, pointing at my bag she continued, "they would mug you right away." As a Guatemalan, growing up in one of the most violent cities in Latin America (Fontes 2018; O'Neill 2015), I was keenly aware of the constant threat of violence we all live under. My own experiences with violence marked the precautions I took to avoid certain forms of transportation, but also in the precautions I took at the beginning of my fieldwork to make myself "less visible" in new areas I visited. Moreover, this awareness also informed my relationship to my interlocutors, especially the young (adolescent) women I was working with. Taking precautions to ensure the safety of these young women meant our relationship was often managed through established NGOs and other organizations that could provide safe spaces to meet, and (more importantly) who were already approved by the parents of these teenagers. I understand that working through these official institutions impacted the types of relationships I had with the teens, who would come to associate me with the NGOs, but I believe this was in the best interest of both their safety, and their parents' (and my) peace of mind.

Outline of Chapters

The chapters in this dissertation build on an underlying understanding of the way Christian piety, which fits often seamlessly with rights-based adolescent pregnancy prevention, permeates civil society in Guatemala. Here, I draw from Kevin O'Neill's (2015; 2009) work to define Christian piety as an "affective infrastructure[50]" imbued into technologies of self-governance that wield disciplinary power in accordance with certain tenets of Christian morality such as hard work, timeliness, personal hygiene and grooming, and asceticism, among others (*Ibid.*). This form of Christian self-governance is made legible through the "ruthless levels of social suffering" the people of postwar Guatemala face (*Ibid.*). Christian piety, and its accompanying techniques of the self, is evident in the following chapters as I explore what is produced by regimes of reproductive governance that rest on the work of NGOs to instill youth with neoliberal desires of aspiration and superación. *Superación* (both a noun and a reflexive verb, *superarse*) have specific connotations in Guatemala. The term suggests an idea of self-improvement and socioeconomic betterment. Underlying these ideas of improvement is a push towards "overcoming" a range of social positions and identities—of rural, indigenous, impoverished, backwards, uneducated—in the desire to be a modern citizen.

Through their interventions, NGOs are operationalizing a discourse of development that encourages women and youth to enact modern subjectivities and so view themselves as "empowered". Drawing on discourses of global Human Rights and medicine, the discourse of development relies on Western fantasies about freedom and choice (Abu-Lughod 2017; Escobar 1995; Mohanty 1984). Inadvertently or not, most NGOs draw on a globalized neoliberal ideology

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[50] For O'Neill (2015), the term "affective infrastructure" refers to the way "feelings and emotions underlie and organize bodies—here in lieu of the prison, factory, asylum. […] Christian piety as an assemblage of affect and idiom is one such moral infrastructure that helps to distinguish between, for example, the pious and the impious" (216).

that portrays "individual liberty […]as one of the great moral achievements of capitalism" (Castles and Miller 2009). Women and youth participating in these programs are focusing on strategies that help them incorporate into a neoliberal reality. The dialectical nature of this process, however, also means that they are changing the local nature of this discourse as well as the unequal structuring of social hierarchy in their communities (and to a lesser extent, in the nation). While many of the women and youth participating in these programs certainly came to adopt new ways of identifying themselves, of interacting and communicating with others, and reproductive behaviors, I cannot confidently say whether this ended up having a positive or negative impact on their lives. Though cautious of the subversive quality of this process, I argue there is undeniable agency to be found here. Throughout this dissertation, I examine my ambivalent stance by presenting ethnographic data on the ways this dialectical social process is played out in the daily, complex lives of ordinary people.

1.   The first chapter looks at what constitutes an imagined sense of self as someone who is *empoderada* (empowered) or *conscientizada* (possessing necessary knowledge and education). It analyzes the way Christian moral regimes in the region interact with rights-based global reproductive health ideals to create new forms of reproductive governance. This includes a neoliberal responsibilization of the self that is centered on formal education and conscientization. In this chapter I argue that the way these young women draw on the discourse of inherent human rights to create narratives about themselves as empoderadas (empowered) closely resembles Christian narratives of salvation. I examine how, in generating these self-narratives, young women are positioning themselves as morally superior by distancing themselves from others—their friends and family members who are not participating in these trainings—who they see as un-empowered. This chapter uses

ethnographic material from a PhotoVoice project conducted in partnership with a feminist reproductive health organization to explore the unintended parallels between human rights and Christianity in the lives of young women hoping to carve out a more equitable life for themselves in an unforgiving neoliberal context.

2. The second chapter focuses on what is contestation and how traditional power dynamics are tested and resisted in the struggle for empowerment (*empoderamiento*). I look at the tensions that arise within gender and generational relationships as the process of becoming empoderada takes place and strains relationships towards a new equilibrium. I explore what gender progress might look like in Guatemala, and the impact this has on patriarchal structures. Here, I consider the *political* nature of women's health work by looking closely at the ways global discourses of social equality, human rights, and development are given affective meaning through intimate understandings of empowerment. I see empowerment as being part of a self-transformation in the way young women imagine and position themselves in relation to those in their communities, especially their families and friends. This creation of a new vision of themselves leads to new ways of imaging the future and what constitutes a "good life" for women. In other words, I analyze how, through empowerment, young women come to negotiate and assert a vernacularized version of gender equality by challenging the uneven power dynamics that frame their intimate and everyday lives.

3. The third chapter examines how indigenous young *men* rethink and negotiate their own identities as they take part in rights-based initiatives aimed at "empowering" *women*. I consider how NGO's teach "successful" and neoliberal bodily practices to Mayan youth

as they participate in reproductive education programs that rely on Westernized ideas about freedom and choice and, in promoting a certain type of multiculturalism, often overlook Mayan ways of being. I explore how male expertise about gender equality is crafted in a landscape where NGOs take up multicultural education. Ultimately, this chapter analyzes the way indigenous youth experience their identity as Maya change as they work to become "successful" to ask: what happens when this newfound identity is challenged by others?

4.   The final chapter takes a closer look at what a critical reinterpretation of medicalized development can mean in the era of decolonization by following a grassroots group of indigenous and ladina women in Sacatepéquez, Guatemala in their quest to find development rooted in radical feminism. I examine how a clear and determined response against the power of Western medicine and the hegemonic ramifications of over-medicalizing the female body can lead to unexpected consequences. This is not an analysis of a decolonizing movement, but rather an analysis of a rights-based feminist movement that sought to use the language and ideas behind decolonization in their organizing. In this chapter, I consider what is produced when, in a not-so-surprising turn of events, this quest leads the group to the Anti-Vaxxer movement. How can we as researchers in solidarity with the decolonization movement respond when attempts at alternative development challenge the very safety of those embracing it?

Ultimately, this dissertation is concerned with the way young men and women participating in nonprofit reproductive health organizations use global and local ideas about gender equality and reproductive health to imagine and work towards a more equitable future. In the chapters that

follow, I explore how different aspects of young women's lives—religion, family dynamics, formal education, race, etc.—are entangled with the knowledge and techniques related to reproductive practices. The governance of these reproductive practices is framed within the larger context of development and modernity laid out in this introduction, but not in a top down or totalizing manner. My ethnographic work suggests that young women (and often young men) frame their social struggles and changing subjectivities in terms of empowerment which reflects the dialectical nature of vernacularization. For many, empowerment was more than a humanitarian buzzword or empty signifier, but rather a way to express their emerging identities as valued members of society. I emphasize that empowerment and human rights and the discourses that surround them do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, women and youth are caught in the middle of a very religious and precarious environment where reproductive health, gender relations, and generational traditions are impacted—and impact—the social practices women and youth learn from NGOs. I see these interactions as fluid, at all times tradition is being challenged, reimagined, and reaffirmed by the influx of information and experiences.

Chapter One
Empowerment as Reproductive Governance: Human Rights and Narratives of Christian Salvation

Abstract:

In Guatemala, the idea of inalienable human rights (Moyn 2010) shaped the language of collective action to demand justice and rights in the post-war era (Sieder 2008). More recently however, Guatemalan scholars have pointed to the emptiness behind human rights and the way they have served as a tool of state-sponsored modernity, carried out in a variety of "trainings" organized by both NGOs and government agencies (Lopez Garcia 2008). My research examines such trainings in the field of women's health to consider what is produced when young women engage with the discourse of human rights in their everyday quest for a better life.

In this chapter I argue that the way these young women draw on the discourse of inherent human rights to create narratives about themselves as *empoderadas* (empowered) closely resemble Christian narratives of salvation. I examine how, in generating these self-narratives, young women are positioning themselves as morally superior by distancing themselves from others—their friends and family members who are not participating in these trainings—who they see as un-empowered. My research uses ethnographic material from a PhotoVoice project conducted in partnership with a feminist reproductive health organization to explore the unintended parallels between human rights and Christianity in the lives of young women hoping to carve out a more equitable life for themselves in an unforgiving neoliberal context.

"In this picture, I thought to myself, if you notice the flower that is below, it is all withered, but the flower above it is very alive. So, I believe that—and I thought about all the cases of young girls who end up pregnant as an example—we have the information because we come here to [the NGO] and, so we are aware, and we talk, and we have evaluated ourselves. I am doing things right, or when I decide to have sexual intercourse, I am going to be safe, I will be able to protect myself. On the other hand, people who do not have this information take the risk of being like the withered flower."

-Evelyn

Introduction

In considering the everyday vernacularization of human rights and equality that comprise the ideas behind empowerment, I was struck by a common narrative that many of my interlocutors articulated. Like Evelyn, many young women (and some men) would describe themselves as

empowered by contrasting their NGO-derived knowledge about reproductive health with the lack of knowledge of many of their peers. This knowledge, taught mainly by organizations relying on global health ideas of reproductive health as a human right, including the use of material from the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO), seemed to qualify those who were empowered. Since the signing of the Peace Accords in Guatemala in 1996 and the "NGOization" that followed both the end of the Armed Conflict as well as Guatemala's signing of the Millennium Development Goals[51] (MDGs) in September of 2000, NGOs and temporary development programs have increasingly controlled the landscape of reproductive healthcare (Summer, Walker, and Guendelman 2019; Berry 2013) as well as other facets of "development" in Guatemala. The emphasis on women's rights and reproductive rights *as human rights* that these organizations emphasize combines with deep-rooted Catholic and Christian morality to generate distinctive forms of reproductive governance for the youth participating in reproductive rights initiatives.

Following Morgan and Roberts (2012), I use reproductive governance to mean "the mechanisms through which different historical configurations of actors – such as state institutions, churches, donor agencies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – use legislative controls, economic inducements, moral injunctions, direct coercion, and ethical incitements to produce, monitor and control reproductive behaviours and practices." I especially focus on the ways that NGOs relying on human rights frameworks encourage and teach youth to "techniques of the self"

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[51] The Millennium Development Goals are eight international development goals established after the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000 and following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. They were to end in 2015. The eight goals were: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; develop a global partnership for development.

or self-governance (Foucault 1991) to regulate their sexual and reproductive practices[52]. This chapter analyzes the "moral regimes" (Morgan and Roberts 2012; Foucault 1991; Fassin 2007)[53] at play when youth re-articulate these two (often competing) forms of governmentality—reproductive rights as human rights and traditional Christian teachings regarding reproduction—through the lens of empowerment. I analyze different narratives of empowerment, most of them from a PhotoVoice project I organized with a rights-based reproductive health organization based in Antigua and the surrounding areas of Sacatepéquez and Chimaltenango (more below), to consider what is produced by an empowered/un-empowered distinction in their everyday lives. Ultimately, I highlight how ideas about human rights expertise and Christian salvation expose the way teenage pregnancies have become a morally charged symbol for the lack of empowerment, or what I refer to as un-empowerment.

Considering the narratives of empowerment through the lens of both human rights and Christian salvation[54] illuminates the way that young women hold their strong religious faith alongside other, sometimes contradictory, knowledge about equality and feminism. This reflects the fact that, outside of one feminist collective I briefly worked with (see chapter 4) or foreign NGO workers, everyone I talked to identified as religious. On the other hand, it also reflects how the women I worked with used their Christian faith to make sense of the feminist and human rights discourses that NGOs were "preaching" *despite* the way these ideas are idiosyncratically presented as antithetical to Christian traditions. For example, on many occasions young men and women

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[52] While in the past sexual and reproductive practices have been intimately tied together, many scholars have pointed to the ways that the rise of contraceptives and other reproductive technologies have increasingly allowed for each to be considered independent of the other in certain occasions (Morgan and Roberts 2019).

[53] The idea of "moral regimes" draws from Fassin's (2007) notion of "politics of life" and Foucault's (1991) idea about "regimes of truth" to "refer to the privileged standards of morality that are used to govern intimate behaviours, ethical judgements, and their public manifestations" (Morgan and Roberts 2019).

[54] See below for an explanation of the meaning of Christian Salvation in the region.

would disavow the word feminism, claiming they were religious, or they were not extremists, but then go on to describe beliefs about gender roles that could easily be labeled as feminist.

Guatemala is a deeply religious country (around 87% of people identify as Catholic or Protestant & Evangelical[55]) and religion continues to shape gender relations and people's perception of justice, equality, and human rights around the country. So, how do religious ideas about reproduction and sexuality factor into young women's subjectivities and what impact does this have on how they try to become empoderadas? I see Evelyn's musings about the two flowers as a reflection of the way sexuality is deeply tied to morality and, ultimately, to a form of gendered oppression in Latin America that Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos has coined "*cautiverios,*" or *captivities* ([1990] 2005): my translation). *Cautiverios* is a feminist analytical tool that illuminates the lived experience of gender oppression for women in Mexico (and Latin America, especially Central America). Captivities, however, does not do justice to all that *cautiverios* encompasses. Since Lagarde y de los Rios published her seminal piece in the 1990, the term has become an anthropological category that details the ambivalent normalization and acceptance of gendered oppression in women's lives through the eyes of women themselves (Lagarde y de los Rios 2014). As an analytical tool it captures the way that patriarchy as an ideology continues to shape women's everyday lifeworlds in affective and physical ways. In addition to introducing the term "femicide" into the popular and political lexicon, her work as a feminist activist has also introduced "empowerment" into feminist circles—not as an empty signifier, but as a concrete goal of total gender liberation.

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[55] According to a recent survey by the Guatemalan newspaper Prensa Libre, completed by the private company ProDatos, around 45% of the population identifies as Catholic and 42% as Protestant/Evangelical. Only 11% stated that they did not have a religious affiliation (Contreras Corzantes 2015; US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and ProData 2016).

In this chapter, I explore empowerment from three different approaches. First, following Lagarde y de los Ríos, as a feminist tool towards the interconnected goals of autonomy and freedom that come from the complete transformation of gender relations (*Ibid.* [1990] 2005). Second, as a global buzzword used by NGOs and politicians to address the alarming inequality and violence suffered by women in the neoliberal era, without necessarily addressing structural violence. And finally, as a folk-term, by looking at the idiosyncratic ways the word is used by my interlocutors that combines both previous definitions in unique ways. This latter is especially influenced by youth's own religious beliefs and the gendered ways these beliefs are socialized.

I present here a series of photos, like Evelyn's, taken by a group of 10 young women and two young men during a PhotoVoice project I organized with the NGO Mariposas. The project arose out of my own desire to enable a different mode of communication for youth to share their experiences with reproductive health programs with me and was embraced by the NGO as a way for me to share ethnographic insights into their youth program that were not visible by metrics and quantitative analysis they carried out on a regular basis. The partnership allowed me to present the project to youth (and more importantly, their parents) through an organization and structure that they were already familiar with, from meeting places to signing consent and assent forms. At the time when the idea was presented, I had already been working with Mariposas and attended many of the Youth Program events. Participation was voluntary, and in the end limited to some of the older members of the program due to the high number of youth who volunteered. Being older meant that many of the participants had known me for longer than some of their newer peers but also meant that they had more flexibility with their schedules and parental permissions to meet with me. Participants were given money to cover their bus fares, snacks and drinks during the

PhotoVoice sessions, and the option to keep a printed copy of any photographs they took. They were not responsible for any damage or loss to the camera equipment.

During a period of four weeks, this group of young women and men carried with them a small action camera (think, off-brand GoPro). Each week, I would meet with the group either in pairs or individually to reflect on some of the pictures they had taken. With input from the Youth Coordinator, Ana, and the Programs Director, Eleanor, I assigned a different theme each week to help guide the young photographers. The first week, after a lively workshop on the ethics of photography—including a thought-provoking discussion about informed consent—and a basic tutorial of the cameras, I asked youth to take pictures as a form of self-reflection. The second week, I asked them to take pictures that helped them contemplate their families and friends, and the third week, their communities. The last week was left open, although most participants either did not take pictures the fourth week or took personal pictures that I had offered to print for them. Despite the different weekly themes, the underlying theme of the project remained reproductive health and empowerment[56]. During the second week, I also conducted a group interview, where participants could volunteer to talk about one or two of their pictures with the rest of the PhotoVoice participants, Ana, and myself. At the end of the four weeks, I conducted a series of three small workshop with the participants and other interested youth where I asked them to reflect on these three themes using different task-based activities.

Like many NGOs, Mariposas is a foreign funded but (for the most part) locally run NGO that draws on feminist and human rights discourses to provide quality reproductive care to underserved communities in various departments in Guatemala. Their youth program was based

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[56] Both of these are explicit goals in the Mariposas Youth program and so are topics that occupy the overwhelming majority of workshops and talks that enrolled youth attend.

in Antigua, Sacatepéquez, the participants were all aged 14-19 and came from neighboring communities around Sacatepéquez and Chimaltenango such as Alotenango, El Tejar, and Santa Lucía Milpas Altas. At the end of the four-week PhotoVoice project, Eleanor and I organized a small presentation of the pictures for the rest of the NGO, including visiting board of director members. For this display, the participants could choose one or two pictures and caption them and would then have the opportunity to tell the story or reflection surrounding these pictures to the (mostly foreign) visitors with myself and other members of the NGO acting as translators. Despite how intimidating this sounded to me, the youth who volunteered to present their pictures to the board of directors was excited to meet with important members of the NGO and would ask me for English phrases so they could share how much the community they found at Mariposas meant to them. During this time, I also accompanied members of another NGO, GuateAyuda, on different events surrounding maternal and child nutrition and the prevention of teenage pregnancies. GuateAyuda was founded and funded by a group of Catholic women from Guatemala City. GuateAyuda was based in Tecpán, Chimaltenango and served women from the surrounding areas. While most of the young participants in the Mariposas youth program and local staff were Evangelical or Mormon Christians, GuateAyuda's local staff was for the most part Catholic and the women they worked with Catholic Kaqchikel women. In a number of events the local priest, Don Jorge, would accompany the NGO as well, but during the workshops, it was just the female "technicians," the participating women, and their young children. While I rely on the PhotoVoice project with Mariposas in this chapter, I also contrast the rights-based approach Mariposas took with Guate-Ayuda's Catholic framework.

Christian Cautiverios and the Promise of Salvation

While this chapter focuses mainly on the way youth vernacularize human rights discourses by attending rights-based reproductive health workshops (and later conducting these workshops), here I look briefly at the impact of Christianity on the reproductive landscape of the region. Religion, in Sacatepéquez and Chimaltenango (and more broadly Guatemala) is what Staurt Hall calls a valorized ideological domain (in Chen and Morley 2006). That is, "the domain into which all the different cultural strands are obliged to enter, no political movement in that society can become popular without negotiating the religious terrain" (*Ibid*: 143). Hall emphasizes the "ideological vitality" of religion by pointing to the way that social movements must and indeed come to engage with religion in order for them to be legible to communities who are shaped by popular religions. I briefly explore here the history of Catholic traditions and the rise of fundamentalist Evangelicals in the region as it relates to reproductive governance.

Both Catholicism and Evangelicalism have been important sites of nation-building that have been tied to ideas about modernity and civilization. While Catholicism in Guatemala is a legacy of our colonial history, there are local versions of Guatemalan Catholicism that include both religious syncretism (or hybridity, as others argue) with Mayan traditions (Cook and Offit 2009) and also that include deep roots in the local version of liberation theology during the Armed Conflict. Even though Catholicism is known for its centralized power structure, it has long been a site of ideological struggle between institutions and forces throughout Guatemalan history, particularly during the rise of liberation theology in the 1960's (Manewal 2007). During this time,

the country also began experiencing a shift from being a majority Catholic nation to an increasingly Protestant one, often in violent and deeply political ways[57].

Kevin O'Neill (2015; 2009) has documented the rise of Pentecostalist Christianity in Guatemala and the way a variety of social mechanisms surround the notion of salvation as a moral regime that governs peoples beliefs and actions. That is, salvation is more than an "idea," rather, it has a very real, affective impact in the way it structures how people perceive themselves and the world and how they incorporate this form of morality into their everyday struggles. O'Neill has also shown how humanitarian interventions are deeply complicit in this idea of Christian salvation[58] (O'Neill 2013). Ultimately, for many of my interlocutors, the neoliberal responsibilization encouraged by NGOs intermingles with Christian (including Catholic) morality to police female sexuality. There was a prevailing sense that the prevention of teenage pregnancies was directly tied to the prevention of *sin*. This, in turn, was tied to premarital sex and the use of contraceptives and deeply linked to ideas about purity and family honor that are informed by *marianismo*. Marianismo refers to the affective division of labor along gendered lines which posits women as inferior to men and as "unquestioning" and "obedient" to the authority of their male family members and the Church (Bachrach Ehlers 1991). Across Latin America, scholars have

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[57] Bryan Manewal (2007) has documented the way that the "government's fear of the socially and politically progressive Catholic ideology of Liberation Theology, coupled with their own long-held vision of modernizing the indigenous populations by transforming their social structure, led to a brutal program of forced conversion to Fundamentalist Protestant ideologies that focused on the individuality of salvation and believer's submission to authority" (50).

[58] Kevin O'Neill (2013) analyzes how children of La Paloma, Guatemala who are "sponsored" by Christian members of a North Carolinian church undergo a form of disciplining to make them legible to international sponsors. The children who are chosen to be sponsored are taught technologies of both self-cultivation and confession. O'Neill describes how the program polices the way the children dress, act, perform at school, etc. in order to become a "subject of prevention", that is, to avoid joining a gang. When children do not comply with these disciplinary tactics, they appear unintelligible to their sponsors, who can come to see them as ungrateful, or unwilling to be helped. Those who fail to discipline their bodies are "left behind" and allowed to die (quite literally, as is the case with the unsponsored young girl who was brutally murdered by gang members).

traced how "this fatalistic acceptance of women suffering at the hands of men has been traced to the colonial period, when women were taught to emulate the virtues of the Virgin Mary" (*Ibid.* 1991).

Marianismo was a main component of the religious moral regime that policed women's sexualities. As one Mariposas Youth member put it: "*Tu cuerpo es templo de Dios*" "Your body is a temple of God"—a phrase I had heard often growing up in a Catholic household. Mari, the protestant young woman who said this to me, was explaining why her peers might be hesitant to use contraceptives, or to "put things in their bodies". There was a double-entendre here where women must police themselves in regards to what "goes in" to their bodies because their bodies are not truly theirs, they are God's. She continued saying that there was a fear of "tarnishing your body and a lot of people are scared of getting cancer because of using birth control." Mari's comments illuminate what is at stake for women when they decide to use contraceptives and engage in sexual behavior: the deep fear of moral judgement about their purity which combines with physical forms of punishment such as cancer. The belief that contraceptives cause cancer was quite common among women of all ages in Guatemala and a myth that Mariposas was actively trying to dispel through their peer education program.

During a small focus group interview with a group of teens from the Mariposas program, I asked them to reflect on how they imagined parents would react to discovering their daughters' hypothetical use of contraceptives. All of them commented on the idea that this would cause a "*mancha de la honra*" or "a stain on one's honor," that would bring shame to the entire family. When I asked how their own parents might react, one of the young women responded in a serious tone: "my mom would beat me, she would…if she found out I was having sexual relations or worse—was pregnant, she would hit me so hard". For many young women, the staining of their

(family's) honor would be accompanied not just by public humiliation but also by harsher repercussions such as domestic violence and homelessness. These consequences are exacerbated by the fact that abortions are outlawed in Guatemala, leaving young women with few options when faced with unwanted pregnancies. Salvation, then, is the real state of making it to adulthood without having stained your family's honor.

For others, it became clear that the vernacularization of religious ideologies is a dialectical process. While some women relied on religious beliefs to interpret feminist teachings about reproductive health, others interpreted their religious beliefs through a reproductive health lens. Adelaida, one of the participants in the PhotoVoice project said that she likes to remind her peers that "the church doesn't really interfere in the use of contraceptives." Similarly, a local health promoter who was also a Eucharistic minister for the sick (that is the person in charge of bringing Holy Communion to those who are unable to attend church on Sundays) for her local Catholic church said she encouraged women to get contraceptives. She stated that she had a Jadelle implant (a small hormonal device placed in the upper arm) because "yeah the Church says that [that we must welcome all of the children God sends us], but they're not the ones who are going to pay for my children." Women would often interpret religious teachings to fit with their worldview. Another midwife from the area told me that although "the Bible says we must fill the Earth with our Children because they are God's children, but that was before—now the earth is already full of our children[59]!" In what follows, I consider how this ideology of marianismo and Christian purity relates to the way youth interpret a reproductive moral regime built on liberal principles of human rights.

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[59] I also wondered if her comment stemmed from the government mandated TBA (traditional birth attendant) trainings, which had a problematic history of emphasizing population control. For more on this topic, see (Summer, Walker, and Guendelman 2019).

Vernacularizing Human Rights: How Global Discourses About Rights Shape Local Ideas About Empowerment

"Here I was able to reflect a lot about how a baby changes you, right, because of all the reasons we were talking about earlier, about having babies at a young age. It's like, we haven't finished studying and all, so we leave a lot of things behind in order to care for a baby… or maybe we think, 'it's not the same.'" Upon seeing this picture and hearing Helen's description, her companions at [the NGO] commented that being part of this program has helped them think about their futures and what they want to do. For them, this stands in contrast to the ideas of their classmates and friends who are not in part of an NGO, and who "only think about the moment."

- Helen

The idea that others are "only thinking about the moment" and the risks "of being like the withered flower" or ending up alone and destitute because of a teenage pregnancy serves not just as a warning against engaging in premarital sex, but as a way to distinguish the empoderadas from the un-empowered. There is a morality component to these narratives that is decidedly explained

through the lens of cautiverios. With these short narratives, the young women in the PhotoVoice project are vocalizing the positive/negative stereotypes duality that is tied to the cautiverios of women (Lagarde y de los Ríos 2005). From these, and many other conversations I had with young women—and indeed my own upbringing in a Catholic household in Guatemala—I got the sense that making it to adulthood without the sin of adolescent pregnancies was a type of salvation that for many in Guatemala is unattainable. In the "tabooed" sexual lives of women the saved/unsaved division maps onto the madresposas/putas categories Lagarde y de los Ríos so carefully describes. In this way, the image of the pregnant teenager comes to symbolize (gendered) moral failure. I return to the symbol of the pregnant teenager further in the chapter, but first I want to examine how these narratives of empowerment are shaped by youth's participation in human rights trainings.

The imagined empoderada subjectivity that young women were working towards was the result of NGO training directed at women whose cautiverios are deeply tied to religion and morality. I see the salvation aspect stemming from the religious nature of patriarchal norms in Guatemala, while the possession of knowledge (about sexual education, also referred to as concientization as I explain below) that was tied to feeling empowered comes from the NGOized landscape of the region. Both components are—inadvertently for some NGOs like Mariposas but purposefully for those like GuateAyuda—working to discipline female sexuality. I say inadvertently for Mariposas, because their objective, stated to me during interviews but also in their official NGO documents and planning meetings, was not to prevent young women from having premarital sex, but to encourage safe and ethical sexual practices. This is, in and of itself, another form of disciplining: to encourage youth to use contraceptives, including condoms to prevent STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections), and to engage in ethical sexual practices, like

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obtaining consent and understanding power imbalances in relationships. Having seen how hard the Mariposas staff planned and worked[60] to avoid shaming sexual behavior (especially along gendered lines) demonstrates just how pervasive women's cautiverios are. The fact that this message of sexual liberation did not quite come across when the Mariposas' youth would re-articulate their own beliefs about sexuality points also, however, to a mistranslation of a globalized feminism curriculum.

This mistranslation was further exemplified during a sexual and reproductive rights workshop conducted by Ana and based on the Spanish version of The Population Council's (Pop Council for short) "It's All One Curriculum: Guidelines and Activities for a Unified Approach to Sexuality, Gender, HIV, and Human Rights Education" (2011). This activity was conducted with all the newer members of the Mariposas Youth Program (so only one of the attendees had participated in my PhotoVoice project, but a couple had participated in my smaller workshops). The attendees were separated into groups and given a black and white photocopy of a case study from the Pop Council's textbook about a case involving sexual assault or misconduct, or gendered violence (including homophobia). One of the group members would volunteer to read the case out loud, ensuring everyone could hear or see the case regardless of their reading skills, and the group would debate the case and try to respond to the four or five questions presented after the reading.

During the activity, my group read the story of a young woman who starts consensually dating a young man her own age. During a community party where her parents are in attendance, the young woman leaves with her partner and is then emotionally pressured by her boyfriend into having unprotected sex despite her unwillingness to do so. The young woman then describes crying

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[60] I want to acknowledge here that there is also a disciplining of staff that is happening, where NGO workers are also part of the "training" the NGO provides, and they must also internalize and re-articulate the principles they themselves teach to the Youth Programs.

because she felt she had disrespected her family by having intercourse and deeply regrets it. When she finds out she is pregnant, her family is very angry and prohibits her from seeing her boyfriend again. The questions following the short story ask the students to reflect on power imbalances caused by different social positions like gender or age. Despite these guided questions, meant to encourage students to reflect on power within relationships, my group all agreed that the parents were at fault here. When I asked why the parents and not the young man, whom in my eyes had raped the young girl due to her lack if consent, my group responded that it was the parents responsibility to stop her if she was about to leave the party. When I pointed that she had sneaked out of the party so it was likely her parents had not seen her leave, one of the students said "well, then I think it's not fair that they don't let her see her boyfriend."

This interaction highlights two important tensions as young women vernacularize global rights discourses. First, there is an absence here of individual choice. While the story and indeed many Western-led development initiatives emphasize personal freedoms and women's ability to *choose,* these concepts are not always culturally relevant for women in the non-Western world (Abu-Lughod 1993; Van Hollen 2003; Pinto 2013). In this example, participants were asked to reflect on the young woman's ability to make a *choice* about engaging in consensual sex and what kind of cultural factors might influence her ability to choose. My young group members, however, could not disentangle sexual behaviors from an understanding of sex with personal honor, which is a relational issue involving their families rather than an individual one[61]. Second, this lack of consideration for *individual* choices or freedoms signals a larger tension between individual and

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[61] Nicole Bery's (2010) work examines the way that bodily experiences and an understanding of the self go hand in hand, drawing from Strathern (1988:13), Berry points to the often *relational* quality of subjectivity for many indigenous women: that is, the way that relationships (in her case, kinship relations) are highly influential to the development of a conception of the individual body.

collective rights, something many scholars have pointed to when it comes to the interpretation of human rights in Latin America (Pitarch, Speed, and Leyva-Solano 2008; Morgan and Roberts 2012).
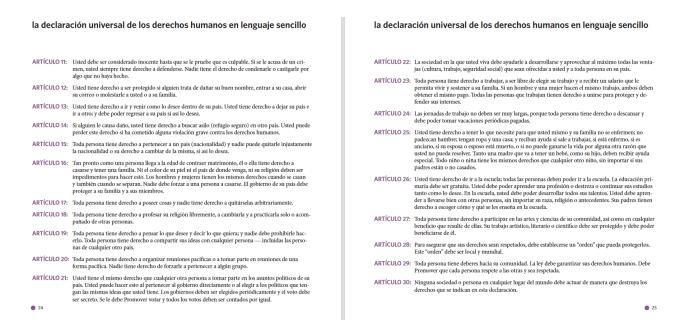
la declaración universal de los derechos humanos en lenguaje sencillo

ARTÍCULO 11: Usted debe ser considerado inocente hasta que se le pruebe que es culpable. Si se le acusa de un crimen, usted siempre tiene derecho a defenderse. Nadie tiene el derecho de condenarle o castigarle por algo que no haya hecho.

ARTÍCULO 12: Usted tiene derecho a ser protegido si alguien trata de dañar su buen nombre, entrar a su casa, abrir su correo o molestarle a usted o a su familia.

ARTÍCULO 13: Usted tiene derecho a ir y venir como lo desee dentro de su país. Usted tiene derecho a dejar su país e ir a otro; y debe poder regresar a su país si así lo desea.

ARTÍCULO 14: Si alguien le causa daño, usted tiene derecho a buscar asilo (refugio seguro) en otro país. Usted puede perder este derecho si ha cometido alguna violación grave contra los derechos humanos.

ARTÍCULO 15: Toda persona tiene derecho a pertenecer a un país (nacionalidad) y nadie puede quitarle injustamente la nacionalidad o su derecho a cambiar de la misma, si así lo desea.

ARTÍCULO 16: Tan pronto como una persona llega a la edad de contraer matrimonio, él o ella tiene derecho a casarse y tener una familia. Ni el color de su piel ni el país de donde venga, ni su religión deben ser impedimentos para hacer esto. Los hombres y mujeres tienen los mismos derechos cuando se casan y también cuando se separan. Nadie debe forzar a una persona a casarse. El gobierno de su país debe proteger a su familia y a sus miembros.

ARTÍCULO 17: Toda persona tiene derecho a poseer cosas y nadie tiene derecho a quitárselas arbitrariamente.

ARTÍCULO 18: Toda persona tiene derecho a profesar su religión libremente, a cambiarla y a practicarla solo o acompañado de otras personas.

ARTÍCULO 19: Toda persona tiene derecho a pensar lo que desee y decir lo que quiera; y nadie debe prohibirle hacerlo. Toda persona tiene derecho a compartir sus ideas con cualquier persona — incluidas las personas de cualquier otro país.

ARTÍCULO 20: Toda persona tiene derecho a organizar reuniones pacíficas o a tomar parte en reuniones de una forma pacífica. Nadie tiene derecho de forzarle a pertenecer a algún grupo.

ARTÍCULO 21: Usted tiene el mismo derecho que cualquier otra persona a tomar parte en los asuntos políticos de su país. Usted puede hacer esto al pertenecer al gobierno directamente o al elegir a los políticos que tengan las mismas ideas que usted tiene. Los gobiernos deben ser elegidos periódicamente y el voto debe ser secreto. Se le debe Promover votar y todos los votos deben ser contados por igual.

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la declaración universal de los derechos humanos en lenguaje sencillo

ARTÍCULO 22: La sociedad en la que usted viva debe ayudarle a desarrollarse y aprovechar al máximo todas las ventajas (cultura, trabajo, seguridad social) que sean ofrecidas a usted y a toda persona en su país.

ARTÍCULO 23: Toda persona tiene derecho a trabajar, a ser libre de elegir su trabajo y a recibir un salario que le permita vivir y sostener a su familia. Si un hombre y una mujer hacen el mismo trabajo, ambos deben obtener el mismo pago. Todas las personas que trabajan tienen derecho a unirse para proteger y defender sus intereses.

ARTÍCULO 24: Las jornadas de trabajo no deben ser muy largas, porque toda persona tiene derecho a descansar y debe poder tomar vacaciones periódicas pagadas.

ARTÍCULO 25: Usted tiene derecho a tener lo que necesite para usted mismo y su familia no se enfermen; no padezcan hambre; tengan ropa y una casa; y reciban ayuda si sale a trabajar, si está enfermo, si es anciano, si su esposa o esposo está muerto, o si no puede ganarse la vida por alguna otra razón que usted no pueda resolver. Tanto una madre que va a tener un bebé, como su hijo, deben recibir ayuda especial. Todo niño o niña tiene los mismos derechos que cualquier otro niño, sin importar si sus padres están o no casados.

ARTÍCULO 26: Usted tiene derecho de ir a la escuela; todas las personas deben poder ir a la escuela. La educación primaria debe ser gratuita. Usted debe poder aprender una profesión o destreza o continuar sus estudios tanto como lo desee. En la escuela, usted debe poder desarrollar todos sus talentos. Usted debe aprender a llevarse bien con otras personas, sin importar su raza, religión o antecedentes. Sus padres tienen derecho a escoger cómo y qué se les enseña en la escuela.

ARTÍCULO 27: Toda persona tiene derecho a participar en las artes y ciencias de su comunidad, así como en cualquier beneficio que resulte de ellas. Su trabajo artístico, literario o científico debe ser protegido y debe poder beneficiarse de él.

ARTÍCULO 28: Para asegurar que sus derechos sean respetados, debe establecerse un "orden" que pueda protegerlos. Este "orden" debe ser local y mundial.

ARTÍCULO 29: Toda persona tiene deberes hacia su comunidad. La ley debe garantizar sus derechos humanos. Debe Promover que cada persona respete a las otras y sea respetada.

ARTÍCULO 30: Ninguna sociedad o persona en cualquier lugar del mundo debe actuar de manera que destruya los derechos que se indican en esta declaración.

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FIGURE 1.3: *The Simplified Declaration of Human Rights (Spanish), The Population Council 2011*

A couple of days later, I joined a similar activity, but with a different group and a shorter set of case studies based on real events and with the goal of "encouraging students to describe the ways that intimate relations and sexuality are affected by our capacity to exercise our human rights; strengthening their abilities of critical thinking"[62] (The Population Council 2011: 28, my translation). The activity began with students reading simplified versions of United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) and learning to recognize power imbalances between different social groups such as: man/woman, rich person/poor person, politician/community

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[62] Promover que las y los estudiantes describan la forma en que las relaciones íntimas y la sexualidad se ven afectadas por nuestra capacidad de ejercer nuestros derechos humanos; fortalecer sus habilidades de pensamiento crítico.

member, ethnic majority/ethnic minority groups (The Population Council 2011: 26). The participants were then split into groups to read two-part case studies, with questions after each part. For example, one of the cases tells the story of Amina, a divorced woman from Nigeria with three kids who has sexual relations with a man she was dating. After discovering she is pregnant out of wedlock, Amina is accused of adultery and sentenced to death by stoning. Her partner denies being the father and faces no consequences. This first part of the story was followed by questions like "how does this case make you feel?" and "which sexual or reproductive right is this related to? Do you think this case represents a violation of human rights? Why?" (*Ibid.* 28). The second part of the case recounts how Amina appealed the verdict, which was overturned, and how authorities denied that she had ever been sentenced to lapidation in the first place. It concludes by saying after her release, Amina re-married.   After clarifying what "lapidation" meant, the participants were shocked by Amina's story. I saw certain parallels with the ways "adulterous" women are treated in many Guatemalan towns (and indeed Guatemala continues to have one of the highest indexes of femicide and sexual violence in Latin America and the Caribbean[63]). As a social scientist, I immediately thought of the Guatemalan militaries use of sexual violence as a terror tactic during the Armed Conflict (Yoc Cosajay 2014; Brocate and Ríos 2017) and the always-looming threat of violence present in Guatemalan towns as women navigate reproductive health (Berry 2013).

For the young participants, however, the foreignness of Amina (and her partner, Mohammed) and the far-away country of Nigeria meant that the shock of discovering this woman was almost stoned to death did not quite translate to their everyday experiences. From an earlier private conversation, I knew one of the members of my group was currently living in a violent

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[63] Procurador de los Derechos Humanos de Guatemala 2018

family situation, so I did not bring up the connections I saw with gendered violence in the Guatemalan context to avoid potentially triggering[64] them. Moreover, the mention of religious law created for the youth an easy way to differentiate between what happens in "those Muslim countries" (including a racist interjection about terrorism from one of the participants, and snickers from his friends) versus what happens "*aquí en Guate*" or "here in Guate[mala]." This was also a depoliticizing move facilitated by the way development initiatives such as this one emphasize *health* and the creation of *leaders* rather than more "political" topics aimed at challenging structural inequality. My group members did not have to address the uncomfortable reality of domestic and sexual violence in Guatemala, even as their own realities often reflected these uneven power dynamics. Moreover, my own hesitation to push for a deeper discussion of violence left me feeling complicit the depoliticization that is often characteristic of humanitarian interventions (Fassin 2011; Ticktin 2011). The depoliticizing logics and limits of humanitarian interventions at play highlighted the precarity of my young interlocutor's lives as well as my own and the NGOs inability to fully address it.

The "One Curriculum" activity also included a reading about FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) in East Africa and a violent, homophobic attack on a young LGBTQ man in the USA. During the activity I saw how some of the Mariposas youth seemed visibly confused at the stories. The foreignness of many of the situations led to other scenarios where attendees would miss the point of the activity. After reading a couple of the cases, the workshop leader asked "*¿Saben ustedes de casos similares que hayan sucedido aquí? ¿Cuáles derechos fueron violados?"* "Do

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[64] A trigger "is something that sets off a memory tape or flashback, transporting the person back to the event of the original trauma and causing the individual to experience overwhelming emotions, physical symptoms or thoughts. The individual will react to this trigger with an emotional intensity similar to the time of the trauma" (Saskatoon Sexual Assault & Information Centre n.d.).

you know of similar cases that have happened here? Which rights were violated?" For many of these cases, it was difficult for the participants to point to a specific human right that had been violated. In fact, it was difficult for me to pick a specific article from the simplified UNDHR. The participants were all in agreeance that there was wrongdoing in each of the stories, they were becoming more familiar with understanding power, but the generalness or vagueness of the specific articles were hard to apply to these very specific scenarios. Sensing the struggles of participants, the workshop leader, Jovita, switched gears and asked the participants to reflect more broadly on what rights were being violated or what wrongdoing was being committed. She then reminded the participants that many of these actions were also illegal under Guatemalan law (like lapidation, physical violence, and forcing others into sexual slavery, all cases presented during the activity).

The young women and men who participated in my PhotoVoice project had undergone this same training, and had been exposed to a wider array of activities from the Pop Council's textbook as well as other global health materials (like the European Council's *Compass*). All of the young photographers had been with Mariposas for over a year, and some had participated in the program for three or four years. Their participation was based on their enjoyment of the program as well as parental encouragement that found the NGOs goal of preventing teenage pregnancies quite appealing. During this time, they had heard multiple charlas about sexual violence and gender norms and were now in charge of taking some of these activities and charlas to local high schools, including informal charlas with their own peers. Yet, when discussing feminism many still felt uncomfortable using the word, seeing it as "too radical" to quote Evelyn. When discussing teenage pregnancies, there was still an ascribed component of shame directed towards adolescent and unmarried women. And throughout my interviews and workshops with young women, it was

apparent that the idea of personal and family honor was still deeply tied to one's virginity. Indeed, for an anonymous survey of sexual practices I helped administer, only two of the twenty-four young women admitted to having engaged in sexual activity with a partner. Interestingly enough, almost 60% of the young women indicated that they were waiting to complete certain educational or career goals before having intercourse while only 10% wanted to wait until they were married.

These anecdotes illustrates a failure to commensurate (Hankins and Yeh 2016) a globalized human rights approach with the local instances of sexual violence illuminates the difficulties of applying abstract and generalizable ideas about rights to very specific local contexts. For the North American Program Director and presumably the developers of the "It's all One Curriculum" textbook, sexual violence whether in Nigeria, Ireland, or Guatemala is all comparable and made legible through the lens of human rights. In other words, it is "the same thing, again" (Gal 2007 in Hankins and Yeh 2016). Yet, despite the institutional authority of the local NGOs and global human rights organizations on this topic and the standardized way reproductive rights were being taught here, there was still "wiggle room for dispute" (*Ibid 2016*). Hankins and Yeh argue that "commensuration draws us into the micro-politics, the everyday mechanics, and the lurking hazards of authoritatively managing movement across boundaries" (*Ibid.* 24). I see this failure to commensurate sexual rights (and its violations) and the different cautiverios disciplining women as opening a space for young women to establish their authority in a landscape that constantly denies women that ability. This failure is productive: it allows participants to place themselves in a morally superior category of the empowered despite the many cautiverios present in their own lives.

The vernacularization of rights allows young women and men to interpret globalized discourses about rights in a dialectical way, both challenging and assimilating to their local needs

and beliefs (Goodale and Merry 2007). This "friction" (Tsing 2011) between the local and the global illuminates the ways that globalized human rights and local Christian ideas about salvation interact to create complementary moral regimes for youth in Sacatepéquez. That is, it illuminates a type of reproductive governance where young women's sexualities are policed by at first what seems like competing discourses regarding sexuality, reproductive rights and Christian tradition, that ultimately end up complementing each other. In this way, I expand the empowered/unempowered division to be more than a madresposas/putas or locas[65] divide. Rather the "friction" at play here generates a more nuanced version of this duality that also takes into account the way neoliberalism has allowed NGOs to flourish and so connect these young women to a globalized discourse of women's rights as human rights. This is not to say that local versions of feminism by radical organizations in Guatemala are not influencing young women's views of empowerment.

For example, there was a local feminist collective in Antigua (for more details see chapter 4) that was constantly organizing marches and protests against the Guatemalan patriarchy as it was experienced in the Sacatepéquez and Chimaltenango region[66]. While many of my young Mariposas interlocutors had never heard of them, and felt their work was too radical, some of the local Mariposas staff did attend their marches and could then incorporate these ideas into the reproductive rights curriculum. The opportunity to incorporate these ideas presented itself despite the standardized curriculum that was often used because of the vernacularization that workshop leaders had to engage in even before the participating youth took up and re-articulated these ideas

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[65] Lagarde y de los Rios (2005 [1990]) describes the *madresposas*, literally mother-wives, as the way in which women are socialized to see their positionality in society in relation to others, namely men (especially as caregivers). The *putas* (whores) and *locas* (crazy women) refer to the women who fail or refuse to acquiesce to these gender norms and the expectation of social suffering accompanying women's position as caregivers in society.
[66] I analyze the feminist collective's efforts to make feminism visible and contest the puta and loca stereotypes in chapter 4 where I also explore some of the ambivalent, unintended consequences this form of politics can have.

themselves. For example, when Jovita moved away from asking participants what article in the UNDHR was being violated to speak more broadly about consent and power in relationships, but also more specifically about Guatemalan law. Here, I find it helpful to consider Jovita and Ana as local "middle figures" who are tasked with adapting and implementing globalized or biomedical discourses to local, everyday practices. While "middle figures" can end up reproducing local power structures and hierarchies (Nagar 2006; Pinto 2008), they can also "use, subvert, and transform humanitarian practices in their everyday work" (Varma 2012) in a way that evidences how global biomedical discourses regarding health are not totalizing, but rather interact with changing subaltern subjectivities in unique ways[67].

After receiving their training at the NGO, the Mariposas youth would become the "middle figures" by going out to local schools and organizations to carry out rights-based reproductive health trainings and charlas themselves. Their foray into local schools and organizations can be seen as a site for the performance of authority[68] where middle figures can experience a transformation of the self (Pinto 2008: 124). Finally, it is through this self-transformation that occurred as the Mariposas youth shared vernacularized ideas about human rights with their peers that the distinction between the empowered and the un-empowered became clear.

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[67] Similarly, (Hunt 1999) has also shown how native "middle figures and their subaltern 'others' […] translated and debated biomedicine" in such a way that struggles with and renegotiates globalized discourses of health in local contexts.

[68] Pinto argues that that NGO trainings and other sites of education are not examples of direct authority per se, but rather sites for enacting or performing authority (2008: 124). She concludes that the subjectivities that are transformed through education are of those performing authority, not necessarily of those intended to be the targets of such education. In other words, "educators themselves, who become agents of authority and participants in development" are transformed over "those who 'learn' from figures or become and remain 'trainees'" (*Ibid.* 2008).

The Empowered and the Un-Empowered Distinction

FIGURE 1.4: *Photo by Adelaida 201*

"This is a young woman from school who got pregnant. I believe that, as empowered young women, we have the information that can prevent this, and so we can inform people." Adelaida goes on to explain that they aim to prevent pregnancy with their peer education work.

-Adelaida

"In this picture I am with my friends and companions at the institute. One time, one of my classmates asked me about violence when dating, and so I began telling him […] He was asking if he could hit a woman, but I said that no. And he just told me 'ohh okay' like he was thinking, 'oh okay, I won't do it *again*.' Between us [classmates] there is trust, so I do think he thought about what I said [… We hadn't heard about how violence is "bad"] until we started at Mariposas and they talked to us about this topic in depth."

-Roberto

I have focused here on the globalized discourse of feminism because I think it had a significant impact in the way young women imagined themselves and their futures through this process of becoming empowered. In her work on coming of age and the sexual economy in Madagascar, Jennifer Cole (2012) makes a productive distinction between the imagined self and the actual self, and how this separateness feeds into generational change. She considers how the way people perceive change produces a "representational feedback loop" that directly influences what people imagine is a future possibility and what they can do to achieve it (*Ibid.* 149). I argue

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that imagining a future as empoderadas allows young women to claim certain power and authority that is otherwise out of their grasp in the neoliberal precarity[69] (Butler 2006) that frames their lives. I show how for many young women, the imagined empowered self is tied to social mobility so that avoiding pregnancies is seen as a *condition* to an improved quality of life through economic means. In the next chapter, I also consider that the way young women imagine themselves as empoderadas produces a form of political agency that can have meaningful impact on young women's lives.

I do not want to imply here that young women can only develop authority and engage in acts of politics through NGO interventions. Rather, I am analyzing a specific type of authority and empowered subjectivity that is produced through the vernacularization of global human rights discourses that NGOs can emphasize. The authority that young women do develop by participating in these NGO workshops is tied to the NGOized landscape of the region and to the constraints that neoliberalism imposes on the way youth imagine their futures. Brad Weiss' (2004) introductory account of the impact that economic and social instability have on the construction of personhood, particularly for youth across different African nations, helps us understand the impact that morality, tradition, and religious imagery are all intricately woven into the way people imagine their future possibilities.

"If 'tradition' and 'sanctity' are perpetually reinvented and inscribed in the construction of neoliberal personhood, these processes are often aligned in uneasy tension with those persons deemed to be 'at risk' from the sanctimonious perspective of traditionalism. It is no surprise then, to find a widespread interest in 'youth'—somehow deemed always to be in crisis […] The 'crisis'

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[69] By adopting a definition of precarity that is reflected in the body itself, Butler (2006) makes visible the personal agency of individuals living in these situations of political, economic, environmental instability, etc.

of youth is further evidence of the uncertainty that surrounds securing the future" (Weiss 2004, 14).

Though Weiss spotlights the way neoliberal personhood is intertwined with anxieties about masculinity in the face of economic uncertainty, I see a parallel with the anxieties about education—and the risk that adolescent pregnancies present to this achievement—intertwined with the local discourses of empowerment. Weiss' also brings our attention to the ambiguity of the role that education plays in modernity: it is an icon of neoliberal potential for social mobility while also a tool of social reproduction that reinforces hegemonic social divisions, especially along gendered lines. Understanding the empowered subjectivity that young women imagine as a form of "neoliberal personhood" highlights the tensions inherent in an NGOized landscape that continues to encourage youth to attain an education as a form of *superación,* (or overcoming of one's socioeconomic circumstances, Villavicencio 2016) amid "the collapse of the *promise* of a modern life [that] has transformed modernity itself into a vast dissimulation" (Weiss 2004: 18).

As Adelaida's picture conveys, for many, this educational component to becoming empowered involved having information and knowledge about reproductive health and human rights. Her assertion that "I believe that, as empowered young women, we have the information that can prevent this [teenage pregnancies]" emphasizes how possessing information is seen as a key component of empowerment. Likewise, Roberto's caption shows how the Mariposas youth come to distinguish themselves not just from classmates, but from their friends. The way he judges the unspoken "*again*" in his friends' comment about relationship violence distinguishes him as empowered for knowing that domestic violence is a violation of one's rights. Further, the way he distinguishes between his life before Mariposas—and know knowing how violence is "bad"—

exemplifies this idea of transformation through rights training. He was un-empowered before, like his friends, but after attending workshops at the NGO, he now considered himself enlightened.

This sentiment was also evidenced in many other of the PhotoVoice narratives. While many young women used the term "concientizada" (presumably similar to Freire's [1970] *concientización*) to describe the possession of this knowledge, there was also a globalized feel to their description of concientización that does not quite match up to Freire's critical consciousness. First, because of the fact that the young women using this term would refer to concientización exclusively as an issue of education and health. I saw their emphasis on education, not necessarily as a radical form of liberatory education about class or gender oppression (Freire 1970), but more as a form of neoliberal discipline about personal responsabilization and with it the (ambiguous) promise of social mobility[70].

The promise of social mobility was also a big component of empowerment. The young women and men participating in these NGO workshops that rely on globalized notions of freedom and choice were encouraged to dream big. The harsh economic reality of their lives, however, meant there was often no realistic way of achieving those dreams of superación. While conducting fieldwork, there was a recurring idea that both younger and older interlocutors would articulate: that their presents and future were in crisis because of "la economía" or "the economy". For example, one young mother of two participating in GuateAyuda's maternal nutrition program lamented that "before things were better, but now with the poor performance of the economy, we can barely afford to feed our children." Considering the history of Guatemala's genocidal Armed Conflict, I was reluctant to agree with them that things were "worse" now. I realize now that there

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[70] This form of "development-as-pedagogy" (Cody 2009) which presents "the production of an enlightened consciousness, as the real work of development" (353).

is an incomparability between the circumstances faced during the Armed Conflict and during this neoliberal precarity.

One reason for this lack of comparison was the fact that I was interviewing younger generations like myself (aged 25-35) as well as youth (14-25) who had not lived through some of the worse moments of the war, although we had lived during the ensuing violence that followed the signing of the Peace Accords and the dissolution of militarized units created during war. Second, and perhaps more importantly, there is a disarticulation of modernity that reduces communities to individual consumers in a market economy (Smith 2004) that is experienced as precarity (Kasmir 2018; Butler 2006). Here, precarity refers to the everyday, embodied experiences of vulnerability, disenfranchisement, and uncertainty, especially the ways that these lived experiences are felt through the lens of subjectivity and emotion (Butler 2009; Kasmir 2018). Vane, one of the PhotoVoice participants, exemplified the tension between the promise of social mobility and her precarious life conditions. During her "self-reflection" assignment, Vane took a picture of a large yellow house in Chimaltenango,[71]

> "I took this picture because this is a house I really like. Sometimes I walk by it and… one day I want to live in a house like this. I like coming to [Mariposas] because it helps me know that I can work on, you know, improving myself and I don't have to worry about kids."

She was comparing herself to a cousin who feared might be pregnant with her own admittance into the local branch of Universidad San Carlos (Guatemala's most prestigious public university). The house, with a big gate for a car (and a large SUV parked outside) and surrounded by a concrete fence with metal rods that allowed viewers to partially peek into the property,

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[71] The capital of Chimaltenango the department.

symbolized for Vane the promise of becoming empoderada. The house had a very real economic value, but also a symbolic one that allowed Vane to conflate empowerment through education. That Vane was even able to enroll into a University was a privilege many of her classmates did not have, since most youth are expected to contribute to the family household income around the time they finish high school (and often before this). In reality, however, it was unlikely that someone like Vane would be able to afford such a house. What's more, during a trip through Chimaltenango on our way to Tecpán, two of the male GuateAyuda members had a lengthy discussion about the "narco-houses" or houses built with money from drug-trafficking, that were popping up around Chimaltenango at the time[72]. While I have no way of knowing whether or not Vane's dream house was the result of "narco" money, it does add an interesting dimension to the question of social mobility[73].

Many others had similar aspirations[74], of attending university, purchasing a car or a motorcycle, and generally of living middle-class lives. In Guatemala and more specifically, in Sacatepéquez, these middle-class aspirations included owning and living in concrete homes with multiple rooms, owning cellphones, computers, western clothing, and other status symbols tied to different forms of neoliberal consumption. The emphasis on education was part of youth being

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[72] They also made sure to raise the windows of the GuateAyuda pick-up truck we were in, telling me Chimaltenango was too dangerous, and we could be targeted now that we were stuck in traffic through the city-center.

[73] In another story from the GuateAyuda member, called affectionately "el nica" because he had lived in Nicaragua for a time in his youth and retained a slight accent on some words, highlights the impossibility of social mobility for many. El nica's family had accumulated a fair share of money from his father's tow-trucking business after finally paying off the loan used to buy the tow truck. Not long after they had moved into a new, larger house, however, gang members came knocking on their door to extort them. El nica's mother and father had been forced to flee to Nicaragua for the time being after storing the tow-truck in a friend's garage in Guatemala City. El nica was now living with a friend while they decided how to proceed.

[74] Kevin O'Neill (2015) describes the way that aspiration (this desire to improve the self, to *do* and to *be* better) is a deeply emotional state. He writes, "By *aspiration*, I mean something akin to an affect, or a raw, reactive sensation that takes place before consciousness and before discourse […] Christian piety as an affect is very much in line with the former's attention to the fact that so much struggle and contestation over improving and becoming better (in the context of soft security) takes place through the body, in its flesh, and at the pit of the stomach."

internalizing or understanding what kinds of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) are needed to succeed in a neoliberal economy, even if success is elusive. Likewise, the aspiration towards a middle-class life, with the idea that only those who waited until after adolescence and marriage to have children had a chance at socioeconomic superación, was a way for empowered youth to create a distinction between themselves and their peers. That is, youth attending these rights-based reproductive health interventions distanced themselves from their peers through the possession of information (education) and (class-based) economic aspirations.

There is a gendered component to superación that I explore in Chapter 3 where despite the teachings of gender equality, young men continue to feel pressured to and derive value from being the main wage earners of their household. In reality, however, the majority of women must work to ensure their family's survival. During one of the trainings on gender equality in the workforce, Ana encouraged everyone to think critically about the gendered nature of certain jobs (construction workers versus housekeepers, etc.). The training material Ana was using also encouraged women to aspire to working, rather than being housewives. After mentioning this Ana quickly interjected, "and this is more for you know, in our grandma or great-grandma's time, where women did not have jobs, but now that is not the case." The encouragement to join the workforce rather than stay at home was neoliberal in the way it promotes capitalist modes of existence, but it also did not represent the lives of anyone attending the training, who had grown up with single mothers or working mothers. This also did not represent the reality that most women in Guatemala work in the informal economy[75], making them more vulnerable to wage theft, abuse, discrimination, etc.

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[75] The ILO calculates that around 71% of women who work in Guatemala are employed in the informal sector, a number that goes up in non-urban areas. Moreover the Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (ASÍES) has conducted studies that evidence the way high rates of informal jobs leads to a higher wage gap between genders.

Ultimately, the NGOized promise of a modern life encourages young women to know their rights while often overlooking the real-world constraints to enforcing reproductive rights. For example, the case studies activity from *It's all one curriculum* I detailed above include a story of a Polish woman denied an abortion for medical reasons and the repercussions this violation of her rights had. Abortion is now[76] interpreted as a right under CEDAW (The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) which Guatemala has ratified. In 2018, however, thousands of people took to the streets in Guatemala to protest a so-called "abortion law" that was never under consideration by the government. With signs containing slogans like "Ley del aborto = genocidio" ("abortion law [equals] genocide"), protesters effectively shut down attempts to pass initiative 5376. This was an initiative that proposed to amend the current law on the protection of children and adolescents (PINA by its Spanish acronym) on a number of topics including the decriminalization of abortion for children under the age of 14. It was struck down by conservative congressman Aníbal Rojas, who headed the Congressional Commission on Women at the time.

It is the absurdity of scenarios like this—of commissions for the protection of women's rights headed by conservative Christian men and popular marches against abortion laws that were never under consideration, the labeling of abortion as genocide in a country that routinely denies that the mass killing and razing of entire indigenous villages was genocide—that highlight the incommensurability of globalized human rights ideas in such local contexts. Moreover, despite the

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[76] I say now because this is based on articles, that while not specifically naming abortion, are interpreted to mean so by the Committee on CEDAW. Hunt and Gruszczynski (2019) point to "three CEDAW articles in particular may be cited as supporting women's human right to abortion: Article 12.1, Article 14.2(a)(b), and Article 16.1(e). Article 12.1 mandates equality in health care services, and the Committee on CEDAW characterizes "the refusal of medical procedures that only women require, such as abortion, as sex discrimination" (Cook and Dickens 2003, 6), suggesting that a lack of abortion rights constitutes unequal health care services."

taboo-ness of abortion[77], it was a popular topic for apocryphal stories. I was constantly hearing stories from women about so-and-so's neighbor or cousin who had ended up pregnant outside of wedlock and had walked into the woods or a ravine to bury a fetus, only to be discovered by a group of local children, women, or in one case, stray dogs. The stories never used the word abortion, emphasizing how taboo of a topic it is, yet the recurrence of these stories showed it was a common anxiety for local women. Because abortion is heavily criminalized in Guatemala and the participants of Mariposas' youth program (including its local program coordinators) were all religious, we never discussed the case study of abortion in Poland. Yet, the Mariposas nursing staff (affiliated with their clinic that provides an array of quality reproductive services to women of the area) also shared stories of young local women coming to ask for contraceptives (especially IUD's [Intra Uterine Devices] which are otherwise very unpopular) in the hopes that this would lead to an abortion.

The nurses recounted the countless times young women would vehemently deny being pregnant while being hesitant to take the required pregnancy test needed to have an IUD placed. In one apocryphal story I heard, one of the local health promoters for the nurses detailed a story where a young woman refused to take a pregnancy test but said she was currently on her period. Seeing how the nurse was still skeptical of her claim or perhaps at the behest of the nurse, the young woman went home and then brought the nurse a bloodied sanitary napkin. It was then discovered that the blood on the napkin was chicken blood and the bits of presumed uterine endometrial lining were cut up chicken heart bits. The story was shared over breakfast one morning when I was accompanying the nurses to a local health clinic to provide contraceptives to women

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[77] In chapter 4, I recount in more detail my experience with a rights-based feminist organization that *did* touch on topics of abortion because they did not rely on foreign or government funding.

who had signed up with the health promoter. Although the mention of chicken hearts gained some gasps and laughter (at the ingeniousness of the young woman, but also the grossness of being handed a sanitary napkin full of chicken blood), the conversation quickly continued with other apocryphal stories of clandestine abortion.

A good life, or an empowered life left no room for teenage pregnancies, a moral stance that was complicated by the criminalization of abortion and the shameful promiscuity associated with using contraceptives. Empowerment was predicated on both concientización and social mobility, yet economic superación was likely an elusive goal for many young men and women. Like Vane's wistful reflection on the big yellow house reveals, education was the qualification for the promise of a modern life and superación. For this reason, I saw the moral component of empowerment— including knowing what reproductive rights are and having sexual health education—as playing an important role in the way youth defined empowerment. Social mobility was an aspiration for the future, but the moral high ground was readily accessible *now*. In a way, this shift towards seeing empowerment as a spiritual condition of salvation as a response to the lack of social mobility in Guatemala. This empoderada subjectivity is an outlet for youth who are being encouraged to dream big and imagine superación to create an authority and power that a precarious life denies them. Below, I analyze the way this cultural distinction creates a sanctimonious division between the empoderadas/un-empowered that manifests itself in the shaming of teenage pregnancies.

"This is one of my friends, and that day she had called me to go to her house for her graduation. Above all, I was happy because I gave her tips [about how to decorate for her graduation party]. And I was very happy because her graduation is soon […] I give counseling [*consejería*] to my friends, and she's someone I have given *charlas* to. I like to give my informal talks to my friends because you already have so much trust, and you can say 'look, I'm studying this [reproductive health],' and there is more trust to talk to them about these topics in depth. For example, this is not the first time I've told this friend that I am studying [in the Mariposas program], but I've already told her a couple of times and so now she *knows.*"

-Evelyn

Teenage Pregnancy as Damnation: Discourses of Salvation and the Coloniality of Human Rights

FIGURE 1.7: *Photo by Mariela (group interview), 2017*

"Last year, my sister's best friend ended up pregnant. She was 15 years old, and her boyfriend, he was 14. Well, they received the support of their parents, and decided to have the baby, they started living together, but when she went to have the baby in the hospital the situation was more complicated. The young woman had high blood pressure and she was told that both her and the baby were in a situation of risk. In the end, the baby was born but the young woman died. The baby was left in the care of the father, but he was practically a child… Afterwards, the boy [father of the baby] was left traumatized by this experience, and he is not exactly 'crazy,' but he does have psychological traumas."

-Mariela

"This is a picture of a single mother […] everything is a lot harder for them because they're alone. There are many single mothers around where I live, a lot of them ended up pregnant with men that are a lot older than them, from outside [of the community] and they disappeared when the girls told them they were pregnant."

"I took this picture because there are a lot of problems with having relationships when you are too young, and there are a lot of cases like that […] I think that if there was more information you could prevent [cases like these]."

-Ronal

Ultimately, I argue that the construction of a "neoliberal personhood" predicated on education and social mobility results in a moralistic division between the empowered and unempowered that links a lack of empowerment to *sin* and *damnation* in part because it is based on abstracted human rights ideals that have deep ties to colonialism and Western imperialism. I consider this merging of salvation with empowerment to be linked to the coloniality (Quijano 2007; Quijano and Wallerstein 1992; Mignolo 2011) of human rights (Maldonado-Torres 2017). That is, to the way human rights, and development interventions more broadly, motivate a desire

to be and act *modern*. The stigma and economic perils associated with adolescent pregnancies then, come to be seen as decidedly *un-modern*.

In Guatemala, the idea of inalienable human rights (Moyn 2010) shaped the language of collective action to demand justice and rights in the post-war era (Sieder 2008). More recently however, Guatemalan scholars have pointed to the emptiness behind this abstracted notion of human rights and the way they have served as a tool of state-sponsored modernity, carried out in a variety of "trainings" organized by both NGOs and government agencies (Lopez Garcia 2008). Around the so-called "developing" world, the impact of human rights is still debated, especially when it comes to the rights that CEDAW lays out (Hunt and Gruszczynski 2019). Here, I rely on the work of scholars who expand on the idea that human rights as a tool of modernity works to separate the West from "the Rest" (Hall 1996) at the very intimate level of the *soul*.

Brazilian philosopher Denise Ferreira da Silva (2009) argues that modernity (and human rights) are always placed outside the grasp of people of color. Although many of my young interlocutors would be reluctant to identify as indigenous and colorism plays a big role in the way they perceive themselves (see chapter 3, Also Hale 2006), the Post-War NGOization of human rights in the region has been tied to an ethnfication of NGO aid recipients (see Rodas 2008; Vanthuyne 2009; Bastos and Cumes 2007). Ferreira da Silva, along with other theorists (Blaser 2010; Blaser, Feit, and McRae 2004; Escobar 1995; 2010), posit that the coloniality of power that sustains the West/rest, civilized/uncivilized dualities within human rights discourses continue to preserve an image of civilization and humanity in the likeness of white Europeans. Ferreira da Silva's "analytics of raciality" make evident how modernity produces an ethical regime where people of color are understood as a threat to modern society (2009: 219). In his analysis of the coloniality of human rights (Wynter 2001; Gordon 2005), Nelson Maldonado-Torres argues that

human rights engage in an embodied separation of, or more clearly, classification of, beings into "zones":

> "a zone of salvation where the world and its resources are perceived as being there 'for our sake' […], and another that is populated by entities whose very existence is regarded as problematic and dangerous. Since the world is perceived to be best without these entities, ideally, they would disappear after their bodies are used to build civilization and to satisfy the needs of the civilized. In the worst-case scenario, the condemned remain alive but only outside of the zone of civilization, or having limited access to it" (2017: 123)

Drawing on Fanon (2008), Maldonado-Torres calls this ontological colonial difference "damnation" and those outside the zone of salvation the "damnés" (*Ibid.*). Development, he argues as well as newer terms like "diversity" and "inclusion," remain a project of coloniality and so continue to operate under this modern/colonial divide. Focusing on the damnés exposes the embodied positionality and lived experience of the colonized within the discourse of human rights. For Maldonado-Torres, it also creates a colonial "color-line that makes it possible to distinguish humans from non-humans and to think of humanity in terms of degrees—that can be more or less human" (Maldonado-Torres 2017; 2015).

In multicultural Guatemala, NGOs are intricately linked to this color-line in various ways. Velasquez Nimatuj (2008) has pointed out how NGOs were at the forefront of bringing the political demands of Mayan peoples to the Guatemalan constitution in 1985, when the current constitution was ratified (a date that marks the beginning of a journey away from over three decades of military dictatorships and into democratic practices involving civil society). More recently, NGOs have been the channel through which neoliberal multiculturalism has flourished in Guatemala (Bastos 2008; Hale 2002)(Gonzalez Ponciano 2008). While I explore the "question" of race and

multiculturalism that is prevalent in the works of NGOs, especially as it is tied to masculinity, in chapter 3, here I want to focus on the role of NGOs as mediators of this "damnation".

Young women's narratives of empowerment as narratives of Christian salvation can be understood as the result of the vernacularization of human rights in a precarious neoliberal context where the moral regimes of both Christian and Global Human Rights come together to create a new form of reproductive governance. The coloniality of human rights creates this "zone of salvation" Maldonado-Torres describes in a way that fits almost seamlessly with the Christian symbolism with which young women are raised. The NGO trainings (that some have argued are nothing more than empty tools of modernity) in which these young women participate allow them to claim for themselves this salvation, while relegating their peers as damnés. All the while, damnation remains a zone where these young women themselves are always in peril of falling into. As young women learn about globalized human rights through NGOs, they are faced with patriarchal cautiverios and the reality of neoliberal precarity which constrain their ability to exercise a set of rights already inconsummerable to their lived experience.

By placing themselves in the empowered category, these young women are working towards salvation, but it would come at a cost. The anxieties surrounding the possibility of failure reveals that there is a lot at stake for young women. There are feelings of shame that would come with an unexpected pregnancy, the "mancha de la honra" or the stain to the family's honor which many of my young interlocutors brought up, the possibility of being thrown out into the streets, but there is also a deeper fear of being, not just the "puta," but also the "loca". Mariela's narrative really gets at the anxieties about psychological trauma that can accompany this so-called "failure". A failure that, according to recent studies, is quite common: around 44% of all women in the

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country were mothers before the age of twenty[78] (higher for women in rural areas and without a high school education) and teenage pregnancies has risen in recent years[79].

There is a societal fascination with the teenage or the single mother that was evident not just in the PhotoVoice narratives, but throughout my fieldwork. Today, even some Catholic NGOs have embraced contraceptive use for adolescents as a recognition of the "crisis" that the country faces in regard to teenage pregnancies, although many religious people still view contraceptives and premarital sex as sinful. These societal anxieties surrounding the morality of teenage pregnancies are in line with the way moral regimes operate as a form of reproductive governance (Morgan and Roberts 2019). That is, moral regimes regulate or "set the standards" for what is perceived as rational versus irrational reproduction (*Ibid.*). In both Christian ideas about motherhood and human rights ideas about individual choice, teenage pregnancies fall into the latter.

I see the anxieties about this "irrational" reproduction being expressed through the narratives of empowerment many of my PhotoVoice interlocutors shared. It can be evidenced in the moral high ground of working towards a salvation that, while statistically and practically quite difficult, can come with devastating consequences for the young women involved[80]. Moreover, the

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[78] (Institute 2006)

[79] (España 2020)

[80] The consequences of this "damnation" (teenage pregnancies) are often socioeconomic: for example, during a workshop run by GuateAyuda I met a young woman, Glendy, who had just been fired from her job with one of the local bakeries because of her unexpected pregnancy. Her boss, a devout, older Catholic, stated that she did not think a mother would have the time to dedicate herself to the job despite being a mother of 4 herself. I asked Glendy if she thought the fact that she was unmarried had anything to do with it, and after some consideration she agreed but said that even after becoming "joined" or *juntarse* with her partner (the common term for moving in together, which for youth has the connotation of elopement, but for their parents, of sinning), she had been unable to get her job back. For other young women, however, being acknowledge by their partners (either by being joined or officially married), was enough to reduce the stigma of a pregnancy.

fact that there is a convergence between human rights ideas and Christianity when it comes to teenage pregnancies, these moral regimes had different standards for preventing them.

The consequences of this "damnation" (teenage pregnancies) are often socioeconomic: for example, during a workshop run by GuateAyuda I met a young woman, Glendy, who had just been fired from her job with one of the local bakeries because of her unexpected pregnancy. Her boss, a devout, older Catholic, stated that she did not think a mother would have the time to dedicate herself to the job despite being a mother of 4 herself. I asked Glendy if she thought the fact that she was unmarried had anything to do with it, and after some consideration she agreed but said that even after becoming "joined" or *juntarse* with her partner (the common term for moving in together, which for youth has the connotation of elopement, but for their parents, of sinning), she had been unable to get her job back. For other young women, however, being acknowledge by their partners (either by being joined or officially married), was enough to reduce the stigma of a pregnancy.

There was tension between two ideologies that resulted in mixed messages about how to be "saved" from teenage pregnancies: the NGO normalizing safe and consensual sex among youth by encouraging contraceptive use was contradictory to Christian parents and churches demonizing any form of sexual behaviors before marriage which then clashed with human rights organizations criticizing teenage marriages and instead encouraging young women to finish their education before getting married. In the end, however both are a way of policing sexual behaviors. The men involved in teenage pregnancies, however, faced less or none of the repercussions than women did. The following conversation, which occurred in one of our group sessions during the PhotoVoice project, the stigmas surrounding teenage pregnancies are brought to light along with the idea that only those who are empowered with information can escape this fate:

R, A, V, M, J: Photovoice participants, aged 16-20

MV: Marianinna Villavicencio

AL: Youth program coordinator for the NGO

R: I know a case where a young woman got this boyfriend, but he was much older and when she ended up being pregnant, he left her and left the baby, and that is really common in these cases of young relationships… Because there is no planification-

A: —Because there is no information!

R: Yeah, informing others so that this can begin to change, because it's even a repetitive process, so many adolescent pregnancies, because—so they see it as normal, and sometimes even the parents see it as normal

AL: What happened with the youth that studied with you in your high school class?

R: The majority are already moms and dads. Many don't have a career/haven't continued with school, it's hard for them to find jobs.

[…]

V: My mom, she ended up pregnant at 17, and even being pregnant she went to school—no? I think it was after because there are pictures where my brother is placing her graduation ring, and my brother was already five years old, but she did finish her career/schooling… Something that my mom tells me—something that I tell her is 'why are you telling me things, if you ended up pregnant!' and like THAT I told her, and she told me 'yeah, but your dad never left me and now things are not

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like they were before, you have everything, you're good and you were raised well'

she said to me, but *now*, it's not like the same.

R: [now] they go buy cigarettes and alcohol

((laughter))

Here we see the way that teenage pregnancies are stigmatized by being a condition of those who have no "information" and so cannot engage in any "planificación" (family planning). Moreover, family planning is seen as a way for youth to achieve social mobility since, in theory, they would have access to increased school education and job opportunities. Vane's comment that her mom was a teenage mom highlights the fact that teenage pregnancies are the norm for many in Guatemala, but the comparison between then and now (reminiscent of those who compare "the economy" before and now) indicates an increased anxiety about teenage pregnancies that has come with the signing of the MDGs and the increased scrutinizing of teenage pregnancies by both NGOs and government agencies. Ronal's interjection about how youth now would not be able to finish their schooling or develop their careers because they are only interested in buying "cigarettes and alcohol" shows there is a moral component to this as well—albeit a trite one as exemplified by the uproarious laughter following his comment.

The damnation of teenage pregnancy is also exemplified in a picture Ronal shared afterwards of a pregnant young woman from his community, and the allusion to the older "outsiders" that disappear once their young partners become pregnant. It was my impression that the most likely case is that the young women protect their (local) partners or are rejected by them, rather than the father being an outsider that was never seen again. Even so, many of the NGOs I

observed, including Mariposas, were working to bring responsibility to the young men as well. What is interesting, is how these anxieties seemed to be seeping across gender boundaries to affect young men as well. For example, in Mariela's story the young woman dies from her adolescent pregnancy, but the young man involved also suffers and is left traumatized.

There is a combination here of the pregnant teenager as the collective symbol of Guatemala's failures as un-modern with narratives of empowerment that present salvation out of this "uncivilized" state through education and concientización. This was exemplified in the later during the same group conversation, as Ana, who had been a teenage mom herself, elaborated on Vane's story:

> AL: I think that it's worth mentioning that it is okay—or it can be done, like what happened to us in the school we went to give a talk on preventing adolescent pregnancies and there were already people there who were pregnant.
>
> MV: mhm I was there.

At first, it seemed like Ana was going to defend the attack on teenage pregnancies that the youth were building on until this point, but her comment quickly turned to one that highlighted this civilized/uncivilized divide between the empowered and unempowered. The teenage mom had become a collective symbol of Guatemala's failures and an indictment of the very personhood of the young women who end up pregnant:

AL: And the point is that likely its possible—yes they will be able to accomplish things or their goals that they've proposed, but the process is going to be more difficult, it's going to be longer, the goals they had, minimum two or three years. *Nobody* is saying that it's going to be impossible because it can be done, but it's going to become difficult and not only for her as a person, but no, for the *country!* And if we see it beyond the individual, adolescent pregnancies aren't—like I've told them multiple times—it's not just 'ay, ME' right, I, 'I ended up pregnant, it's *my* problem. No. It goes beyond, the delay that the country has in education, in health, in—when there is an adolescent mother, right?"

MV: Is it usually something we all think about, when talking about reproductive health, thinking beyond? ((*short silence*)) How is preventing teenage pregnancies related to the country's progress?

R: less delinquency

MV: How so?

R: Because let's say there are—like there are areas, where they have um… at a young age and maybe they don't have the resources, and the means are common, committing a crime, its stealing or something like that ((*laughs*)) or that they already have the vices like stealing or something like that and it affects it…yes

AL: —yes

MV: back to the talk where there was someone already pregnant—

I was excitedly interrupted by Vane at this point,

V: —yes! But they don't react well! And even when you try and like, not to talk, or not to say like 'hey, LOOK at her! she made a mistake!

R: [Ala puuuu ((*laughs*))]

((*others laugh, some gasp*))

The laughter and Ronal's interjected half-swear encouraged Vane to keep going,

V: No they don't take it well! With J, we placed the pregnancy simulator on someone and we were asking them to bend down and move around and she goes LOOK, I can bend down! like THAT and I was like, mhm, yeah—it's hard to say, how to talk about these topics if there's someone like that there.

M: ah, yeah

J: mhm!

R: ooookay

V: No, and AL afterwards told me, but you should have told her, which child do you think will be better, from someone who is educated or from you that has not finished her education?

AL: —No but I didn't say it like THAT

R: Aahhh! ((*laughs*))

((*laughter*))

V: —no but

((*more laughter*))

The conversation quickly derailed as the teens all laughed at the image of Vane shaming a teenage mother wearing a pregnancy simulator while Ana tried to remind them that this is not what they were supposed to do. Ana seemed to be stuck between wanting to convince the group that they should absolutely not have a child as teenagers (which was a big component of the Mariposas curriculum) while also trying to prevent this outward shaming. In a way, the laughter was an acknowledgment that they knew that they knew this shaming was, in fact, *shaming* and so not encouraged. Yet, it was also tied to a sense of superiority, that they could laugh at Vane's comments because they themselves were empowered and so knew better.

In a later conversation with Ana, I brought up the pregnancy shaming that I had noticed during the PhotoVoice activity and other group interviews. She immediately gave me a wry smile and nodded knowingly: "it is something we have definitely become aware of ourselves and we are trying to brainstorm ways around it." A couple of weeks later, at a workshop for the youth program members to practice giving their formal peer education talks (that is, invited talks at local schools, instead of spontaneous ones with friends and classmates throughout their regular schedules), Ana brought up the topic and reminded everyone that the idea was not to shame teenage pregnancies

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but to encourage safe sex. "I had my little girl when I was a teenager, so does that mean that I am a failure?" she asked everyone, her current (second) pregnancy emphasizing the seriousness of the question. The group shook their heads and some muttered "no's". As a middle figure between the NGO administration and the adolescents themselves, Ana was beloved in the youth group. They would confide in her about their dreams, problems at home, relationship woes, and other very intimate topics. She would receive calls from adolescents in tough situations at all hours of the day, as everyone had her personal WhatsApp number, and many would also bring their friends to talk with her when they needed support. Ana's personal story stood in contrast with the imagery of the bad or irrational teenage mother because of the sense of community she created in the NGO for many teens, and I appreciated her openness with the group about her own teen pregnancy.

Ana's engagement with the curriculum as a middle figure also shows how vernacularization occurs at every level, from the director of programs drawing on UN material and picking activities for each workshop, to Ana, using these materials to teach the jovenes, and then the way each joven interpreted that in very personal ways: Helen's self-portrait, Vane's dream house, Ronal's fear. It also makes it clear that this is an ongoing project of imagining and articulating, and then re-imagining and re-articulating what empowerment means. There is a constant back and forth that gives young men and women the opportunity to input their own voice into reproductive health programs and ultimately, into reproductive governance.

Conclusions

In the face of what often seems like overwhelming disenfranchisement, young women are able to take these global ideas about feminism to create an ambiguous power and authority for themselves. This is a discursive move that turns these young women into the "stultifying

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schoolmaster[81]" as they take these ideas about human and reproductive rights to their friends and family through Mariposas' peer-education program. This empoderada subjectivity acts as a form of globalized discipline against female sexuality, making the collective symbol of the pregnant teenager the ultimate image of damnation. In a country plagued by increasing inequality, lack of social mobility, and decaying infrastructure, the prevention of teenage pregnancies seems doable. Unsurprisingly, however, it rests on the conception on women as bearers of the nation and places the burden of improvement directly onto the bodies of women. In the next chapter I explore how this vernacularization (Levitt and Merry 2009; Goodale and Merry 2007) of human rights can go beyond a form of globalized discipline and generate opportunities for political agency.

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[81] See introduction for an expansion on the way Ranciere's (1987) notion of the "ignorant schoolmaster" is replicated by NGOs in Guatemala, that is the ways NGOs, "having thrown a veil of ignorance over everything that is to be learned, […] appoints himself to the task of lifting it" (*Ibid.*:6). Only by concealing knowledge from the student is the explicator able to teach it. This makes the student dependent on the master. Ranciere also calls this "Enforced stultification" (7).

Chapter Two

Mujeres Empoderadas: Reproductive Health and Everyday Politics in Guatemala

October 7, 2017: As part of my research into reproductive health NGOs in Guatemala, I had traveled to a nearby village from Antigua, where I was living, to attend a talk on women's empowerment. The talk was hosted by a Guatemalan NGO that sought to improve women's access to menstrual hygiene products. The talk, or *charla* as they are more commonly known, was relatively uneventful. It was more of a promotional service for the NGO than a hands-on or instructional workshop for women's rights, as other such events I attended were. After the talk was over, I got a ride back from a friend, Monica, a performance artist who also organized sexual rights workshops in Antigua. During the ride she introduced me to Keilin, a young woman who had attended the charla because of her growing involvement in Monica's workshops.

Keilin had grown up in the Sacatepéquez area, about 30 minutes from Antigua, and attended a high school in the area where, a couple of months before, Monica had given a charla on domestic violence. These charlas are an effort to "empower" young women so that they can exercise their rights, especially with relation to domestic violence and reproductive decisions. Monica saw the under-reporting of violence against women, committed most often by a woman's own family or intimate partner, as one of the biggest barriers to women's empowerment in the region. She had taken a particular interest in Keilin, whose own interest in learning more about domestic violence had slowly revealed that she was herself a victim of frequent abuse. During the following months I heard Keilin's story as she developed her own notion of what empowerment

and sexual rights were. Sexual agency was a complex issue for her, filled with tensions stemming from her own family history, her evangelical faith, and the general injustices of gender relations in Guatemala. Keilin had been born when her mother was just 16. It was unclear whether anyone besides her mother knew who the father was,[82] and she had lived with her extended family (as most Guatemalans do) her whole life. After her mother was killed in a traffic accident a couple of years back, Keilin had begun working at her uncle's general store to contribute to the family income.

One afternoon, as we walked back from one of Monica's workshops together, Keilin began sharing with me more details about her life. Our conversation began with her concern in changing her contraceptive pills, which she blamed for her recent weight gain. It was not a subject she could bring up at home, for her family attended a local evangelical church which looked down upon medical forms of family planning and premarital sex. "My aunt can never find out I take these" she said pointing to her purse, "so I carry [the pills] with me everywhere in case someone goes in my room."

"What would happen if she found out?" I asked her. Her eyes widened, and she shook her head. We walked in silence for a bit longer until I asked, "do you think you could ever share what you learn in Monica's *capacitaciones* (trainings) with your family?"

> "Well… it's been on my mind a lot… Monica thinks I should, but I just don't know… Well… it's a hard topic for me, because you know my uncle used to be violent to me (*me violentaba*) but recently he hasn't so I don't want him to start again, it's been years now…"

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[82] The few but concerning stories I heard about the pregnancy made me wonder if Mery's mother had been a victim of sexual assault. Though this would sadly not be uncommon, these are stories I heard mostly from extended family members, so there is no way of knowing for sure.

I knew her uncle continued to be verbally abusive but refrained from pointing that out.

"It's just…" she continued slowly, "you learn all these things at the charlas, about how we all have these rights—even little kids and little girls! And about how you can tell the police now if somebody hits you, but some people maybe don't care about that, about what the police would say. I think 'what if I tell the police my uncle hit his daughter, and they tell him I told them'? and sometimes I think that would make things worse."

A couple of weeks later, she confided in me that every day it became harder to see what she called the violation of her little cousin's rights and stay silent. I suspect part of her rising anger was also due to the realization that she herself had been a victim of domestic violence, and her own rights had been violated. A year later, as I was preparing to leave Antigua, Keilin had yet to make an official *denuncia* (a formal complaint to the police). She had, however, convinced her uncle to give her a salary for her work and stood up to his verbal abuse a couple of times. "I told my aunt," she would say passionately, "he can't speak to me that way, I have rights!"

Keilin's inability to speak openly about contraceptives and her hesitation to make an official denuncia raise important questions about political agency in a landscape loaded with social and moral tensions. How do we understand Keilin's sense of empowerment and her claim to have rights given her hesitation to speak out? Where do the small steps she *did* take towards gender equality fit in? Young women in Guatemala face significant challenges as they develop political awareness through reproductive health interventions. Ultimately, this chapter asks: how do young women reconcile this sense of quotidian empowerment with the significant social, religious, and economic constraints on their agency?

Introduction: Politics as an Analytical Tool

As evidenced by Keilin's story, the way young women experience rights through reproductive health interventions is filled with complex, layered meanings that go beyond having access to healthcare and into the intimate ways young women interpret and exercise those same rights. My research shows that women's health work, at every level, is part of an always contested, unfinished political project. Given that stories like Keilin's demonstrate both an ideological and bodily engagement with rights, in this chapter I argue that it is necessary to understand their actions, however personal, as *political* engagement. A framework grounded in embodied politics highlights the agency of young women regarding their reproductive rights, the struggles they face in negotiating and contesting the racial and gendered hierarchies that shape their daily lives, as well as the physical and tactile interactions of these discourses with their bodies. This chapter is loosely divided into two main sections: the first defines political agency by providing a critical analysis of empowerment as both governmentality and political action, and the second examines how the complexities of being and feeling empowered are carried out by young women in their everyday lives.

Following Postero and Elinoff (2019), I engage with politics as a productive site of world-making practices by examining the ways in which young women use, debate, negotiate, and manage their sexuality and reproductive health. As I show below, I see these practices as layered, emerging in a dialectical relationship between body politic, and discursive and bodily practices. I use an ethnographic focus on life-as-lived (Abu-Lughod 1993) to evidence the myriad of ways power is disrupted and settles in new forms (Postero and Elinoff 2019; 7) in the everyday lives of indigenous and *ladina* (non-indigenous) women in the small urban towns of highland Sacatepéquez and Chimaltenango, Guatemala.

I draw from Rancière (1999; 2004; 2010) to contrast politics with policing, or the way that the natural order of things is organized. He refers to this "machine of vision," as the *partage du sensible* (the distribution of the sensible), which naturalizes gendered roles and racialized distributions of bodies by organizing what is considered an "appropriate" way to act for a particular social group (Rancière 1999). For example: women are 'naturally' seen as caring, so their 'place' has been associated with the domestic sphere and uncompensated social labor (Michael Feola 2018). In a similar manner, indigenous peoples in Guatemala are seen as "lazy", "backwards", "stubborn" (Cayzac 2001; Stavenhagen 2002; Hale 2002; 2006; Similox 2005; Bastos et al. 2008), which then naturalizes the extreme poverty that disproportionately affects indigenous communities. As such, women and indigenous people (and especially indigenous women) constitute what Rancière refers to as "the part without a part," or those members of society who are barred from exercising substantive citizenship rights by being excluded from democratic processes and so having their voices ignored by civil society.

Policing

In this paper, I push back against (what I consider) Rancière's limited notion of what counts as politics by showing how it is intertwined with our everyday lived experiences. Though he offers a valuable framework for understanding what politics is not (i.e. what he calls "policing"), I refer to Rancière's version of politics as limited because of how infrequently he sees politics as having taken place. Here, policing is the process of symbolically organizing and naturalizing social hierarchies[83] (Rancière 1999). I examine the way policing affects our everyday, personal

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[83] I also see this as similar to what Althusser (2006 [1978-87]) refers to as the "Ideological State Apparatus" (ISA), both as site and an object of ideological conflict between classes that works to construct   reality.

experiences by taking into account how this machine of vision organizes our lifeworld, or "the unquestioned, practical, historically conditioned, pre-theoretical, and familiar world of people's everyday lives" (Desjarlais and Throop 2011, 91). I find policing to be in line with what Foucault (Foucault 1977; Foucault 1973) refers to as "discipline," or techniques of the self that aim to normalize populations[84]. Foucault recounts how throughout (Western) society these forms of practice and discipline are being used to create docile and functional bodies needed for capitalism. Thus, there is a significant embodied component to policing that rests within a hierarchical ordering of bodies marked along gendered, classed, racialized, and sexualized lines (Feola 2018). In this way, bodies become both an object but also a way through which the social world is experienced (see Desjarlais and Throop 2011; Hollan 2001; Itzhak 2015; Csordas 1999).

Policing takes on a very distinct role in the field of women's health organizations in highland Guatemala. As I describe in the introduction, in Latin America, discourses of improvement and discipline are often aimed at the impoverished, racialized "other," making the category of the "indigenous woman" highly desirable for such interventions (Radcliffe 2012; Nelson 1999, 272-274). Women's bodies can become sites of neoliberal indoctrination, where the consequences of deep racial and socioeconomic inequality are inadvertently taken up by North American or European elites through care and development work in a way that (unintentionally) fails to challenge current power structures (Ferguson 1994; Escobar 1991; Povinelli 2011; Fassin 2011; Stevenson 2014). In these instances, women's bodies are singled out as "corrupt," inferior, or uncivilized, making them suitable sites for surveillance and "improvement" (Li 2007). These bodies, then, are conceptualized as the site for the formation of docile citizens (Foucault 1977).

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[84] Such as the development of a work ethic or a time schedule, documentation and examination, space, and even the development of efficient bodily motions

What this means usually depends on the type of NGO and especially the type of funding an organization receives.

For example, during some of my fieldwork I worked with GuateAyuda[85], an organization funded by wealthy Guatemalan women from the capital whose goal was to promote maternal health through a Catholic vision of family (and the role of women in that family) in indigenous Kaqchikel communities. For GuateAyuda, development work meant engaging with women's bodies as sites of future motherhood[86] and with women as caregivers and transmitters of Catholic values. This type of NGO governmentality seeks to "improve" women by providing nutrition classes so they could better feed their children, hygiene lessons so they could keep their homes 'clean' (according to Western standards, a difficult task when your floor is made out of dirt), and finally they held entrepreneurship courses so the women could learn to sell their *tejidos* (indigenous weaving[87]) more profitably and so increase the household budget.

In carrying out this Catholic vision of an ideal housewife, GuateAyuda exemplifies the way NGOs can unwittingly obscure the gendered and racialized structural violence against indigenous women and youth in their encouragement to produce productive neoliberal subjects who rarely challenge current power imbalances. Indeed, many scholars have shown how such goals have been used across Latin America to police women's bodies since colonial times with gendered and sexual violence (Chirix García 2013; Lagarde y de los Ríos 1990; Camacho 2001).

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[85] Pseudonym.

[86] However, Schild (2015) reminds us that "[f]or many black and indigenous women, too, motherhood would continue to constitute an important space for making claims" (*Ibid.*).

[87] Encouraging indigenous women to use their bodies for weaving as an economic tool was a very popular expectation that many NGOs in the region had. I understand this specific (and often, narrow) expectation as being in line with what Hale (2002) calls the "indio permitido" (permitted Indian) role.

Not all organizations, however, fit into this description of discipline and policing so neatly. Indeed, the NGOs and grassroots organizations I worked with during the majority of my fieldwork held completely antithetical views to that of GuateAyuda: they were founded and are run by women like Monica who strongly identified as feminists, and who want to break the hegemonic power that Catholic traditions hold over women's bodies. I see the work of most reproductive health NGOs in the area as inimical to what is considered "normal" in traditional Guatemalan society—women as maternal, docile, and generally "lesser". Yet, I argue, they still act as a form of governmentality (Foucault 1991; Rose 1996), or reproductive governance (Morgan and Roberts 2012): including the teaching of practices that attempts to challenge racial and gender hegemony with Western feminist standards that uphold neoliberal principles. Many have pointed out the complicity of Western-styled feminism with global capitalism (Eisenstein 2010; Fraser 2009), an indictment that has particular salience in Guatemala's busy healthcare landscape, which has seen a sharp rise in the "NGOization" of social services and development (Hale 2002; 2006; See also, Cody 2009; Ferguson 1994). In Eisenstein's words, this NGOization has particular relevance in women's development where:

> "[b]oth at the level of rhetoric and at the level of global and local policy, then, the 'development' of women has become a substitute for state-led economic development in Third World countries. To eliminate poverty, it seems, it is no longer necessary to create an economy that meets people's needs. Now a focus on women's leadership is sufficient" (Eisenstein 2010).

In other words, despite being well-intentioned, NGO and humanitarian interventions often fail to challenge current power structures. Ultimately, as I showed in the last chapter, many standards of reproductive governance taught by NGOs imbue young women with techniques of the self that produce non-radical, neoliberal subjects (Foucault 1977; Hale 2002; Hale and Millaman 2006). For this reason, I refer to the work of these feminist NGOs as reproductive

governance (and not *politics*), which does not necessarily possess a negative connotation, but rather refers to the way that social institutions such as NGOs monitor and conduct beliefs and behaviors regarding reproduction (Morgan and Roberts 2012). I find this term useful to explain work that is a form of discipline despite being ideologically opposed to traditional gender norms. While I use reproductive governance to describe the development initiatives carried out by many feminist reproductive health organizations, this should not be taken as a judgement of value. The work of these organizations is often quite valuable and can come to benefit many women who would otherwise not have access to reproductive health. Here, I am pointing out that the work of feminist NGOS, while valuable and critical to the well-being and sense of empowerment for many women, is still part of a neoliberal cycle where citizens are increasingly forced to rely on non-governmental organizations to provide basic rights and services.

Moreover, in this chapter I focus not on the work of the NGOs themselves, but on the actions of the women involved with reproductive health programs. My goal is to highlight the ambivalence and ambiguity of politics and policing in the lived realities of ordinary Guatemalan women who are not necessarily engaged with social movements or organized activism. It would be easy to present this "conduct of conduct" as mere neoliberal responsibilization, but in reality, the actions of women involved in reproductive health initiatives are far more complex. Though I present GuateAyuda's efforts above as in line with hegemonic gender hierarchies, I want to remind the reader that both Catholicism[88] and motherhood[89] have been useful tools for the poor and

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[88] In the case of Guatemala specifically, it is important to note that it was the Catholic church who co-chaired the Commission for Historical Clarification, which was responsible for investigating, and later outlining the atrocities committed during the Armed Conflict (1960-1996) thus formally naming the military as the perpetrator of the majority of the violence.

[89] Motherhood in particular has served as (claim making technique) for non-western women (Mahmood 2001, Abu-Lughod 2002)

marginalized in Latin America to make substantial claims on the state vis-a-vis social inequality (Schild 2015).

Politics

If NGOs often end up reproducing neoliberal forms of governance, , how then does meaningful political agency also operate in the same field? For Rancière, the short answer is, politics occurs when *la part des sans-part* (the part without a part) acts to enforce the very rights and privileges that are being withheld (Rancière 2004). In what Feola (2018) refers to as "proleptic" political agency, the disenfranchised become political subjects through a constant, ongoing process that transforms the economy of vision into a more inclusive one (*Ibid.* 2018: 82). Politics, then, occurs when this "wrong," this exclusion from civic life and substantive citizenship, is challenged. This *dissensus* (disagreement)*,* to use Rancière's term, can be understood as a struggle by political subjects who have been traditionally denied rights to articulate and contest the established order (Roseberry 1994; Postero 2017; Williams 1977). In this chapter, I show how this proleptic form of politics is occurring simultaneously with different and competing forms of policing.

The history of Guatemala is filled with "wrongs" committed against marginalized and indigenous women that showcase the subversive power of dissensus. For years, groups such as "Actoras de Cambio" (Agents of Change), composed of women raped and tortured by the military during the Armed Conflict (1960-1996), fought to bring their case, and those of thousands of other victims of militarized sexual violence to trial. In 2013, a series of rape charges were finally presented before the Grand Tribunal of High-Risk against General Rios Montt and his chief of

intelligence by a group of Ixil victims. The tribunal drew sustained public attention and was the subject of much public (and private) debate. The women, faces covered by multicolored hand-woven cloths, recounted in painful detail their own rapes as well as those of their loved ones. This reclaiming of national historical memory (Casáus Arzú 2018; Fulchiron 2016) was made all the more powerful by the fact that the women were narrating their traumatic experiences in their native Ixil. The tribunal (and the hard work that led up to that moment) inspired artistic movements, such as "Nosotros las Mujeres" (*We the Women*), and "memory festivals" across Mayan communities which have transformed victims of sexual violence into agents of change (see Fulchiron 2016). It was a pivotal moment in Guatemalan history, which launched a broader (and too often, deeply frustrating) national conversation about sexual violence as a gendered form of genocide.

Let us return to the narrative of Keilin. Her conflicted indecision about whether to make a *denuncia* was taking place in the middle of the string of sexual violence cases being tried before Guatemalan society. In 2016, just a year and one month before my conversation with Keilin, a group of Achí women who had filed a case against six paramilitary members who raped them during the Armed Conflict called for an investigation of impunity against the judge of the case. The judge had continually delayed judgement against three of the men and had let the other three go. While many praised the courage of these women, social media was also filled with accusations against these women, ranging from accusing them of lying at the behest of "*los noruegos*" (the Norwegians, a common way to discredit political acts in Guatemala by labeling them as foreign and underrate their value within the national community), to justifying the heinous acts committed by these men in the name of "saving" the country from communism. These absurd accusations were made alongside a common policing discourse of victim-blaming that accompanies sexual assault and harassment claims in most places. In Keilin's own community, there was a similar

debate surrounding a middle-aged schoolteacher who had recently been accused of sexually assaulting three different young women and threatening violence against their families if they spoke out. The young women who had accused the teacher were often presented as immoral or as attention-seekers, "Well you should see those young women," a woman sitting next to us at a health clinic one morning told Keilin and me, "if I were their parents, I wouldn't be letting them say those things around in the street"[90].

We were sitting on a hard, wooden bench that ran along the crowded hallway of the local public health clinic. Keilin had accompanied one of her cousins, Pia, who had an infant son so she could hold the baby while Pia went in for her appointment. I had tagged along, as I often did, out of ethnographic curiosity. As Keilin strapped the baby to her back, gently shuffling her feet back and forth to mollify his cries, the woman sitting next to us continued,

> "One of my neighbors told me (u*na mi vecina me dijo*[91]) that one of the [victims] was in school with her daughter and, and she would never let her daughter be friends with this girl because she was bad news—you should see the makeup she wears! Who knows what she wants to do with that!"

She raised her eyebrows suggestively. "Mmmm" I replied noncommittally, glancing to see Keilin's reaction. She was looking down, pulling on the ends of the blanket that held her nephew tightly against her body. Was she uncomfortable, or just making sure the baby was secure? "So, you don't believe them then, the girls?" I asked the woman.

> "I don't know what to believe nowadays" she said huffily, "you see all these things in the news and in that Facebook (*el Face*), about all these girls that want to get

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[90] "Es que viera usted, que esas jovencitas, son cosa seria, […] si yo fuera sus papas no dejaría que andaran diciendo esas cosas por la calle"

[91] There is a vagueness that "una mi vecina" (one of my neighbors) conveys that is not quite captured in the English translation: it can mean anything from an actual neighbor to an overheard conversation at the supermarket.

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with older men […] and there was that case of that man, you know? He was tricking young girls into having relations with him and then the police got him because his wife found out…"

She shrugged and, without clarifying, moved on to tell me she was here with her own teenage daughter who was pregnant after running away with her boyfriend.

In my bewilderment with the woman's stories, encouraged by the approving nods of other women in the waiting hallway, I did not notice Keilin had stepped outside. I could see her from the door at the end of the hallway, rocking back and forth in the dusty patch of grass outside the clinic. I excused myself and followed her out just as Pia came out of her appointment. Our walk back was filled with casual conversation about our lunch plans, now delayed because of the long wait at the clinic, and Pia's worries that her family would be upset she had not made tortillas yet. Less than a year later, on April 1st, 2018, Rios Montt passed away without having ever been brought to justice.

For Rancière, political moments—like the tribunal—are rare. As such, his framework does not account for the complexities behind, and leading up to, these subversive acts. I explore the tensions between policing and politics that people like Keilin experience in their everyday lives by using a more nuanced definition of politics that accounts for everyday practices of world-making (see Postero and Elinoff 2019; Hankins 2019). I answer Postero and Elinoff's (2019) call to expand our understanding of politics in order to emphasize that becoming a political subject does not necessitate a big revolutionary moment. As Feola reminds us, politics is about *generating possibilities* (2018: 83). The usefulness of a politics/policing approach based on everyday worldmaking practices comes precisely in this transformative potential; I see political agency, then, as the power to change (even slightly) the social landscape, to act upon rights and privileges

that that were previously withheld from marginalized peoples. I especially focus on what Feola refers to as the "unglamorous work of preparation, education, and organization that too often tends to disappear within Ranciere's tendency to privilege the 'headline' cases of political agency" (2018: 87). This is what my research demonstrates: the unglamorous work of preparation and education via human and sexual rights workshops organized by a variety of nonprofit groups or organizations seeking to "empower" disenfranchised young women. While much of this work falls under the umbrella of reproductive governance, it is also work that generates the possibilities needed for the powerful acts of the quotidian I explore below.

I draw on this expanded notion of politics to further examine the lived experience of the women and youth who are most often the target of NGOized development. I hope to account for the banality of ordinary life as a way to understand what is truly at stake for people as they live their lives. Ultimately, the everyday empowerment of women produces new political subjectivities in ways that are not overtly radical or revolutionary I call these small moments *everyday politics*. That is, the ways hegemonic power is resisted in the mundane, in the minute and seemingly inconsequential details of daily life. Though they do not seem obviously radical at first glance, I argue that for the women who enact empowered subjectivities, these small acts are filled with political potential.

Though similar to "everyday forms of resistance" (Scott 1985; 1990) I point not to an ideological struggle, but an aesthetic one. That is, I am not focusing on a Marxist notion of class consciousness (and false consciousness) but rather on everyday *dissensus*. I find this helpful in addressing critiques of Scott that point to a "resignation" of marginalized classes to the status quo

(Gutmann 1993) that rarely lead to significant change in Latin America[92] (Eckstein 1990). I see dissensus as a way to address questions of agency within policing biopolitical states, especially as questions of rights are increasingly relegated to so-called apolitical NGOs. Whereas Scott points to the tactical convenience and need "to leave the formal order intact" (1990: 2), a framework grounded in small-scale political empowerment makes evident the aesthetic nature of contestation in the entangled cycles of politics and policing. A politics of the everyday takes Scott's emphasis on the ordinary, the non-revolutionary, and applies it to the complexities of reproductive rights in a landscape where citizenship and daily life are increasingly medicalized (Rose 2007; Nguyen 2010; Conrad 2007). In this way, everyday politics makes visible the ways in which discipline and resistance occur in simultaneous tension with each other in daily life. There is no "resignation" or "tactical" relationship to the oppression of a ruling class, but rather a complex experience of social hierarchy whose limits are constantly being tested and reinforced.

Everyday Politics: Becoming "mujeres empoderadas"

Keilin's struggles with enacting empowerment bring up the complexities behind the concept, and of developing quotidian political engagement in general. When I was preparing for my fieldwork, the word empowerment came up quite frequently. The word had become a trite buzzword meant to justify and fund the thousands of development interventions aimed at indigenous, rural, and underserved women around Guatemala. Having grown up in Guatemala and volunteered with a myriad of non-profits throughout the years, I was skeptical of many of these NGOs, which often rely on questionable stereotypes about those they help and engaged in what I

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[92] There is also much criticism of Scott's framework among Latin Americanists who focus on the powerful forms of popular protest that occurred in the era of military dictatorships—where a notion of "feet dragging" seems inappropriate in the face of brutal and genocidal repression (Gutmann 1993).

dismissively considered an exercise of policing and governmentality. Empowerment, I told myself, was an empty signifier thrown about by non-profit organizations, governments, and corporations—the "elite" in the development world. A couple of weeks into my fieldwork, however, I realized it would be foolish to ignore "empowerment" and dismiss the work of NGOs so easily. Instead, I came to understand this term as one that had a great deal of significance to the young people with whom I was working.

Although they were just 17 years old, Noemi[93] and Marisol[94] were two young women who had a lot of previous experience with NGOs around Sacatepéquez: one of their secondary schools had been founded by an organization interested in providing thorough sex-ed classes, Noemi had been involved with *Ser Niña* (an NGO that provides a variety of workshops to young girls) in elementary school, and both were part of the Mariposas[95] youth program with which I was collaborating. As we saw in Chapter 1, Mariposas was an NGO that provided low-cost or free, quality reproductive care to women around various departments in Guatemala with an emphasis on contraceptives. The majority of the staff was local, and though most of the funding came from abroad, everyone at Mariposas worked hard to engage with the local communities they worked with.

That afternoon, Noemi, Marisol and I were sitting in Ana's small office, tucked in the back corner of the kitchen, leaning over my computer to take a closer look at some pictures they had both taken for a PhotoVoice project I organized. This week, I was meeting with the young

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[93] Pseudonym.
[94] Pseudonym
[95] Pseudonym

photographers individually (or in pairs, if it was more convenient[96]) to discuss the pictures they had taken so far. As we scrolled through the album, Marisol talked about how her own mother became pregnant at the age of fourteen "because she didn't have any information." She contrasted her mother's experience to her own, referring to herself as—in Noemi 's words—a "mujer empoderada" (empowered woman) who had taken part in many NGO trainings and so had the information and communication to avoid teenage pregnancies. Though not all my interlocutors saw NGOs as necessary to develop their understanding of "rights", they did see the expertise cultivated in these interventions as a vehicle for empowerment. Moreover, Mariposas' critical emphasis on rights and the youth's understanding of themselves as empowered set the groundwork for everyday political agency.

Building on her thoughts about empowerment, Marisol added that "young people have their minds open to new experiences and knowledge" and so they are more open "to becoming empowered". This was especially true when it came to gender roles and sexuality. Marisol explained that "society tells us women that we have to wear dresses and skirts, and that we have to cook and that we can't work. They say that men have to be construction workers and make all the money, and they can't make tortillas […] but that is changing as we have more information. And maybe one day we will be old, and some things will be hard for us to accept…" Noemi chimed in—"but right now we are *jovenes actualizados*!" (up-to-date youth). Both girls were quite optimistic and adamant that being empowered is what was allowing them, as young women in a restrictive society, to take charge of their futures. For both, one of the biggest achievements of being "empoderada" was being able to talk about reproductive health and sexuality openly,

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[96] That is, only Noemi had a phone and they lived close to each other, so they liked to take the bus together to come to the Mariposas' office.

especially giving "pláticas"—or small-scale *charlas (talks)*—to close friends and family members. Marisol pointed to one of the photos,

> "Here is a picture of me explaining to one of my [male] friends about contraceptives. He had a lot of questions, and it was really nice because we could talk about these things, and I could show him what a condom is and that I wasn't embarrassed to talk about it."

She was sitting on a worn-down sofa at her school, facing her friend, and holding a *muestrario,* a small, bound book given to Mariposas' Youth to show their peers anatomically correct images of the reproductive system, male and female, as well as tangible examples of contraceptive devices.

> "At first, when he saw that I was giving these talks to classmates, he said that having information about [contraceptive] methods was just for women, but I showed him that no, both men and women must know this information […] it is important that all the information about contraceptive methods, or any topic, can be given to people, regardless of whether they are women or men. I explained all the different methods, and he grabbed the copper T [copper IUD] and was flexing the parts, because he was really surprised by what it looked like."

Hearing Noemi and Marisol talk about reproductive rights illustrates the ways young women interact with sexual health institutions and interpret the lessons taught during these workshops. These narratives are a result of reproductive governance, a way that people take up the language used by NGOs and apply what they learned in workshops to their own social worlds. I see this as a genre in and of itself, where people apply the morality behind lessons of reproductive governance to their own lived experiences, thereby transforming the discourse of empowerment into something more personal and, I argue, more political. For Marisol, it was having an open mind

and encouraging everyone to speak openly about reproductive health. For Keilin, participating in a different NGO, it was knowing even children had human rights.

Intertwined with these descriptions of *charlas* and narratives of self-confidence is also a performance of authority that imbues these young women with power. As the "middle figures" (Pinto 2008; Varma 2012) Noemi and Marisol draw on their rights-based education and mirror the language used by human rights institutions to become the educators and experts rather than subjects of NGO interventions. In her work on reproductive governance and NGOs in India, Sarah Pinto (2008) demonstrates the way that these "mimetic acts" (or the way people come to model speech after biomedical and nonprofit institutional trainings) provide "a site for enacting authority" that has a strong affective component. Pinto argues that "the *performance* of education accomplishes a transformation of subjects" that allows women to become authoritative figures of development (*Ibid.* 124). Authoritative institutional speech can be seen as a power move through which young women come to position themselves as empowered and so as *superior* to their peers. In the last chapter I explored some of the ways that this moral superiority is crafted, but here I want to emphasize the gratification and sense of power that young women (usually accustomed to both a societally constructed sense gender and generational inferiority) attain from using their empowerment to educate others.

Our conversations revealed how being *empoderada* is intricately tied to a sense of self**,** as well as to what I refer to as political subjectification (in the sense of developing political subjectivities). I consider the "opening of the mind" that Marisol speaks of to be part of a necessary step towards building a more inclusive community in the future. As young women (and men) become *jovenes actualizados* they are actually challenging the "machine of vision" to be more equitable, particularly when it comes to gender roles. For Marisol, being able to sit down and have

a talk with a male classmate about reproductive health was a big step in this direction. In the picture, she is sitting up straight, shoulders back, and making eye contact with her friend. The confidence and ease her posture conveys is contrasted to how she describes her experience with talking about reproductive topics in the past:

> "You used to think this was something embarrassing, so you look down or you giggle because you're using words that are seen as taboo. The guys, especially, they think it's all a big joke, but I like being able to talk about this and teaching people that you don't have to laugh when you say these words, and you don't need to be embarrassed because they are normal and they are important for everyone."

Noemi was not the only one who spoke of this self-confidence when talking to others. Lety, a young woman I interviewed after attending a capacitación on empowerment organized by another NGO, affiliated with a well-known Guatemalan university and scholarship program, explained to me how she had developed confidence in herself since attending the workshop series:

> "I was in this workshop and they were teaching us how to stand up and talk about ourselves and the program director came to me and said I had to stop looking down […] it was a little harsh at first" she recounted with a laugh, "but since then I paid attention and started looking people in the eye when I talk and it makes a big difference. I knew that I didn't have to be scared of people, even if they were older or they had prestigious jobs […] Since then, I was invited to speak at one of the workshops on self-confidence by [the director] because she liked the change she saw in me and I always share my story, and remind people that they have to believe in themselves."

I see this embodied sense of self-confidence and knowledge sharing as part of developing a political subjectivity. For both Marisol and Lety, practicing confident speech was part of voicing their own interpretations of rights and empowerment. It was also about imagining and working towards communities where societal standards are mediated by "mujeres empoderadas" and "jóvenes actualizados".

These stories of becoming *mujeres empoderada* raise important questions about the role that self-transformations play in *politics* for ordinary people. There is a clear interaction between discursive strategies of empowerment that draw on global ideas about what women should be (as feminists, consumers, or mothers, etc.) and practices of the self that allow these young women to embody female power and confidence in a way that affects their daily lives. I find Hankins' (2019) call to consider the ethical interaction between the "institutions and discourses that frame individual lives and action" helpful to address this tension between competing *discourses* of empowerment and embodied *practices* of empowerment that young women are constantly negotiating. For Hankins, politics, "is the collective engagement with such arrangements so that we might ethically *practice the selves we want to become*" (Hankins 2019: 178, my emphasis; c.f. Weeks 2011). It is this orientation towards the future that is filled with political potential.

Keilin's realization that she had the right to live free of domestic violence, and the slow-growing conviction that in the future, she would make a 'denuncia' with the police should her cousin be beat up again were part of her vision of becoming empowered. This future self she imagined arose out of a number of rights workshops (sexual rights, human rights, and gender equality) that she attended. Such interventions, organized mainly by Monica's friend who ran a feminist, expat-supported organization[97], took up what Feola calls the "unglamorous" work of educating and preparing Keilin for that moment. The work occurring in workshops like Keilin's is not straightforward, it takes time and repetition, and as always, the interpretation of rights is ultimately up to each participant. This *vernacularization* is a crucial aspect of developing politics. I find it helpful to draw here from Goodale and Merry's (2007) notion of vernacularization to refer to the ways that these young women use global and international ideas about women's rights to

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[97] For more on this organization, see Chapter 4.

envision a valued and equitable way of life within their own communities (c.f. Levitt and Merry 2009).

The process of learning about one's rights is not unidirectional; there is no formula whereby a young woman attends a workshop, learns about social justice, and is then able to apply those rights to her life. Rather, there is this vernacularization process, by which global discourses of social equality, human rights, development, and "empowerment," are given intimate and idiosyncratic meaning by participants. In Marisol and Noemi 's case, a big part of feeling empowered is critically interpreting issues related to reproductive rights (such as gender norms) and knowing how this applies to their daily lives. For them, constructing a more inclusive reality includes knowing how the information they shared can help their peers challenge sexist gender stereotypes.

Returning to Keilin's case, her passionate conviction in her right to denounce domestic violence is political, yet her hesitation in doing so exemplifies the real-world constraints to engaging in politics. For her, the ramifications of being seen and heard by a public (her community) are significant, and though she did not explain them outright, it is not hard to see why she would hesitate to make a 'denuncia'. Filing a police report, though a brave act of politics, would impact her life at home: would her uncle retaliate with a return to violence? Would people believe her, or would she be disregarded as merely 'seeking attention'? More significantly, would she lose her home and job? Her precarious place in her uncle's house put a very high price to exercising her rights. Keilin's hesitation reflects a tension between the feminist and Rancierian call to publicly denounce domestic violence and the multifaceted policing to remain a "good" evangelical daughter. This tension resulted in a steady back and forth between the angry conviction that *una*

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denuncia was the right choice and the uncomfortable acquiescence of living with her uncle's *machismo*.

Keilin's case underscores that knowing one's rights is not the same as exercising those rights. Though I would argue here that knowing your rights can generate the *possibility* of exercising them, of claiming them, this is still not an unequivocal process. Indeed, there are many intimate, and deeply personal challenges to disrupting the distribution of the sensible. Thus, I remain cautious about the possibilities created by these everyday forms of politics. However, I see them as generating *mundane, yet no less important* change in the lives of young women, instead of full-scale revolutions[98].

The fact that Keilin did not denounce her uncle does not necessarily detract from the significance of her political education. Feminist ideas, of bodily and citizenship rights, will continue to shape Keilin's choices in the future. For example, in another conversation I had with her she talked about what she looked for in a potential partner. She was attending a workshop on healthy relationships I had been asked to collaborate on, and I asked all the participants to make an idea map on little whiteboards of what they looked for in a boyfriend or girlfriend. Though many had typical adjectives for a teenage relationship, with words like "nice," "good-looking," and "fun," Keilin's stood out to me for her emphasis on a respectful partnership. Her word board included, among others, "considerate," "kind," and "knows me very well." In this way, I am hopeful Keilin will be able to exercise her right to be free of domestic violence and enter into more equitable relationships with men in the near future. I see the generating of possibilities in her life

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[98] Though some have critiqued the non-revolutionary emphasis on the everyday (Gutmann 1993; Eckstein 1990), I find them ethnographically significant because my interlocutors did. An ethnographic lens highlights the way everyday politics recognizes what is important to people in their day to day lives.

as a slow incursion into a political practice that, though not sending shockwaves or making headlines, has the potential to make the community more equitable in the long run.

Keilin's political agency is also grounded in this expanded understanding of politics as the ethical self-practice towards valued personhood[99] (Hankins 2019; Cole 2012). The workshops organized by Mariposas, and by other local organizations, influence a collective imaginary of equality that shape local political practices to bring about a more democratic community. They are training a new generation of local leaders and development workers who will have the potential to bring their embodied experiences of reproductive rights to the table in a few years. This act of imagining and collectively working towards a more equitable community through self-improvement is *political* precisely because it is based on rights that are both currently denied to marginalized women, yet being claimed by them, nonetheless.

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[99] That is, what Cole (2010) calls "valued forms of personhood" or what it means to be a good adult, living a fulfilling life in one's community (See also, Juliano 2005).

Family Politics: Expanding Political Action Beyond the Public Sphere

FIGURE 2.1: *A Rainy Self-Portrait, 2017*

I see the family as a microcosm of social hierarchy, where political action can have small-scale yet empowering consequences for the everyday lives of young women. In Guatemala, as in many other places, gender marks a clear division of (unrecognized) labor and responsibilities. For example, the young women I was working with were often expected to take care of household chores that their male siblings did not have to do, such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for younger siblings. For many of these young women, the home presented an initial opportunity to try out their developing political agency. On one occasion, Yasmín, one of the ladina teenagers involved with the Mariposas PhotoVoice project I organized, showed me a picture of herself in what she considered to be a moment when she truly felt empowered, and what I consider a perfect encapsulation of everyday politics. She had taken a self-portrait (above) in front of her house one rainy afternoon, her arms were extended outwards, her face raised towards the sky in a wide grin.

"Just yesterday I was thinking about a lot of things… I have a cousin and he told me, 'Yasmín, I'm very worried.' I asked what happened and he said, 'My [girlfriend's] period hasn't come, and we're very scared...' For a long time before this I had told him, 'tell her [your girlfriend] to come to Mariposas, that I'll go with her,' but now they are scared [because she might be pregnant already], and I was thinking: Mariposas makes you reflect a lot because of all the things we learn here. I know I am not going to lose out on all the opportunities I have just for one moment of pleasure. I was also thinking: in the afternoons I have no worries, at night I go to bed whenever I want to. And I will be going to study at the university soon, and I'll have my worries, but they will be my own worries, right, like about my studies to improve myself. So, this is how this picture came about, it records my happiness… and it's how I really believe [being informed about reproductive health] has made me think."

She followed up her reverie with a story about how this feeling of empowerment had changed her family dynamic:

"My parents, they've noticed that I have been feeling like this, my dad half-jokingly said that maybe I shouldn't come to these *capacitaciones* anymore because the other day he asked me to get him a drink while he was watching TV and I said no, because I am not his *muchacha!* [his maid] and I used to do my brother's laundry too but the other day I was thinking… why am I responsible for this? He has two arms and two legs; he can do it himself! And now when I do laundry, I only do my own."

Yasmín's clear articulation of her value and her equality with her brother raises several pertinent questions: are these small acts of defiance a step towards breaking long-established patriarchal hierarchy? Are they like the forms of "everyday resistance" that Scott (1985) discusses[100]? More important, are they *political*? I would argue that the simple act of refusing to bring her father, the symbolic head of the patriarchal household, is in fact a clear act of dissensus. Her sense of freedom and happiness, embodied in her first picture, go beyond superficial talk of what empowerment is, and shows how the vernacularization of social justice discourses has very

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[100] See below for a full discussion of how I compare this everyday form of politics to Scott's "everyday resistance" (1985).

real effects on the lived experience of young women. Like refusing to wash clothes, everyday politics is comprised of mundane acts of change that can be easily overlooked. While an understanding of politics that focuses on big, dramatic gestures—like that of Actoras de Cambio—evidences the important power of dissensus in challenging social inequality, it can also overlook everyday instances of contestation.

I want to build here on an understanding of politics that takes a step away from organized social movements and political activists, that is not always grounded on the privilege of the "public"[101] sphere and civil society, to expand our idea of political agency. In a similar vein to Rancière's notion of politics, Lauren Berlant (1997) points to the policing nature of the public/private divide and challenges it with what she calls "diva citizenship", or "a moment of emergence that marks unrealized potentials for subaltern political activity […] when a person stages a dramatic coup in a public sphere in which she does not have privilege" (*Ibid.* 223). Berlant argues that there is power in mobilizing against this divide for political reasons. I extend her argument and show that there is value to applying her framework to the un-dramatic, everyday practices of political subjectivity. Topics of sexuality and reproduction have long been excluded from public discussions (in the United States and elsewhere) and in the deeply religious communities of Guatemala, this includes family discussions. While Keilin did not stage her dramatic coup against her uncle, others did.

For example, Yasmín embraced the NGO teaching that the names of female body parts are not a "bad word" and decided to teach her young cousin the word vagina. She hoped that teaching

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[101] I place this in quotation marks to call attention to Nancy Fraser's (1997) emphasis on counter-publics over one, single public. She points to the way civil society was founded on exclusionary principles (c.f. Mehta 1997) and to the importance of recognizing *many* publics. Moreover, I want to highlight the way the public and private are always co-constituted.

her cousin what a vagina is would encourage her to use the term when talking of both sexuality and sexual harassment. She showed me a picture of her cousin holding a blond Barbie doll wearing nothing but blue boots (a visual instrument rife with symbolic meaning, about capitalism and race[102]) in their living room and explained to me how she had taught her little pupil about female anatomy using her NGO training. Yasmín's vernacularized and impromptu rights workshop is an authoritative moment of everyday politics, where she was challenging not just the discursive taboo of saying the word vagina, but also the silencing of women's sexuality and domestic violence that comes along with it. Smiling mischievously, Yasmín recounted the uncomfortable stares her family had given her during this charla every time the word vagina was said out loud, for it had been a Sunday and their living room was busy with people coming and going in preparation of a late family lunch.

In many instances, when I found myself talking to people about what empowerment meant to them, the word *conscientización* would come up. Though not quite in the way Freire (2000 [1970]) uses the term, for many it was still considered a powerful affective tool of empowerment. In one occasion, I struck up a conversation with a seamstress, Norma, in the overcrowded obstetrics and gynecology waiting room of the San Jose Public Hospital in Escuintla. As the wait stretched on and the heat inside the waiting room rose, she told me about her husband, whom she described as being a very supportive man. "But you know," she told me as she fanned herself with a small cloth, "he wasn't always like that. When we first got together, he didn't think it was okay for me to go back to school because it meant I wanted to go out and work, and that's not what women are

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[102] I place private in quotations to highlight the way the public and private are always co-constituted. For now, I see the Barbie, with her blond hair and blue eyes, as a poignant representation of a Westernized (physical) ideal that can never be achieved by the girls playing with the doll. The pervasiveness of blond, light-skinned dolls (both Mattel's version and knock offs) as gendered play objects reinforces a socio-racial hierarchy that places brown-skinned women at the bottom of the social ladder.

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supposed to do. You see, he wanted to have a family right away. But after I had my first baby boy, I decided to finish my [secondary school] and became *conscientizada* about how important it was to have this education."

She went on to assure me that her husband was now on board with her working, not just because it provided a second income to their family, but because he appreciated her own personal growth. The opportunity to complete high school was only possible for her because of a small group of community leaders who organized weekend classes for adults. At first glance Norma's story does not seem revolutionary—after all her classes had been in Spanish, which was not her native language, and she now worked hard within the confines of a capitalist system—but her education allowed her to feel *empoderada*. This feeling had changed the nature of her relationship with her husband, making her home life more equitable, and allowing her to grow as a person. From a Westernized perspective, Norma's experience may seem lacking. Her excited announcement that her husband "even took care of our baby boy when I was doing my classes!" reveals a larger, deep-rooted gender disparity in the country. Her subjectivity and her sense of personal agency, however, was deeply impacted by this gesture (and the feeling of accomplishment at having her diploma) and had allowed her to challenge patriarchal hegemony in her own personal life.

I do not want to overstate the positive connotations of empowerment with these stories. The reality is that life for most Guatemalans is filled with deep structural inequality. The accounts of small steps people take to empower themselves are often overshadowed by the precarity of their economic and health statuses. What's more, imagining the self as empowered can also have a negative impact on people's everyday life. For many who participate in development programs, being *superado* is tied to imagining a "good life". In her analysis of the sexual economy in

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Madagascar, Jennifer Cole (2012) considers the complex social processes behind young women's idea of a valued personhood. She examines the role that an ideology of modernization has on the way youth imagine and create their futures, leaving many with feelings of being 'behind' and needing to 'catch up'" to Western societies. In doing so, Cole reveals the tensions between the passionate need to attain this imagined personhood and the overwhelming difficulties this quest is filled with (65).

For Mariela, everyday empowerment is knowing how to identify that she is in a healthy relationship and counseling her friends on safe sex, as well as planning her future as a healthcare professional. For her, feeling empowered means "being confident in the decisions I make," an impressive statement for a 17-year-old to make. According to Adelaida, young women like her need information to be able to make empowered decisions: "I believe that in Mariposas, as empowered youth, well, our job is to inform people and be able to end so many taboos and myths that exist in society." Despite the optimism of most of the young women I worked with, their real-world circumstances often made it extremely difficult to substantially carry out this empowered subjectivity.

As Lety's example below illustrates, what it means to be empowered is very much controlled by the organizations who work with these young women. After all, as Tania Li poignantly reminds us, "empowerment is still […] a relationship of power" (2007: 4996) built on the assumed "ignorance" and inferiority of the subject of intervention (Ranciere 1991). After completing the workshop series, Lety applied to study marketing and business in Guatemala City. The workshop director helped her find a scholarship through a prominent Guatemalan food chain who I found out had sponsored the capacitaciones through the university. I visited her on campus after her first year was over and learned that she had originally wanted to study sociology, "but

they don't have scholarships for that" she told me. It was a reminder of the power that donations have on the work of different NGOs. Just like GuateAyuda had a Catholic emphasis because its donors and organizers were very religious, Lety's sponsors had a clear idea that "empowerment" meant joining the capitalist workforce.

In a similar manner, Mariela's dream to become a doctor fit into a larger development discourse surrounding women's health which prioritizes biomedical interventions (Pinto 2008; Van Hollen 2003; Smith-Oka 2013) and so presents jobs in the sector as an empowered ideal. Like Keilin, however, Mariela also faced significant challenges when it came to her own family in her quest to become a mujer empoderada. The first was an economic one: she lived in a household with a single mother and six siblings, the eldest of which already had a young child of her own at the age of 19. It was unrealistic for Mariela to pursue a full-time education because she was expected to contribute to the household income. Beyond an expectation, it was really a necessity and Mariela was keenly aware of that. The second was a (gendered) labor one: as the second oldest girl in the household, she was needed around the house to take care of multiple younger siblings and an infant niece. She could not afford the intense time commitment that a medical education required.

"Well," she said with a sheepish grin one morning I ran into her at the Alas office accompanying a family member who wanted a contraceptive method, "I don't know if I really am going to do that whole doctor thing… They [the Alas staff] really believe in me because of my good grades, but… I don't know… I don't think that's what I think I'm doing anymore..."

Her hesitation and modesty highlighted the tension between the very Westernized NGO encouragements to take a feminist stance and become a doctor, and her own lived experience. It

was not just that Mariela had good grades, she excelled at public speaking, was beloved by her classmates, and had smarts that went beyond the classroom. "Es brillante." *Brilliant* is how the staff at the NGO described her. For them, she represented the ideal subject of intervention: a young woman with a lot of potential and socioeconomic hardships. In fact, she was often the poster girl, literally, for fund-raising activities aimed at the NGOs foreign donors. Her smiling face and courageous story—of a brilliant young, brown woman about to graduate high school, child-free when she herself was the result of a teenage pregnancy—enticed both wealthy American and Guatemalan donors to invest in her future, and the future of many other youth like her. On paper, Mariela's desire to become a doctor perfectly fit the narrative of empowerment many NGOs advocate for, yet in in reality this was an impossible expectation.

These stories highlight how political subjectivity is always an unfinished project: there are always contested and interweaving cycles of discipline and dissensus. In both Mariela and Keilin's case, I saw both policing and politics working simultaneously. An everyday politics approach makes evident these tensions in the lived experiences of my young interlocutors. NGO workshops helped Lety find the confidence she needed to become a workshop leader herself, leading to a prestigious university scholarship but also limiting what she could do with it. At the same time, however, Lety was part of a group on campus who was interested, not in joining the corporate workforce, but rather the nonprofit one. They organized a multitude of volunteer projects for other students on campus, and Lety hoped that one day she would be able to run an organization of her own. Part of becoming mujeres empoderadas, then, involves working towards valued forms of personhood that are influenced (and in turn influence) the governmentality of NGOs. Approaching politics/policing from this everyday understanding underscores the way lived experiences are informed by both *past* experiences and expectations of *future* experiences (Desjarlais and Throop

2011). There is a dialectical interaction between the governance done by NGOs when they teach young women what they *should* be working towards (responsible, neoliberal citizenship or healthy, doting mother) and what young women themselves interpret that to mean in their own lived experience. There is a productive tension between institutions (and their ideologies), and the ways people come to practice valued adulthood in their everyday lives.

Conclusions

The stories of the young women I have shared here stand out for the transformative way they deconstruct hegemonic practices in their own personal lives, even beyond revolutionary politics or diva "scene-making" (Warner 2002). These everyday practices of contestation might not break the chain of governmentality and policing in the neoliberal era, but they are rooted in a desire for a more equitable future. I see the practices that these young women engage in as deeply *political* (Rancière 1999). The way that these young women use global and international ideas about women's rights to envision a valued and equitable way of life is ultimately a form of dissensus. I am suggesting that politics does not necessitate a spectacle to provoke change, precisely because rights are ever-changing, and citizenship is always in formation. To be clear, I do not want to over-glorify the practice of everyday politics. I see this form of dissensus as generating small-scale, and often quite intimate change*;* I do not expect it to change gender relations radically in the community, but rather to set a foundation upon which future progress can be made (often, frustratingly slowly). Indeed, it is these small, unglamorous moments, that pave the way for a Rancierian, diva citizenship. Having Noemi and Marisol explain reproductive rights to me reflects the ways empowerment is interpreted at a discursive level, while Yasmín's story

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captures how this self-transformation into mujeres empoderadas is practiced in an everyday setting. Finally, stories like Keilin's ground this understanding of everyday politics back into the socioeconomic precarity that frames the lives of most Guatemalans.

In the long run, an everyday understanding of empowerment and its relation to politics/policing allows us to see political agency in the everyday actions of young girls like Yasmín, Noemi, and Marisol. In the ordinary lives of these mujeres empoderadas everyday politics means providing a friend with strict parents free condoms, it is being able to leave a dildo out even though your grandmother might see it, it is yelling the word vagina in a crowded living room, but above all it means feeling powerful as you face the future. Whether or not this small step at dissenting has a larger impact in their communities remains to be seen. The social, economic, and political challenges these young women face are vast, but their struggles for gender equality have the potential to impact their social reality, and that of those closest to them. Additionally, the sense of community they have formed through attending charlas, pláticas, and trainings is significant, as it provides them with a supportive network of like-minded individuals who believe in the promises of equality and justice.

In this chapter I considered the self-transformations young women enact based on a sense of empowerment as *politics* to highlight their power in the face of different kinds of neoliberal policing. The governmentality associated with NGOs, and the power they continue to exercise in the lives of young women as the influence and control of non-profit in the area continues to grow is at once policing and generating possibilities for politics to occur. As people like Yasmín, Keilin, Lety and Noemi engage with the discourses about social justice, they are bringing their own voices and concerns to the table even as they continue to be policed and disciplined by overwhelmingly neoliberal and precarious country we live in.

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Chapter Three

Interpellating Identity: Masculinity and Indigeneity in the Neoliberal Era

Abstract

Every year, Guatemalan NGOs host thousands of talleres, charlas, & capacitaciones (workshops, talks, and trainings) aimed at helping marginalized youth "improve" themselves and their life circumstances. The topics of these education initiatives are wide-ranging, from sexual health to farming practices, to child health and nutrition. As inequality continues to grow, however, these initiatives do little to challenge a hegemonic world order that values non-indigenous identities and neoliberal economic practices. This paper examines how young men rethink and negotiate their own identities as they take part in a series of non-compulsory education initiatives aimed at "empowering" women. I consider how neoliberal NGO's teach "successful" bodily practices to youth deemed "at risk" as they participate in reproductive education programs that rely on Westernized ideas about freedom and choice. In doing so, they inadvertently promote a certain type of multiculturalism that can devalue indigenous ways of being. I explore how NGOs enact multicultural discipline through the promise of education and ultimately, I analyze the way indigenous youth experience their identity as indigenous change as they work to become "successful" to ask: what happens when this newfound identity is challenged by others?

As part of my partnership with Mariposas, I conducted a series of interviews with their community health promoters in Cobán, Alta Verapaz. The drive was long and tedious; the highway leading to it had been under construction for years and there would be scheduled closures every day, so I would usually try to find rides with acquaintances or friends of friends to avoid taking a bus. Car rides were a little faster, and included pit stops for snacks and bathroom breaks. One of these drives up to Alta Verapaz, I had gotten a ride from Enrique, a middle-aged man who worked as a handyman for one of the head employees at a Cardamom farm near Cobán and made the trip to and from Guatemala City quite frequently. We were driving on a Sunday to avoid the long lines that formed around the construction areas of the highway, but we still decided to stop for some ice cream halfway through. As we stretched our legs, Enrique asked me about the work Alas did and I told him about the trips around the countryside I had taken with them around the countryside.

"You know," he told me as we resumed our drive, "I used to work for an NGO around here too. We were out here with these people from abroad [*extranjeros*] and we had these machines that we were giving to people."

Although I asked some follow-up questions, I was never quite able to understand what these machines were for, but I gathered they were medically related devices that were given to local health clinics or healers by a foreign nonprofit. Enrique had been hired as a driver for the NGO at a time because of his knowledge of the roads in the Alta Verapaz and Petén regions. He was not the first person I had talked to who had worked for an NGO (or a multitude of NGOs) without exactly knowing or remembering what kind of work the organization did. Nonprofit jobs were a coveted position for many that could provide the social capital to be hired for other nonprofit jobs. For example, Efraín, one of the male community promoters I had spoken with had been able to join the Mariposas team because of his status as a health leader in his community.

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While many of the female promotoras were also midwives, which meant they had an established role in women's reproduction already, Efraín had worked for TulaSalud, an NGO that aimed to reduce maternal mortality by training community leaders to recognize when pregnant women needed to be taken to a hospital during labor. Although TulaSalud was still active in the Cobán region, the specific project he had worked for was no longer operational, but he proudly showed me the cellphone they had given him and some of the medical equipment he still kept in his house. Before TulaSalud, Efraín had worked for another NGO who aimed to provide nursing training to community leaders to encourage inoculations for school-aged children in the area. That organization no longer existed, but Efraín remembered it fondly because it had allowed him to connect with other community health leaders as they completed a number of both state and NGO-sponsored health programs. Efraín could not quite recall the first NGO he had ever worked for was but did point out a myriad of *stuff* he had acquired throughout the years from the many NGOs that had passed through his community. From t-shirts and little towels to plastic cups, a water-filtration jug, nursing manuals and his prized medical equipment box—all containing a slew of logos and acronyms.

Efraín's NGO experience was not uncommon. When I traveled to Q'eqchi' communities, I was assisted by a translator who shared with me stories and gossip about the different NGOs she had translated for during our trips: human rights organizations, women's health initiatives, and often the Catholic church, where despite being a strong advocate for contraceptives, she was also a eucharistic minister for the sick (the person that brings holy communion to those unable to attend church due to old age or illness). Another community promoter complained of the solar panels an NGO had donated--they were not strong enough to even charge their cell phones--because nonprofit environmental groups had made it impossible to get electricity in the town since it would

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have had to cross a national forest reserve. The fact that this community had been a stronghold for the guerilla during the war was not a coincidence in their lack of basic services now. The burgeoning of NGOs in both the Alta Verapaz and Sacatepéquez regions in the post-war era was reminiscent of previous development and colonial incursions into the area, including military ones, as Enrique would recall.

As we continued up the winding roads, the dry, rocky terrain gave way to lush green forests. As someone who is easily car sick, I was grateful for the traffic up the mountains that day. While we sat at a standstill, a group of foreign tourists exited the van in front of us to stretch their legs and take pictures of the stunning scenery off the side of the road. As we sat there Enrique shared the following stories with me:

"I know this area really well, I've been up in the forests a lot"

By this point the cars were moving again, so we buckled our seatbelts, the blond tourists got in their van and we began inching our way up the mountains again. Enrique's mind was still on the military and his youth.

"I was almost taken into the army once, when I was young," he kept going, always good-naturedly, "I had this bike and we were riding with some friends in [my town] when we stopped by the side of the road to rest, you know we were teenagers, so we were just goofing around and then a military truck pulled up and they made us get in. We had to leave our bikes there, and they took us to get enlisted, all three of us. Well, I was able to get out of it because my dad was helping the military out, he helped them do local patrols because he was one of the men in town who had a rifle, so he talked to the guy in charge and said 'hey you know, that's my son' so they let me go, but my friends still had to join the army. One of them died... but my other friend, he came back a bad, bad guy... just bad. I think that's what the army would do, you know, he got these tattoos and

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he was not the same," Enrique lowered his voice conspiratorially, "he was bad, he killed people, right, and then when the war ended he was a bad guy, very tough, but you could see that he was evil in his eyes, he drank blood and that's what corrupted him, so there was no coming back. After he left, he did some bad stuff... he still had all this training from the army but the evil got to him and he was killed trying to rob a warehouse one night."

Before I could ask more, Enrique gestured to the lands around us, "but you know he was out in these forests too, and he told me that one time he was in there when they started shooting at him and so he was shooting back, and he said that he realized that those attacking him, they were foreign, like Russians, and there in the forest he saw this woman, and she was a beautiful woman, she had blue eyes and she was blond, and so he stopped shooting because she was so beautiful, but she had a rifle and started shooting at him too!" He chuckled and gestured emphatically with his hands, emphasize the surreal complexities of his story.

Enrique did not recall what ended up happening to the beautiful woman, but he repeated once more how the war had turned his friend into a "bad, bad guy," *un tipo malo, pero así, muy malo.*

Introduction

Enrique's story and the increasing NGO presence in the region highlight some of the gender dynamics at play between the chauvinistic and violent legacy of the Armed Conflict in Guatemala and newer development interventions, especially those that emphasize female empowerment. In this chapter, I explore the way gender and race are intertwined in the landscape of "improvement" (Li 2007) that frames nonprofit interventions in the Guatemalan highlands to ask: What does the

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indio permitido look like in the era of WAD (Women in Development)? How are empowerment and improvement taken up by young men who still wish to appear "tough" but not "bad"?

Following the work of Charles Hale (2002; Hale and Millaman 2006), the term indio permitido (permitted indian) refers to a form of multicultural governmentality[103] that encourages subjects to police their own conduct in accordance with neoliberal principles. Often encouraged by non-state and transnational organizations, this type of governmentality produces two opposing subject positions: the permitted Indian and the prohibited Indian (*indio prohibido*). Both of these relate to making demands on the state (or other organizations of power). The former acts in accordance with the constituting structures of the neoliberalism so that these demands are not challenging neoliberal and capitalist policies while the latter—deemed "dangerous" and "revolutionary"—makes radical and "inappropriate" demands on the state. Other scholars have identified how this permitted/prohibited binary disciplines behavior not just for those making demands on the state, but also, for example, in the realm of healthcare[104] (Berry 2013) or consumerism[105] (Gónzalez Ponciano 2008). Ultimately, this form of neoliberal governmentality is implicated in the work of NGOs and particularly in the way these organizations can end up advancing an idea of citizenship and civil society that is based on a deeply colonial notion of modernity (Hale 2002: 496).

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[103] I use the term governmentality to refer to Michel Foucault's conception of disciplinary power. This is something I elaborate further in the introduction. For the scope of this chapter, I take governmentality to be an exercise in normalizing power on the body that produces and distributes subjects around a standard in such a way that it qualifies, measures, appraises, and hierarchizes subjects. Those who are farthest away from the norm, or the standard, are the ones who are most subjected to forms of governance.

[104] Berry's (2013) description of the "*Indio bruto*" (stupid Indian) is reminiscent of Hale's "Indio permitido" in that they are both describing categories of subjects that are used as disciplinary tactics against Maya alterity. The "Indio bruto" in Berry's work is used to train patients to be compliant. It relies on technologies of writing, time-keeping, and other "modern" behaviors to discipline Maya patients.

[105] Gónzales Ponciano (2008) argues that the very modernizing process of nation building in Guatemala was built on a whitened *desire and need* for Western modes of consumption.

In previous chapters, I explored what happens when globalized discourses about rights and empowerment are vernacularized, both as a form of governmentality and politics; as challenging and acquiescing to existing power dynamics. Many of the NGO-run youth programs in the Sacatepéquez region operate with the idea that they are developing leaders, yet this differed from other types local initiatives like collectives who sought to create *activists* (I explore this latter further in the next chapter). In the NGOized landscape of the region, I saw this distinction between "leaders" and activists as stemming from a very neoliberal root, where youth are taught to be modern citizens. In this chapter, I explore how teenage participants in NGO programs that highlight this discourse of leadership imagine themselves as emerging citizens of the nation. I focus especially on the role of gender and ethnicity within this imagined self as young men and women work towards the promise of "superación" (Villavicencio 2017).

The discourse of development is predicated on the language surrounding a desire for "improvement". As I describe earlier (Villavicencio 2017), *superación* (as a noun) and *superarse* (as a reflexive verb) are hard to translate outright. The term connotes an idea of both betterment and of overcoming: essentially, overcoming a combination of indigenous, rural, and impoverished identity and conditions. The logic behind *superación* is as follows: first, rising above an identity that is seen as "lacking" and second, an improvement of the overall quality or esteem of a person. Charles Hale makes clear how complex this term is in Guatemala: "'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). Though NGOs are not explicitly saying this, the term will always carry this implied undertone[106].

Most of the NGOs I chose to work with were conscious of past development failures in their field as well as competition from other local and global NGOs, and so were making conscious efforts to distinguish themselves by adopting more race-conscious and feminist policies (to varying degrees). There is a large body of literature that has documented the overtly condescending and racist attitudes that development initiatives can take, especially in the field of reproductive health (Lopez 2006; Smith-Oka 2015; Egan and Gardner 2007; Nagar 2006; Escobar 1991; Escobar 1995). I focus here on development organizations that worked hard to combat or at least avoid this type of racism. In analyzing these race-conscious NGO programs, it became evident that they follow the logic of neoliberal multiculturalism. Despite the best interests and hard work of many nonprofit workers, racist and classist undertones remain pervasive within the discourse of development. I direct my attention here on how neoliberal and multicultural governmentality (Hale 2005; Hale 2002; Hale and Millaman 2006) impact the identities and desires of youth's everyday lives. In my previous analysis of empowerment, I see becoming "empoderada" as having two discursive layers. The first centers around notions of improvement as a consequence of the power and governmentality exercised by NGOs, where empowerment can be seen as a buzzword for NGOs to discipline youth. The second makes evident that development is not just a top-down

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[106] For Guatemalan anthropologist and historian Edgar Esquit (2008), superación does not necessarily have to carry negative connotations, as he shows how the superado elites of Alta Verapaz and Chimaltenango fought vestiges of colonial authority (landowners, ladinos, bureaucracy) in their own communities to demand land and development For him, being superado also encompasses Maya leaders who adopted "a local policy of modernization (through education, labor activities, and commerce) for indigenous peoples" (125, my translation).. Esquit examines how la adquisición de conocimientos or the acquirement of knowledges (reminiscent of Freire's [2000] conscientization) led to an indigenous superación. Citing Eric Wolf (2001), Esquit asserts that this superación served to "establish, maintain, and augment the power of [indigenous groups] within social relations" and fight racism, and socioeconomic and political exclusion (2008; 129, my translation).

process, but rather that the way youth vernacularize ideas about rights and empowerment can serve as a form of everyday politics.

As I explored in previous chapters, part of this political subjectification involves a shift in the way youth perceive themselves. Becoming a "mujer empoderada" involves an affective transformation that is deeply political[107], and so challenges gendered hierarchies in the lives of those young women who come to see themselves as empowered. Despite some of the positive consequences of this process, like young women challenging their male siblings to take up household chores or feeling confident enough to teach their male classmates about safe sex, I also document ones that resemble policing more than politics. Because development and indigeneity are intricately tied together in Guatemala, there were many instances where feeling empowered took on racist undertones. For example, during an early field visit to one of GuateAyuda's workshops on child nutrition, one of the older participants thanked GuateAyuda for helping her "become *castellana* (Castilian)". For one of the PhotoVoice reflections two young women took two pictures of two different families at Antigua's central park. The first picture showed a small, light-skinned girl playing near the fountain, the second showed a small indigenous girl in *corte* (indigenous dress) holding her infant brother. As the girls analyzed the images for me, it was clear they did not know anything about them besides what was visible in the pictures at the time. I have chosen not to share these images here to avoid reproducing this visual form of violence and coloniality against the indigenous family whose photograph was taken.

"The first picture shows a little girl that is happy" one of them explained to me, "it's clear that her mother loves her and used [family] planification so now they are able to provide for her.

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[107] Various scholars have pointed to the way affect is deeply political, see e.g. Masumi (2015); Ahmed (2004).

In this [second] picture, it is clear that this little girl is not as loved, the mother was probably irresponsible and now this little girl has to be here on the streets taking care of her brother because their mother can't provide for them." In their interpretation of the two families, the participants had imposed a racist overtone to the topic of family planning they regularly heard at the organization. I knew the staff at Alas worked hard to make sure their programs were race-conscious and multicultural, and many kept up with both academic and activist networks to keep their curriculum up to date. The girl's comment, however, conveyed an underlying societal belief that living a "good life" is tied to a racial hierarchy. In my experience, this hierarchy did not only affect women, but was intricately tied to notions of masculinity as well. Indeed, as development programs encourage female empowerment the question of what an empowered (or *superada*) masculinity should look like becomes all the more intriguing. Idealized masculinities have the baggage from the Armed Conflict of men being political and of being tough—of being the indio prohibido and the "*tipo malo,*" the bad, bad guy of Enrique's story.

What is interesting to note here is that the tipo malo, made "bad" and blood-thirsty by the violence and brutality of the Armed conflict, was exactly the type of masculinity the government needed to carry out its anti-insurgency and scorched earth campaigns[108]. This hyper-masculine, ruthless soldier was a form of hegemonic masculinity[109] tied to nation-building efforts that ultimately led to a counter-insurgency strategy that relied on sexual violence and terror (Leiby

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[108] This is evidenced, among other daunting and tragically violent statistics, by the fact that 93% of the human rights violations committed during the war were perpetrated by state-sponsored actors (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico 1999).

[109] Abrams (2013) documents the way "masculinities are distinctly a relational concept as institutions create masculinities and masculinities also construct institutions" in such a way where hegemonic masculinity refers to "a dominant conception of masculinity as synonymous with power. It explains how definitions of manhood in American culture reinforce the power that some men maintain and wield over women and other men. It is a "culturally idealized form of masculine character" (567). I see this term as useful for talking not just about American culture, but also about the way certain masculinities come to gain value over other forms of gender expression (other masculinities, femininities, etc.) in Guatemala as well.

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2009; Burt 2019). Now, almost two and a half decades after the signing of the Peace Accords, these identities, of hyper-masculinity and sexual violence, have become the embodiment of gang membership and so the target of what Kevin O'Neill (2015) calls "soft security projects" throughout the region. Soft security refers to the transnational techniques and programs intended to *prevent* violence (especially gang violence and membership) "before it starts" through a series of youth programs, social services, development, and—in Guatemala—a deeply Christian sense of self-transformation and disciplining (*Ibid.*).

Ana Maria Alonso (1995) documents a similar process in the frontier masculinities of *norteño* (from the northern Mexican border) men. She recounts the way norteño identity at the time of colonial expansion into Apache land was built around state-sponsored, acquired military skills used to take the land from the "barbarian" indigenous peoples in the name of Mexican expansion. By the 19th century, however, the expansion of Mexico City's power and the country's shift into capitalist forms of development marked this type of previously hegemonic violence-based masculinity as "wild" and "threatening," eventually leading to the norteños becoming key actors in the Mexican revolution *against* the state[110]. Alonso shows how the state redefined "the 'warrior spirit' of the serranoes [as] an obstacle to 'order' and 'progress'; ironically, these one-time agents of 'civilization' became redefined as the new barbarians" (*Ibid.* 118), but this did not change the cultural constructions and social identities of serrano men in reality. In Guatemala, the hyper-masculine *Kaibil* (elite military fighter) and "bad" fighter the government needed to squash

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[110] Alonso writes, "[c]apitalist development and state centralization redefined the forms of subjectivity-subjection; class acquired a new saliency in the calculation of status. Ethnicity and prowess in warfare—the main sources of social honor for the subaltern groups and classes of the frontier—lost their centrality in the calculation of status" (1995: 117).

the guerrilla became problematic after the signing of the Peace Accords, yet (unsurprisingly) the hegemony and social identities behind it did not just suddenly end.

In this era of soft security, the governmentality behind the indio permitido mixes surprisingly well with Christian piety and governance. The indio prohibido is radical[111], non-modern, and so violent[112]. The *machista* man is a threat to civilized modernity, he has tattoos, consumes drugs or alcohol, is sexist, and so violent. Policing toxic masculinity then, becomes an issue of *security*. As Ronal's PhotoVoice comments in Chapter One made it evident, for women this approach to development, of preventing "delinquents," was done through the prevention of teenage pregnancies. For men, though they should share responsibility in pregnancies, preventing delinquency is tied to other forms of governance beyond controlling sexuality. It is done through an intervention into the very "soul" of young men. O'Neil has documented the way this form of governmentality, with its deep ties to Christian piety, is ultimately an embodied "struggle and contestation over improving and becoming better" (2015: 209). It is also deeply tied to hope and to aspiration (*Ibid.*).

This type of development work includes an emphasis on self-esteem as an avenue for self-transformation and superación with the twofold goal of promoting soft security (gang prevention) and neoliberalism. I add neoliberalism here because this type of work often encourages young men to "pull themselves up by the bootstraps" instead of demanding social services or goods from the government. Young men, like young women, are not taught to critically challenge structural

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[111] I also note that there is a connection between masculine subjectivities and political action. Men are the ones deemed political, and so radical, while women during the Armed Conflict (despite carrying crucial labor for the guerrillas) were often not recognized as such other than as victims of gruesome sexual violence.

[112] Diane Nelson (1999) has also documented the way masculine forms of indigeneity are often also associated with sexism—a sexism from which indigenous women must be saved (problematizing here the implication that it is white women and humanitarian efforts that do this "saving"). She has also pointed to the intricate ways in which indigeneity itself is gendered female (*Ibid.* 182).

inequality (that would make them radicals), but rather to incorporate into the precarious economy available to most Guatemalans. As I explore below, this incorporation has very real materialistic implications of consumption and upward social mobility.

Empowered or Indigenous: The Socioracial Hierarchy and Superación.

In the NGOized landscape of Sacatepequez (and Cobán), this baggage behind different masculinities is layered on to notions of superación and the promise of economic improvement built into development programs. For many who participate in development programs, being *superado* is tied to imagining a "good life". Jennifer Cole's (2010) analysis of valued personhood makes it evident that the way youth imagine and create their futures is deeply tied to an ideology of modernization, leaving many with feelings of being 'behind' and needing to 'catch up'" to Western societies. This tension between the passionate needed to attain this imagined personhood and the overwhelming difficulties and disappointments this quest is often filled with[113] are also prevalent in the way NGOs affect young men, especially due to the overwhelming levels of violence youth face growing up in Guatemala.

For many young Guatemalans in the Chimaltenango and Sacatepéquez region, the "good life" is only attainable through self *superación* and empowerment. As I have explored in previous chapters, attaining a valued sense of personhood involves both a neoliberal accumulation of material wealth and status, and the possession of information and a formal education. The socioracial connotations behind this "improvement", however, have results that are unintended for many organizations, as the harsh evaluation of the two mothers at the park revealed. After I was

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[113] C.f. Ferguson 1999.

shown the pictures of the two families at the park, I decided to show both pictures to some of the staff with whom I had developed trustworthy relationships. They were quite alarmed and a little disappointed. I knew they shared my concerns about the racist undertones given in the description of the images. Together, we commented on the difficulty of talking about racism in Guatemala. For me, this difficulty was tied to the country's embrace of multiculturalism (included in our constitution and required in our schooling), which has shifted the conversation from *race* to *culture* as many have pointed out (Hale 2018; Bonilla-Silva 2014). A couple of weeks later, the topic of racial discrimination was brought up in one of the training sessions. It was not the emphasis of the training day, but youth learned some of the laws that prevent discrimination on the basis of race and discussed some examples of racism.

Before then, however, I held an informal workshop where I asked participants to reflect on how they felt when they discussed reproductive health with their friends, their families, and others in their community. I designed a short activity where participants received a blank piece of paper with three columns (friends, family, community) and could choose from a wide variety of post-its containing adjectives to sort into columns, or write-in their own adjectives. The actual sorting activity served as a warm-up to talk about when participants felt empowered (under what circumstances) and what emotions they felt to try and understand the affective component of empowerment[114]. During the group discussion, Ronal, a funny, outspoken participant in many of the NGO youth events (including my PhotoVoice project from Chapter 1) and who had recently enrolled in a local university program, was talking about the positive effects of being *informado*. In one of his more serious moments, he was listing the ideas behind feeling empowered. He

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[114] I discovered that for many of my young interlocutors, their stated emotions during the warm-up activity did not match the fraught and reflective descriptions they would later share with the group.

mentioned the importance of being informed to plan for a better future, including knowledge about our past. He began with: "when we were Mayan—" but was immediately cut off by another teen who interjected: "But aren't *you* Mayan, then?" ("¿Y vos que no sos Maya pues?").

The explosion of laughter that followed her interruption ended Ronal's comment, revealing an underlying suggestion that being indigenous was something did not quite fit in with his sense of being *empoderado*. The laughter of his peers and his embarrassed mumbling made it clear that being interpellated as "Maya" was not something he found particularly pleasant. Ronal, usually the "class-clown" of the group remained mostly silent for the rest of the conversation until we took a short break. The complete one-eighty that I sensed in his commitment and involvement in the conversation were, to be honest, a little heartbreaking to watch. I had been warned about Ronal's "nonsense" and difficult attitude to work with but had always found him fun to have in trainings and workshops. His energy and side-comments were usually the *cause* of explosive laughter and interruptions, so to see him here on the other side was strange. Before the interruption, however, I felt that he had been speaking earnestly about the powerful feeling of being empowered. I was curious about his description of empowerment because most often it was language I heard from my female interlocutors.

I return to this question of male empowerment shortly, but first, to understand Ronal's reaction to being interpellated as an "indio" we must take into account the long history between development and indigeneity. Earlier iterations of development were accompanied by social practices that reinforced systems of power inequalities which, in turn, reinforced beliefs and behaviors that promoted ladino and male superiority, and subaltern consent. Guatemalan social scientist, Emma Chirix García (Chirix García 2013), referred to this as a "civilizing" process that even today continues to build on Eurocentric and colonial notions of modernity, fashion, and

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consumerism to "domesticate the masses in order to advance the idea of European superiority and indigenous inferiority" (26, my translation[115]). Chirix García, as well as other indigenous scholars, have demonstrated how, through the normalizing quality of governmentality, indigenous people are brought into development as abnormal bodies, a category that immediately marks them as lesser and thus not as full citizens or "Guatemalans". Meanwhile, scholars of multiculturalism have shown how this connection between gender, indigeneity, and modernity continues in the neoliberal era.

Now enrolled in university in addition to having a part-time job as a delivery man, indigeneity was, to Ronal, something in the past. His future as empowered, although different from his female classmates, still rested on the postponement of starting a family until being financially secure. He brought up the idea of responsible fatherhood and preventing teenage pregnancies on various occasions, not just during the PhotoVoice project I analyzed in the previous chapter. In Guatemala, around 57.5% of all births are attributed to single mothers (including formal and informal marriages, *unidas*, and domestic partnerships, INE 2018). Many of the charlas Mariposas gave revolved around preventing teenage pregnancies by inadvertently shaming teenage mothers, as I discussed in the previous chapter. However, they also emphasized creating responsible male partners, albeit not as frequently. I found it significant that Ronal seemed quite captivated by the symbol of the teenage mother and seemed apprehensive about the topic. In on occasion, when I asked him why he thought unplanned teenage pregnancies were a big deal, Ronal replied,

"Well, because a lot of them can't take care of the babies because they can't support themselves (*no tienen como mantenerse*), and they're by themselves…"

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[115] In Spanish: "la disciplina se convierte en un medio de dominación o una especie de 'esclavitud moderna' desde los gestos corporales hasta las posturas físicas deseadas, un medio para logar la sumisión al poder y se vanagloria como el 'arte del cuerpo', el dominio sin mostrar lo maquiavélico de ese 'arte'" (2013: 141)

In various occasions Ronal would highlight these two themes again: first having enough resources to support a family and second, having a *family*—that is, establishing a long-term partnership with someone before committing to having children. His first response is tied to the push towards soft security, or the idea that if young men can find gainful employment, they will not see the need to join a gang (something that overlooks the lack of employment availability and wage stagnation throughout the nation). His second response was also not surprising, it is a message that is encouraged not just by the NGO—who sought to help youth envision what a healthy relationship looks like and to promote family planning—and government initiatives taught during public school health charlas, but also by Christian notions of heterosexual marriage and morality. Ronal's comments convey what others had made clear: living the good life and attaining valued personhood was tied to capitalist notions of consumption and success. Being empowered, then, rested on becoming *superado*. Moreover, this form of masculine empowerment promoted by NGOs and soft security programs was also tied to moving away from toxic masculinity—a conflicting message for many young men in Guatemala.

Education and the Desire for a Good Life

Being superado does not automatically make someone empowered. Indeed, I found there was quite a bit of tension in the ways young men perform an empowered masculinity in their everyday lives as they take part in workshops and trainings designed to foster female empowerment. For example, one of Ronal's peers, Roberto, participated in the PhotoVoice project and shared the story of how he was involved in his mother's tortilla business. Roberto was a couple of years younger than Ronal and had been attending the trainings for about a year when I met him, he had decided to become a part of the Mariposas Youth Program because his older sister (and

later his younger sister) had enjoyed participating in the program. Unlike Ronal, Roberto was usually shy, saying little during the whole-group activities. Because of this, he was often overshadowed by some of the larger personalities when the PhotoVoice group shared their pictures with me as a group.

During the later individual interview I conducted with Roberto and one of the Mariposas staff who asked if she could sit in to observe, Roberto reviewed some of the pictures he had taken for the activity. I was interested in hearing more about his ability to *tortear* (make tortillas) as he had shared a couple of pictures of him making tortillas with his mom. Making tortillas is usually an important domestic task for women in the household, including women who work other jobs. In Guatemala, tortillas are usually eaten for every meal or at least for lunch and dinner and most people will try to eat fresh tortillas. For women with stricter time constraints who cannot afford the time to make fresh tortillas multiple times a day, or for men who are buying lunch during their lunch break away from home, there are usually a couple of households in each town who would make and sell fresh tortillas every day. This was the case for Roberto's mom and was the main income for the household of four.

FIGURE 3.1: *Roberto Boils Corn with His Mom*

"Here I am helping my mom boil corn. My mom says that it is good that we are in the [Mariposas] program so that so that we can start visualizing how life is and not 'knock [someone] up' my mom says, and not have a family before the right time […] For me, it's important to reflect about the ties and the trust we have with family, and the support that my mom has given us as we participate in the program."

FIGURE 3.2: *Roberto Makes Tortillas with his Mom.*

"In this picture I am still helping my mom, we are making tortillas. Many of my classmates say that this is for women, but I like to help my mom. I tell my classmates that no, that we have equality… equality."

I asked Roberto if equality was a concept youth were familiar with, he responded,

"The topic of equality is something that they know about, but don't apply it because of how society is, they say 'he's a little weird' […] This is a good picture to talk about equality and about work, because there are times when men don't want to work even though there *is* work for this same reason, that society will cross them out, because supposedly making tortillas is just for women."

There are a couple of familiar discourses running through Roberto's description of making tortillas with his mom. The description of *Photo 1* is a small window into the affective component of empowerment that youth would describe when participating in human rights and reproductive trainings. Youth participating in these programs felt authoritative and proud to be learning about rights. As I have explored throughout this dissertation, feeling knowledgeable about reproductive rights and gender equality helped them *feel* empowered and superior to their peers. Roberto's description of equality, however, also conveys some tensions between this knowledge about equality and the culture of the heteronormative beliefs and expectations that shape masculinity.

Scholars have documented how *machismo* and *marianismo* are "are intertwined, co-existing constructs that describe socially acceptable norms and beliefs that support men and women in traditional gender roles emphasizing a patriarchal power structure" (Nuñez 2016; See also Lagarde y de los Ríos 1990). The NGO worked hard to teach that women could perform any job and that men could be supportive, emotional partners. Last chapter, I explored how this human rights approach to reproductive and gender rights often ends up reinforcing traditional beliefs about femininity, but with a twist. The cases in this chapter demonstrate that the incorporation of

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superación into feelings of empowerment are also complicit in supporting traditional patriarchal norms of the man as the provider.

Moreover, because notions of *machismo* and the related *Caballerismo* (the belief that men should be chivalrous and provide protection and economic wellbeing for their families, Arciniega et al. 2008) are so prevalent in Guatemalan society, the topic of equality can often be a contradictory everyday experience for young men. Roberto's rebuff to his classmates about "we have equality" was a bit undermined by his hesitancy in echoing "…equality" afterwards in addition to the strange phrasing of "having" equality rather than being equal. I saw this as a distinction between knowing about gender equality and applying it to everyday life. When I asked Roberto why youth who are aware of equality do not apply it, that is to elaborate on his comment that that is "how society is" he elaborated not just that "they say 'he's a little weird'" (to men who embody gender equality) but that there is a lot of "judgement" surrounding the topic.

After some prodding on my end, he went on to say that society also judges people based on "the way they dress, how they walk, there are a lot of ways [young men are judged] ...almost everything [can be used to judge]". When I asked how his friends might react when he talks about topics like equality, or challenges gender norms—such as telling his friends that he did not care what they thought about him helping his mom with the tortillas or when he would share knowledge about family planning—he mused, "well, they say 'what are you learning? Stop learning those things' and then that's why many of them… well they don't know about those things".

"So, society looks down on men who know about reproduction and gender?", I asked,

"Mhm," he nodded his head,

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"Why?"

As Roberto elaborated on how society "looks at you like you're weird, or something" for knowing about reproductive and gender rights it became clear that he was referring to homophobic comments. Hypermasculinity as a defining feature of *machista* culture is tied to the construction of race in Latin America. Modernity relies on a juxtaposition across lines of social difference that are biologically and symbolically constructed to sustain liberal exclusions on the base of ethnicity, gender, class, disability, etc. Indeed, scholars argue that a feminized indigenous identity is necessary for the ladino state to position itself as opposing tradition and embracing modernity (Radcliffe 2015; Smith-Oka 2013; Stephenson 1990; Nelson 1999: Casaus Arzú 1992). In his work in Bolivian indigenous communities, Andrew Canessa (2012) has shown how citizenship is intimately tied to gender and masculinity. He argues that "race and sex remain at the heart of how citizenship is construed" and, ultimately, how the nation is constructed. He examines how compulsive military service affects Bolivian men's embodied experience of being indigenous and traces the ways sex and sexuality become sites of uneven power relations (tied to larger national discourses about race and masculinity). Ultimately, Canessa argues that indigeneity and femininity are not only linked together but become the basis of excluding indigenous men (who are seen as feminized because they are indigenous) and women from enjoying the rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship. Ronal's unease about being interpellated as "Maya" when he was describing his feelings of empowerment are grounded in this racialized notion of machismo, even as young men are encouraged to embrace female empowerment.

In the Guatemalan case, the masculinities that arose out of the Armed Conflict continues to haunt gender relations. Diane Nelson's (1999) poignant analysis of race relations in the aftermath of the Armed Conflict still hold true today. Almost thirty years after the 1992

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Quincentennial Celebrations (and protests), considering "the centrality of gender in the production of race, class, and national identification in Guatemala," (*Ibid.* 235) continues to be essential to understanding the social norms in the country. The landscape, however, has also been deeply impacted by the rise of NGOs that aim to address gender discrimination in the aftermath of the Peace Accords and the general trend of women in development (WAD) across the globe. In 1999, Guatemala created the Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women (DEMI, its acronym in Spanish) shortly after signing the United Nation's Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). As many of the CEDAW Commission reports note, however, there has been insufficient governmental change that promotes gender equality. The majority of this work has been taken over by nonprofit organizations in what Moore et al. (2017) have referred to as the "'projectification' of aid in Guatemala" (See also Rohloff et al. 2011).

Roberto's tension between knowing about equality and living it, his pride when showing us the picture of making tortillas with his mom but his fear of being homophobically labeled "weird" are a manifestation of the clash between these two legacies of the Armed Conflict: hypermasculinity and NGOization. Most of Roberto's friends also perform labor to help out their families, but most end up work in the fields surrounding the area, a combination of corn and other crops (lettuce, broccoli, endives and beets). In the end, Roberto expressed that, although his mother was grateful for his help, he would rather work in the fields like his classmates. When I asked why, he shrugged and said, "I dunno, its more practical". What's more, the neoliberal responsibilization furthered by the work of nonprofits combines with the *caballerista* notion of the man as the (economic) head of the household to reinforce a socioracial hierarchy that preferences "modern" ways of being. That is, it promotes ladino (nonindigenous) subjectivities that prioritize Western styles of fashion and media consumption and Spanish.

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For Roberto, this meant that his dream was not to work *en el campo* (in the fields) but rather as an administrator or auditor for a company in town. He was currently working towards this goal by pursuing his high school diploma as a *perito contador* (accounting).

> "What does your mom think of that?" I asked, curious of what she thought of an office job,

> "My mom says, 'ay ay stop studying because I am tired of seeing you [studying]' because I always do a lot of stuff, like they always leave a lot of homework, I have to be writing and all that... 'the electricity is being wasted!' she says to me."

As part of the Mariposas curriculum, Roberto had also written out a life plan during one of the workshops. He dreamt of attending the local university one day to further his education. It was a dual understanding of planning: planning life goals and family planning. Roberto shared with me that one of the most valuable lessons he had learned from these two ideas about planning are to know, not just what he wants for himself, but also what he wants to provide his children with: give them an education, food, and *bienes* (goods). His desire to work an office job illustrate a different type of masculinity that some of his classmates who, according to Roberto, would prefer to keep working the fields. This "modern" masculinity is a mixture of hesitant empowerment and neoliberal goals. I say hesitant because, while Roberto and Ronal, and even Enrique (who confided in me that "I learned I was a sexist when I was working in the NGO") all take authoritative pleasure in positioning themselves on the side of gender equality in development, they do not always embody this in their everyday desires and beliefs. That is, they take pride in not being the "*tipo malo*" of Enrique's story, of embodying the wrong kind of toughness, while still believing in many of the patriarchal constructs that frame Guatemalan society. That is, they continue to believe that men should be the economic providers, that hard manual labor is preferred to domestic labor, and that feminism is too radical a concept.

The desire to go to university exemplifies the way the discourse of development often wields disciplinary power that aims to transform "other" bodies and ways of being into neoliberally acceptable ones—particularly ones that do not radically alter hegemonic power structures. For Foucault, techniques that aim to normalize populations operate through the production of behaviors such as a work ethic or a time schedule, documentation and examination, space, and even the development of efficient bodily motions. He describes how throughout (Western) society, these forms of practice and discipline are used to create docile and functional bodies needed for capitalism. This new form of normalizing power makes the disciplining of our own bodies feel like an integral part of belonging in a society. Those who refuse and so fall outside of the "norm" are considered unintelligible and malignant (Foucault 1977: 199). This civilizing process[116] works in accordance with Western conceptions of what it means to be modern (Ferguson 1990; Escobar 1995). Roberto's desire to go to university and find an office job and Ronal's aversion to being interpellated as indigenous are a result, in part, of this normalizing discipline.

Yet the contradictions present in the young men's lives show how difficult and out of reach the good life promised by empowerment and superación really are. Realistically, Roberto's mom's complaint that he was wasting electricity was not far-fetched. His family could not afford the loss of wages that would occur if he was a full-time student (or the small fees and materials cost of attending) and being a part-time student would make it difficult to take a job with heavy manual labor like agricultural or construction positions. For Ronal, who was already enrolled in university and working part-time, being indigenous would limit his own perception of upward mobility. The dream of an education and an office job and of having *bienes* was not limited to the Mariposas

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[116] Kevin O'Neill (2015) has extensively documented the ways that this type of governance aimed at the body and souls of young men are deeply embedded in Christian forms of piety.

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youth, however. In a couple of occasions, I attended workshops led by a scholarship program, Academic Leaders Scholarship (LAS program, for its Spanish acronym) in the area that sought to help students with academic potential secure scholarships to prestigious universities in Guatemala City. Many of the *capacitaciones* instilled techniques of the self that would help potential candidates fit in with elite ladino society, like making eye contact, firm handshakes, and portraying confidence.

This form of self-esteem building is intricately tied to governmentality and the formation of "modern" subjects through Christian morality[117] (O'Neill 2015). This form of subject-making instills in problematic (or potentially problematic) young men the value of hard work, dressing well, being on time, and other modes of conduct that align well with both neoliberalism and Evangelical Christianity (*Ibid.*). In this way, self-confidence and a good work ethic come to be seen as a solution to poverty, insinuating that poverty can be a *choice*. This implication works to shift the "responsibility" of being financially stable from an unstable and austere socioeconomic reality to individuals themselves. While this was certainly not the conscious aim of the LAS program, it was certainly reinforced participants with a disciplining form of neoliberal responsibilization.

I had heard of the scholarship program and met some of the graduates and current students through Victor, the inaugural recipient of the scholarship program. He was now a successful businessman with a high-profile job in the city and a board position on LAS. He also ran a week-long empowerment seminar twice a year for students around the area who had been chosen for the

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[117] O'Neill has also shown the way that teaching self-esteem as a form of self-governance imbues (men, the subjects of intervention in soft security) with Christian "modes of thought": "The idea and promise of self-esteem provide both the pastors and the prisoners with a set of moral coordinates for who they are and, more importantly, what kind of people they want to become […] Neo-Pentecostalism[…] is one such mode of thought that provides a range of cultural practices through which citizens are both constituted and governed" (*Ibid.* 219).

scholarship program. For many, especially youth, Victor was someone who had "made it:" he had money, he dressed in fashionable (Western) clothes, and a white-collar job. On one occasion I asked him to describe the week-long empowerment seminar that the young scholars would attend. He mentioned that the main goal was to have the student's bond and feel like a community before leaving for the city, which could be a disorienting experience. He mentioned this was part of building self-confidence which was another important aspect of the program, "because if I am a person who thinks less of myself because I am short, dark-skinned, and maybe I don't have curly hair, etcetera etcetera, then that is going to impact my performance."

I asked if many of the scholarship recipients felt discriminated against at the elite institutions they wound up attending, but he affirmed to me they had not. In fact, many of the students I talked to felt the need to clarify that "discrimination is real, but *I* didn't feel it". However, Victor did mention how he (and all the students coming into the LAS program) had to overcome these feelings of inferiority in order to succeed in school and integrate into the social lives there. This denial of discrimination combined with an emphasis on "overcoming feelings of inferiority" corresponds with the move towards cultural discourses of discrimination (Hale 2004) and the larger multicultural shift to "color-blind racism[118]" which shift the reproduction of a hegemonic racial status quo from a "biological" racism to a "cultural" racism that "blames the victim" for their own social disenfranchisement (Bonilla Silva 2013). Under this framework then, the capacitaciones aiming to "improve" the work ethic and habitus of young men and women have a

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[118] Bonilla-Silva illuminates the way people who say they believe in equality, and who want to increase opportunity in education and business also vehemently oppose any government intervention designed to end discrimination in education, housing, hiring/labor practices. Many of the respondents for the data Bonilla-Silva analyzes refer to a discourse of liberalism to support their idea that the government should not take an active role in ending segregation in neighborhoods and schools or change hiring practices to make business environments more equal.

clear racial undertone. The student's repeated affirmations of color-blindness in their experience only served to highlight the emotional impact of being interpellated as indigenous.

For Victor, this moment came during his graduation from University. During the celebrations following commencement, a large part of the engineering class he was a part of had an outdoor party on campus.

> "There was this person with whom I did not really speak or hang out, I did not think we 'matched' (*hicieramos el 'match'*) … well, the very last day, now with our beers and everything, celebrating the closing of our majors and a little drunk, he approached me and said 'look, you, you Victor are a very cool Indian' (*vos victor, vos sos un indio bien deahuevo*)."

Victor went on to explain how at first, he was rattled by the comment. I asked him why and he explained that first, because it was not someone he knew well, which meant he did not know where Victor was from, or that Spanish was not the language spoken at his home. The implication here was that even without that knowledge the other student had been able to tell Victor was indigenous[119]. But now, Victor recalled this as "a very nice experience" because "it is my personality, or how I conceptualize these moments that no—its not that I want to become a closed person or not accept them—but these experiences, they don't move me from where I am."

Victor's explanation that such a comment was not "able to move him" from where he was belied the assertion that being interpellated as "un indio" was "a very nice experience" for him.[120] The belief that his position now was something he could be moved from (even, brought down from) whether intentionally or not, make plain the underlying socioracial hierarchy behind

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[119] Previously, we had talked about how he had often felt self-conscious during his first years at the university because of the way he spoke, "como un indio". I was unsure if this meant with an accent (as many speakers who learn Spanish outside of the home) or because of a lack of proper grammar.

[120] Ironically, he was performing the Indio Permitido even as he saw himself distanced from his indigenous identity.

"improvement." Though race plays an essential part in discourses of development and modernity (Escobar 1995; 2010; Blaser 2010; Radcliffe 2015 etc.), it was not a subject explicitly mentioned in most of the empowerment workshops I attended while conducting fieldwork. I find the very fact that this was a topic missing from the curriculum, and the experience of youth denying racism was a part of their experience when I did bring it up, as part of a larger instance of policing which implicitly denotes racial topics as taboo and so encourages de-radicalized political subjectivities (Hale 2002; Hale and Millamán 2006; Berry 2013). This gaping hole in rights training was (tacitly) justified by the focus on *health* (or in Victor's case, *education*), as opposed to "other" types of rights. This also served to shift healthcare and education from a political and structural issue, to a humanitarian one where people are dependent on NGOs for what should be citizenship privileges.

Conclusions

For the (few) young men I worked with who were attending reproductive health programs—that most often focused on female empowerment—this arbitrary separation of rights (health/gender vs indigenous) reinforced hegemonic socioracial hierarchies. Unsurprisingly, in development initiatives that focused on health, race remained a crucial category for organizing societal hierarchies. Although critical discussions about race were often missing from the way youth framed the discourse of empowerment within the context of reproductive health, the question of modernity underlies empowerment.

Race organizes what is considered successful and modern and in the multicultural era and NGOs have often been complicit in the policing of indigenous ways of being, speaking, and dressing (Postero 2007; Hale 2002; 2006; Pitarch et al. 2008; Bastos 2008; Villavicencio 2016). When my young interlocutors spoke of wanting to improve themselves, there was always an

unspoken racial aspect to this notion of empowerment. This was especially prevalent in the way young men debated the rights and privileges associated with becoming "empowered" as they attempted to reconcile a deeply problematic history of machismo with the often-depoliticized notions of feminism taught by NGOs and human rights organizations.

On the surface the desire to be "empowered" is tied to a clear neoliberal "responsibilization" of the self—the idea that modern, rights-bearing citizens can work hard to achieve what they want instead of relying on others (including welfare programs, NGOs, etc.). For many involved in NGO programs that aim to empower, the creation of a new vision of the self leads to new ways of imaging the future and what constitutes a "good life." Sadly, this is something that frequently culminates in a struggle—and more often than people anticipate, a failure—due to the socioeconomic hardships and overwhelming violence that people in small metropolitan areas face when they are not able to enact this vision of the self in practice. Many people believe that life in developing urban (read: *ladino*) areas is better than living in remote rural (read: indigenous) areas, and that it is easier to be "empowered" in the city. This belief often conceals from them the distressing lack of social mobility and growing inequality present not just in Guatemala, but in other developing countries as well[121].

Ultimately, a successful masculinity is fraught with both racial and socioeconomic tensions. As the idea behind valued masculinity has shifted from the "bad" army man to the neoliberal businessman, indigenous exclusions from gendered nation-building have remained constant. What's more underlying different masculinities is the legacy of the Armed Conflict, which continue to shape what hegemonic masculinity can be in violently sexist ways, despite the

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[121] c.f. Cole 2012; Eisenstein 2010; Schild 2015, Moore et al. 2017

push for female empowerment from NGO's. Guatemala continues to have alarmingly high rates of femicide and domestic violence against women[122], which is tied to patriarchal forms of hyper-masculinity, and which continues to attract empowerment-centered humanitarian interventions. The violence and gang activity that can be traced back to both the surplus of weapons and trained militia from the Armed Conflict, as well as the increase in cartel and gang-related violence, keep a valued personhood continually out of reach for many youth.

A couple of months after my trip to Alta Verapaz with Enrique, his son was murdered by another man in their town during an altercation. Charges were never brought forward because the man was a suspected gang member and Enrique's family was afraid of the repercussions they would face if they made a denuncia with the police. In mariposas, there were (unverified) rumors that some of the boys had been approached by "unsavory" personalities in their towns with promises of drugs and easy money. There were other forms of violence as well, in LAS, one of the young graduates of the scholarship program was killed in a traffic accident when riding his motorcycle from Guatemala City back to his hometown. Victor organized a fundraiser to help the deceased young man's single mother collect funds for a small funeral service and groceries for a couple of months. The driver of the truck that killed the young man was never brought in or faced charges despite an onlooker capturing the entire incident on a phone camera. I present these stories here not because they were extraordinary in their violence, but because they were not. This violence, and the accompanying attempts at preventing it through soft security, frame empowerment and superación at every step.

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[122] (Suarez and Jordan 2007; Violencia contra la mujer: un flagelo silencioso que engruesa las estadísticas de femicidios y violaciones en Guatemala – Prensa Libre 2021; Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres 2020)

Chapter Four
Alternative Development: Lessons from a Guatemalan Grassroots Organization

Abstract

Recently, decolonization has gained prevalence in both academic circles and social movements throughout Latin America. This movement has special potential in the field of development where, following Arturo Escobar (2010), it can lead to a radical transformation of society. This paper explores what a critical reinterpretation of medicalized development can mean in the era of decolonization by following a grassroots group of indigenous and ladina (nonindigenous) women in Sacatepéquez, Guatemala in their quest to find development rooted in radical feminism. I examine how a clear and determined response against the power of Western medicine and the hegemonic ramifications of over-medicalizing the female body can lead to unexpected consequences. I consider what is produced when, in a not-so-surprising turn of events, this quest leads the group to the Anti-Vaxxer movement. How can we as researchers in solidarity with the decolonization movement respond when attempts at alternative development challenge the very safety of those embracing it?

"We're here to fight for ourselves as women," Rosa, the leader of a small women's collective told me one Saturday morning. We were sitting in a sunny courtyard in Antigua after a short meeting about the upcoming events being organized by the group. Rosa's eyes lit up as she spoke, her hands waving enthusiastically as her bangs became slightly undone from her loose hair clip. Everything about Rosa was a whirlwind of activity and passion. Her busy schedule that day included three other meetings with local women's rights groups and an old friend from her previous NGO job. "Walk with me" she said, "I'm going to be late again". I scrambled to throw my recorder and notebook in my bag as she began walking, her purple skirt billowing with her quick, short steps. "We're often at odds with many here because we bring up topics that no-one else is, yet they're so important for our survival!" she continued, as she wrapped her white shawl around her neck. We were now walking along the busy cobblestone streets of Antigua, doing our best to avoid the constant throng of tourists and street vendors while maintaining a conversation. It was the first time since I had met Rosa a couple of weeks before that I had been able to meet with her one-on-one.

Though non-profits and development organizations abounded in the Sacatepéquez and Chimaltenango region around Antigua, few were founded and led by local women. That Saturday morning, Rosa mentioned she had a new topic in mind and wanted to introduce it at the collective's next meeting. After a passionate rant against many of Guatemala's outdated patriarchal institutions, we finally reached Rosa's destination. She stopped in front of a modest-looking house with chipping green paint before knocking sharply on the narrow wooden door. I knew our conversation would be interrupted soon, so I expressed my desire to meet again to talk more in depth about reproductive rights and women's health in the region. She was organizing an

upcoming march to raise awareness about victims of sexual violence, and I was hoping the new topic they picked up for workshops would be centered around reproductive health.

"I'll send you this article I just read, I'm very excited to share it" Rosa said, knocking once more on the door, "it really breaks down the ways our health care is controlled by these elites."

A couple of days later I opened my computer to find an email from Rosa. I excitedly clicked on the PDF attached: "Vax Mortis: The Hidden Face of Vaccines." It was an Anti-Vaccination (or Anti-Vaxxer) piece by a Mexican source, with salacious claims such as: "Obligatory vaccinations are only meant for moneymaking, not for public health benefits" and "Gardasil (HPV) vaccinations have killed multiple young women this year".

Introduction: Grassroots Politics in the land of NGOs

Using Rosa's group—which I hereafter refer to as "the collective" —as a lens into an everyday approach to a different type of empowerment, one grounded in radical feminism and conciousness-raising, I consider what happens when a clear and determined response against the power of Western medicine and the coloniality of knowledge is vernacularized by a grassroots group of radical women. I draw here on Goodale and Merry's notion of the vernacularization of Human Rights (2007) with the intent of providing an understanding of how ordinary people make meaning of discourses of social justice, in this case, decolonization. To be clear, this chapter is not an analysis of a decolonizing development initiative but rather an attempt at alternative development grounded in challenging patriarchal norms and the coloniality of knowledge. In particular, I call attention to the unintended consequences that such an emancipatory politics can have in quotidian applications.

Unlike the young women in Mariposas or GuateAyuda, the collective was self-funded and so did not have a dominating discourse (human rights and Catholic "right to life" ideals, respectively) that they were vernacularizing, but rather the group themselves organized around discourses of rights they found helpful or interesting. As the head of the group, it was usually Rosa who would introduce topics into the circle, but the group was composed of women interested in activism and engaged in different grassroots and nonprofit efforts around the area. This meant that there was usually a mix of different local and global (if there can be such a distinction) ideas that the women would organize around for protests, discussion circles, and events. After years of working with organized non-profits, most of them funded by foreign donors or elite circles in the country, I was excited to collaborate with the collective. Rosa and I had discussed the possibility of organizing an adult version of the PhotoVoice project I had developed with Mariposas, and I began attending the events Rosa would organize with more frequency. Most of the collective's organizing, however, took place via social media. I was interested in exploring the ways the collective enacted the idea of *dissensus* and especially the way they were "polemically inserting their voice into what is supposed to be a common sphere" (Postero 2017: 18, citing Rancière 1999:41) by touching challenging taboo subjects like abortion[123], rape, and homophobia.

As I began to learn more about the collective, their organizing raised the following question for me: could dissensus in the development world serve as a political tool of postdevelopment in such a heavily neoliberal and NGO-ized context? If, as Escobar (2010) suggests, the goal of postdevelopment is to establish true interculturality—establishing a "dialogue and co-existence

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[123] Abortion especially stood out to me considering how multiple other NGOs I had worked with had specific and clear internal policies for their social media pages that prevented any post to be made about abortion given how controversial a subject it is, and the fact that it is illegal in Guatemala (meaning organizations could lose funding defending an issue like this).

among diverse cultural groups under conditions of equality"—that is continually "marked by tensions and conflict and always under construction" (Escobar 2010: 24), how can we interpret the collective's efforts? Throughout this dissertation I have been exploring the idea of politics as world-building; what type of "good life" were the women of the collective trying to establish? In this chapter, I explore the way the collective was building a social movement by bringing together local and foreign activists in an attempt to decolonize not just the production of medical knowledge, as Rosa's comments made clear, but also of reproductive rights and sexual liberation.

Social movements have had a pivotal role in contesting patriarchal racism and popularizing feminism throughout Latin America (Speed et al. 2006; Walsh 2009; Zibechi 2006; Postero and Zamosc 2004). I see Rosa's collective as being rooted in an attempt to join this movement against coloniality and patriarchal hegemony. In the tourist-friendly region, brimming with depoliticizing NGOs, Rosa's radical stance stood apart from other development initiatives. Her clear feminist message was a refreshing take on development: the collective did not shy away from topics like sex work and abortion rights, unlike so many others who relied on government or foreign funding. Moreover, although Rosa was not indigenous herself, she was passionate about racial equality as well. The collective firmly believed racial equality played a pivotal role in reproductive rights. The collective would often join Maya activists in protests around the area and, more often, would promote *campesino* (peasant) and indigenous activists on their social media pages.

Rosa would often use the word "decolonize" to refer to the challenge towards hegemonic elites in Guatemala that the collective aimed to build up. While this language did not match up perfectly to the way academics in general or indigenous activists in Guatemala use *decolonization*, I did see the collective as performing politics in a way that aimed to challenge the coloniality of knowledge that organizes Guatemalan society. Additionally, they were also one of the only

attempts at postdevelopment that I worked with, so I use this chapter to reflect on the ways that global discourses about equality, in this case decolonization and reproductive rights, can be vernacularized and gain local significance for women in the Sacatepéquez region. For the collective, empowerment then was about bringing an end to the policing of women's bodies in Guatemala. This feminist notion of development operated under different means than the NGOs I have described so far.

Layered into Rosa's ideas about feminist empowerment (or politics without accompanying reproductive governance) were decolonial discourses being circulated in the activist circles that Rosa and many others in the Collective were a part of. While I do not describe the collective's work as "decolonial" per se, the language and ideas they drew from cohere with attempts at dismantling coloniality because of the way modernity is linked to gendered forms of hegemony and hetero-patriarchy. Rosa and the collective were engaged in an uphill struggle to empower women through consciousness-raising. Their goal of empowering women, that is to break the chains of reproductive governance, often put them at odds with the very women they were trying to empower. Many were not receptive to the collective's "radical" ideas about sexual liberation and female power because these were at odds with Christian morality. That the collective often drew on decolonizing language was, in a way, unsurprising even though they were not an "indigenous" organization[124].

In her analysis of decoloniality, and *buen vivir* in Ecuador, Catherine Walsh questions whether "the majority of Ecuadorians have the interest and will to commit to this critical, political,

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[124] In this chapter, I will explore how the collective was using this language because they were, ultimately, engaging with a similar question: dismantling colonial forms of hegemony.

epistemic, and ethical project?[125]" (Walsh 2009: 212). The question is even more pronounced in the Guatemalan context, which has historically lagged behind countries like Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela when it comes to mobilizing against the hegemony of Western liberal practices. Indeed, many have documented the pervasiveness of neoliberalism in Guatemala and the way indigenous populations continue to face a multicultural agenda that pushes a ladino-oriented socioracial hierarchy that prioritizes non-indigenous ways of being (Vanthuyne 2008; Nelson 2004; Hale 2006). Moreover, the traumatizing impact of the genocidal Armed Conflict—and the acute dangers of being labeled 'a radical'—prevent many ordinary Guatemalans from embracing radical social movements. As I have made clear, this sentiment is exacerbated in the field of reproductive rights by the deeply religious nature of the country. Despite this aversion to 'being radical', social movements have had a profound impact throughout society, even during the most repressive years of the armed conflict (Bastos y Camus 2003). At the very least, the discourses of decolonization and post-liberalism have provided activists and scholars with a lexicon centered around radical equality that ordinary citizens can borrow from.

On a larger scale, they also provide a basis for debate and a societal imaginary of what an equitable society should be like, and what kind of projects can best bring about this social ideal. As Escobar so succinctly puts it, "*[h]ow one thinks about these processes is itself an object of struggle and debate*" (2010: 2). To put that in Rancierian terms, how women make meaning of social justice questions is part of challenging the distribution of the sensible. The decolonization movement has largely set the stage for Latin America's political, cultural, and academic debates, and its struggles, and negotiations regarding cultural difference and rising inequality. In

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[125] In the original Spanish: "¿tienen los ecuatorianos –en su mayoría– el interés y la voluntad de plegar a este proyecto crítico, político, epistémico y ético de la interculturalidad"

Guatemala, examples of decolonizing practices range from the resilience of Mam mining communities (Caxaj et al. 2014); to political decolonization through literature (del Valle Escalante 2006) and art (Monterroso 2015; Palermo 2009); to wars over land tenure in Q'eqchi' territories (Ybarra 2017); to the remarkable perseverance of Maya women when it comes to political participation (Lopez 2006). Here, I consider here how decolonization became a meaningful emancipatory tool for consciousness-raising by the women of a small, feminist collective in Sacatepéquez. While the work of the collective might not be classified as decolonial in the way the previous list of examples are, their work stood out among other transnational empowerment initiatives in the Sacatepéquez region for its commitment to dismantling hegemonical practices and structural violence against women and sexual minorities.

*Las Mujeres***: The Collective and Cultural Politics**

The young women in Rosa's group did not fit easily into the often essentialized indigenous or ladino boxes that I sometimes felt pressured to place them in my academic writing. As Guatemalan scholar Isabel Rodas (2008) reminds us, many of the terms and classifications used by social scientists have never really applied to real people in everyday contexts in Guatemala. Rather, the collective saw their identities as being grounded in a history of colonialism, *lucha* (the fight), and of being and belonging to the so-called "developing" world.

Many of the women in the collective proudly identified as having indigenous roots but would not describe themselves as Mayan now. Part of this pride in an indigenous past is tied to the rise in the Maya movement after the end of the Armed Conflict and the ethnification of victims that has followed the signing of the peace accords (See Rodas 2008; Vanthuyne 2008; Bastos and

Cumes 2007). Another part, however, comes from wanting to embrace a decolonizing worldview, one that celebrates, as Rosa put it, "the *mujeres* (women) who are not elite, not European or American [from the United States], who didn't go to expensive schools or were born to prestigious families". I do not recall Rosa or any of the members of the collective ever really referring to themselves by an ethnic identifier, even the women who wore traje (indigenous skirt and blouse). Ethnic self-identification was not a conversation topic that came up spontaneously. The few times I tried to subtly bring it up with some of the women who did not wear traje, they would end up describing themselves in terms similar to Rosa's, of what they were *not*. I think many struggled with an identity that was decidedly subaltern in its desire to decolonize, but not indigenous *enough* in the post-Conflict landscape. For example, Marleny would talk about her grandparents who according to her, lived "the real hard way, in the mountains"[126] as being indigenous, but having grown up near Guatemala City, would not refer to herself this way. Marelny's life, however, had not in any way been any less easy by having grown up in the City, as I examine further in this chapter.

In her analysis of body politics and the embodied experiences of indigenous activists in post-genocide Guatemala, Diane Nelson (1999) demonstrates how the rise of cultural identities are used for political gain (to make demands, to gain power, etc.). She maintains that culture can be both a technique of governmentality used by the state as well as a strategy of resistance used by Maya activists (*Ibid.*: 115). Ultimately, identity politics revolves around the idea that culture can be an instrument of agency and change for subaltern people. Doris Sommer (2006) builds on this notion by demonstrating how an analysis based cultural agency makes evident the "wiggle room"

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[126] In the mountains is also a euphemism for saying someone left to join the guerrilla army in during the Armed Conflict".

or *jogo de cintura* in everyday interactions between those with institutional power and those without. She describes this wiggle room as small instances of resistance that—while not revolutionary—evidence how governmentality and coercive power do not go unnoticed and unchallenged. Such an analysis highlights agency by focusing on everyday expressions of cultural differences.

Many of these theories revolving around identity were grounded in notions of hybridity that now appear outdated to indigenous scholars. For example, in her analysis of the practices of decolonization, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) argues that coloniality and its relations of hegemony are duplicated in the knowledge production of academic scholars in the global North. She traces the context behind academic notions like *hybridity* and *post-colonial* (both underlying ideas behind identity politics) to show how these were never truly compatible with indigenous worldviews in Latin America. Rather, these concepts arose out of elite indigenous academic circles. She contends that the decolonization discourse within academic circles is facing a similar challenge. She argues that ultimately, "the possibility of a profound cultural reform in our society depends on the decolonization of our gestures and acts and the language with which we name the world" (*Ibid.* 105). I see Cusicanqui's argument here as a very Rancierian one, about challenging the aesthetic tapestry that makes up our lived experiences. An emphasis on politics makes it evident that gestures, acts, and language are precisely the way that hegemonic perceptual and epistemic hierarchies are challenged.

In a way, Rosa's self-identification (as well as Marleny's and others) can be seen as both an (unconscious) response to the ethnization of victimization Vanthyune, Rodas, and others have described as well as a political move that aims to use cultural difference to demand a more equitable society. I refrain here from placing the women of the collective in one of these "boxes"—

Maya/ladino—traje or not (unless they themselves specified otherwise). Other types of self-identifying, however, were quite clear: for example, when proudly announcing they were feminists, a strange and even "radical" declaration for Guatemalans to make still. Or when speaking about their sexuality, as many of the women embraced more fluid sexual identities than the majority of what is still a pretty conservative country. The collective worked hard to break boundaries and was intent on starting a sexual rights movement in the region by organizing various events for the community, including protests and workshops. They embraced a feminist worldview, that sought to ground empowerment in not just in affective forms of self-transformation, but also in concrete societal practices like denouncing perpetrators of domestic violence, legalizing abortion and gay marriage, etc.

I witnessed a difference between the language and practices used by academics and established social movements, and the real-life experiences of the collective. The former adopted a decolonizing practices and language as a political affirmation of their commitment to a Maya identity. For example, during an interview with a young congressional aide and Kaqchikel organizer, Emelisa, who identified as a Maya, she mentioned how she saw her *traje* as a political move within the congressional offices she worked in. She wore it with conscious pride and made sure her young daughter was aware of her *traje*'s importance as well. Emelisa was currently working for a right-leaning politician she did not support, as her own party did not have any open slots for aides. Her economic need had led her to take this position, in the hopes that she would be able to join URNG (Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, the political party formed from the former guerrilla after the signing of the peace accords) in the near future. Likewise, during an interview with Maya activist Manuela Alvarado, she affirmed that the only way to challenge the longstanding history of discrimination and intimidation in Guatemala is for a complete

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acceptance of indigenous alterity. That is, no compromises when it comes to political representation, land tenure, ancestral practices, languages, etc. The collective was not quite as eloquent on the matter, nor did they have an academic background that drew on decolonization. Rather, they were using this term (and this *idea*) as a way to express their personal and collective experiences with the hetero-patriarchal hegemony behind modernity and coloniality.

Vernacularizing decolonization, as Rosa's anti-vaxxer turn suggests, can also have unintended consequences. Though not quite "average citizens"—as some of the women in the collective had at one time or still were involved with other activist groups—none had academic backgrounds. Some had family members who had been involved with movements during the Armed Conflict, but many had been too young to participate themselves. Others had grown up in extremely Christian families and had come to the collective out of a desire to break free from patriarchal constraints on their reproductive lives. For them, this was their first experience as activists. The material they shared with each other on decolonization, feminism, and other topics of interest were acquired from google searches, and local workshops or passed on by other activists through emails, Facebook and WhatsApp[127].

Lacking the funds of larger NGOs, the collective relied on consciousness-raising teaching to promote radical feminist ideals in their community. This included rallies, info-sessions, open mic nights at a small LGBTQ friendly bar in Antigua, etc. There was always an even mix of collective members and their local friends or family, and supportive expats, usually from Western European countries. Many of the women in the collective worked for development oriented, usually foreign funded, NGOs as their livelihood. They saw this as a way to help their communities

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[127] Both Facebook and WhatsApp (which is Facebook-owned) have been notorious for their spread of misinformation about vaccines and other healthcare topics.

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and earn money, but there was a separateness between the work of the collective, which they saw as their passion, and their work with NGOs which they saw as their job.

Though there is something ironic in the fact that many of the collective's members worked for NGOs, in fact, the region around Antigua is filled with either development or tourism jobs. What's more, without these positions, Rosa and the others would not be able to run the collective as they do. NGO jobs provided them with a comfortable salary and work schedule, allowing them to live in the region, where rent and food prices are driven up by the tourism industry. Living around Antigua provided them with well-off supporters from Western countries that helped fund marches and workshops, or host fund-raising events. Beyond such a cost-benefit analysis, progressive Western ex-pats also bolstered a sense of community and belonging for many of the women whose own families did not agree with their "radical" organizing or sexual orientation. It was no surprise that many of these expats were anti-vaxxers themselves, since the roots of the anti-vaccination movement can be traced back to religious leaders in 18th century Europe (Bazin 2001; Hussain et al. 2018). Though vaccination exemptions in western countries have been tied to religious freedoms, the history of vaccinations in colonial contexts has been much different.

The Hegemony of Vaccines

When I was living in Antigua, most of my mornings began with a short walk from the house where I was staying to the unpaved road that connected it to the picturesque streets of the more tourist-friendly side of Antigua where many NGOs had their offices. During the short walk, I would meet up with Faby, a nurse-turned-*ama de llaves* (head housekeeper) for a boutique hotel and she would stop to buy a glass of fresh juice from a single mother and her daughter who would set up a table at the side of the road. Sometimes we would talk about the news or new health

remedies she had found (including ones sold by the juice-maker at the side of the road) but usually our conversations were about her family, or how my research was going. One warm morning, I invited her to a reproductive health workshop where aspiring community health partners could learn how to properly administer injectable contraceptives (intramuscular vaccines placed in the upper arm every one or three months). Given my aversion to needles, I thought it might be a good idea to have someone who had experience and expertise with injections as a vaccine practice partner. However, that Saturday her daughter was performing in a pageant so she declined, jokingly adding that she was sad she would miss seeing me around so many needles when she knew I was squeamish about it. As we stood on the corner about to part ways, the conversation about needles turned to a more serious note about her past as a nurse.

"You know, when I was a nurse people would sometimes set the dogs on us and try to run us out of town because they didn't want any vaccines" Faby said, her eyebrows raising to signal this was a juicy story she wanted to share with me.

"¿*Cómo así*? [What do you mean?]" I asked, intrigued.

"Yes," she continued, "we would be sent out to different towns to vaccinate the children every year, but some people didn't like us. We would get there and try to get as many people, you know, as many of the kids… We would try to reach as many as we could, but some families would tell their kids to hide or go out of town and say they didn't have any [children]. It was so sad because then their children wouldn't get the necessary immunizations."

"So then, what would you do?"

"Well, we would admonish them, that they were damaging their own children! But there wasn't much more we could do; you know how *those communities can be*" (my emphasis).

"Why didn't they want the vaccinations?"

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She shrugged, "maybe they didn't know better, in their culture".

What Faby's story portrays is a bigger, more complicated issue relating to vaccines, medicine, and biopower. Indigenous communities, especially in the northern and northeastern highlands have continually had lower health indicators than the rest of the country. With the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, and the international scrutiny into the treatment of indigenous and rural communities, this disparity was officially labeled as unacceptable due to pressure from local Maya activism as well as pressure from foreign solidarity and human rights organizations. This led to the creation of programs such as Program for Extended Coverage (PEC), which aimed to diminish the disparities in topics like maternal mortality and child immunizations and malnutrition. Moreover, with the signing of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) in 2000[128], Guatemala signaled its commitment to reducing what was, even for the region, high rates of child mortality and maternal health. The MDG's also promoted the empowerment of women through gender equality and the cultivation of "global partnerships for development."

At the same time, however, many of the communities the PEC and MDG's sought to target were, and continue to be, wary of government agencies and foreign NGOs. It was likely that Faby, who worked for the public health department as a nurse before becoming a housekeeper (where she earns almost twice as much), was sent out to carry mass vaccinations as part of the PEC and MSPAS (*Ministerio de Salud Publica y Asistencia Social*, Ministry for Public Health and Social Assistance) compliance with the MDG's. Having the dogs "set" on her was likely a response from

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[128] The Millennium Development Goals were eight international development goals to work towards with the end goal being in 2015. They were established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The eight goals were: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; develop a global partnership for development.

a community that was not consulted on the topic of inoculations beforehand and were not involved in the process[129], but who had been targets of state violence and colonialism for centuries. While the ministry of health would never explicitly organize immunization campaigns as Faby describes hers—as a group of government health workers arriving suddenly at a community to vaccinate children and reprimand people—I would not be surprised if some of them did end up being carried out in this forceful way. Faby's comment about *those communities* and their "culture" were also in line with racist beliefs about indigenous communities as non-modern or backwards.

With the expansion of nonprofit development initiatives, NGOs have come to control the discourses and knowledge surrounding women's bodies. This knowledge has fluctuated throughout different approaches at addressing the MDG's, often to the detriment of indigenous communities. For example, Summer et al. (2019) have documented the impact of an international emphasis on having skilled birth attendants (SBAs) on Mayan communities who have traditionally relied on *comadronas* or traditional birth attendants (TBAs) after the signing of the Peace Accords (see also Berry 2013). MSPAS (and international) emphasis on SBAs did not take into account the cultural relevance of comadronas as spiritual guides and herbal specialists in Mayan communities. This lack of consideration about well-established Mayan birthing practices exemplifies a nation-wide disregard for indigenous healthcare knowledge and practices (Berry 2006). The policies also failed to account for the fact that many indigenous women also avoid SBAs—doctors, nurses, and trained midwives—because they are more likely to be ladino, meaning indigenous women are

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[129] In order to carry out development programs in Mayan communities, it is often necessary to ask permission from the *Cabildo* (the council of indigenous leaders within a community) to operate in the region. Those who ignore the wishes of the Cabildo, or worse fail to get its approval, run the risk of being run out of town. In the instance of mining and other structural development projects like hydroelectric dams or highways, communities can ally themselves with organizations such as CODECA, the powerful national Committee for Peasant Development, by its Spanish initials.

more likely to face racist abuses at the hands of SBAs and in healthcare centers (Saénz de Tejada 2012).

While there are many more examples of why, two decades after their signing, the MDGs remain unmet, I return here to the hegemony of vaccines and the reaction of the collective to uneven, gendered power structures. When Rosa criticized "the ways our health care is controlled by these elites," she was also referring more broadly to the coloniality of biomedical knowledge and the role that medical knowledge plays in controlling female bodies and sexualities. In a paper dealing with the constructions 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, 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 health organizations' preoccupation with policing women's bodies (*Ibid.* 78). As a feminist grassroots organization, the collective was clear on wanting to fight against this form of policing that stems from biomedical interventions[130].

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[130] Ana and the collective were interested in establishing their role as activists as producers of knowledge, decentering NGOs or government organizations as "experts" and keepers or imparters of knowledge (See Racioppi

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Faby's story highlights the distinctiveness of Rosa's collective from other development initiatives in the area. The collective sought to establish a network of local and community development that was conscious of power dynamics regarding both race and gender, including sexuality. They often expressed a desire to empower the women of their community to learn and exercise their reproductive *rights*, which differed from the MSPAS emphasis on *health*. That is, for women to be able to make informed and free choices regarding their sexualities, to be able to report rapes and have the perpetrators face justice, and generally to be able to do or not do, with their bodies as they please.

For the women of Rosa's collective, an enlightened consciousness regarding these reproductive rights was clearly one of the goals of their development initiative. The collective's emphasis on consciousness-raising fits considerably well with a "decolonizing the mind" approach to decolonizing power/knowledge. This academic discourse draws on the experience of post-colonial states like India or Algeria stemming from subaltern studies (see Ashcroft et al. 1995), it is a form of decolonization that aims to decolonize subjectivities. As Fanon (2008 [1952]) laid out in his influential work, decolonization begins as a radical psychological (and so, internal) project. For this group of radical feminists, a vernacularized empowerment then, occurs not just at the level of the individual, but at the intersection of the individual body with both other bodies, discourses, and social worlds. I see this as intimately related to social mechanisms of power by which, as Desjarlais and Throop (2011) have pointed out, knowledge and practices interact with discursive

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& O'Sullivan 1995 on real versus forced solidarity in the soviet feminist landscape; Vargas Arenas 2008 on activists as producers of knowledge).

and socio-political formations (*Ibid*.: 90; See also Gideonese 2015 for how emotions are also layered in moral forms of governmentality). I view this as necessary to expand our understanding of politics and policing in order to account for the assemblage of experiences (bodily and emotional), expectations, cultural conceptions, and beliefs that are specific to the way a person perceives themselves and the world(s) around them. This refers to how people experience and interact with the distribution of the sensible (Ranciere 1999) in intimate and contradicting ways.

The discourse of an enlightened consciousness is inextricably linked to the coloniality of power/knowledge[131]. A significant aspect of coloniality is epistemological and cultural hegemony, particularly over knowledge and knowledge production. For scholars like Quijano (2007), the only way to challenge this form of racialized domination is by dismantling the European paradigm of rationality/modernity (Quijano 2007: 177; Wallerstein 1976; Mignolo 2011). In Latin America, scholars of decolonization have proposed that disrupting coloniality necessitates alternative ways of thinking and being (Blaser 2010; Escobar 2010; de la Cadena 2015). Walsh (2007), for example, points out, the importance of "other" thought[132] lies in its value as a strategic tool in the struggle against this form of power/knowledge through "both a political use of knowledge and an epistemic acting on the political from the colonial difference" (Walsh 2007: 232).

The collective's work, although perhaps removed from a more thorough *academic* debate of decolonization, was grounded in an attempt at the destabilization of this coloniality nonetheless. The type of decolonizing discourse evoked by the collective had traces from the larger

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[131] Aníbal Quijano describes the coloniality of power as a repression "above all, over the modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification, over the resources, patterns, and instruments of formalized and objectivized expression, intellectual or visual" (Quijano 2007).

[132] By "other thought" she does not mean anthropological alterity, but rather—drawing from Mignolo—Walsh is referring to the need to "bring forward and relate histories, struggles, experiences, and knowledges lived and constructed within and marked by the context of colonialism and its processes of subalternization and racialization" (2007: 231).

decolonization movement sweeping through Latin American activist groups. Their emphasis on decolonizing the mind fell easily under the "subjectivity of the colonized" strain more than a radical epistemological move. Yet, the very need to free that consciousness is inevitably tied back to the gendered paradigm of modernity that underlies development, especially in rural and indigenous contexts (Escobar 2007, 2008; de la Cadena 2010). For many in Rosa's collective, this emphasis on decolonizing the mind stemmed from painful lived experiences in a hetero-patriarchal society.

Marleny, a young activist working in Antigua now, was kicked out for coming out as gay at the age of fifteen and finding herself without a home, she turned to her connections in various activist movements. Marleny, now twenty-six, spoke of the experience with the same mix of bitterness and sadness she often used to lament the lack of feminist social progress in Guatemala. At fifteen he became involved with radical feminist organizations whose members would often help her with housing and food. As she explained to me one afternoon over drinks, "all my life, I was told I was 'wrong', by my mother, teachers, the church […] and then I learned to fight back." Even as a young activist, however, she complained about the lack of credibility and respect older women within her organizations gave her. After being constantly harangued by powerful figures, rejecting the truths of so-called authority figures had become a given. So why should she trust doctors, the majority whom are male and from wealthier families, or scientists, the majority of whom are foreign and so wealthier, whiter? For Marleny, the appeal of the Anti-Vaxxer movement was that it called out powerful pharmaceutical corporations and long-established medical institutions, authority figures which were not unlike those she had fought growing up.

In a similar manner, Heidy, a young, energetic collective member from Alotenango, had joined the movement to fight back against the status quo of sexual violence in Guatemala. She had

been a victim of rape and abuse within her family, and the collective was the place she had come to find a voice against what happened to her. She was often at the forefront of campaigns and small marches denouncing rape and the lack of police action that follows the few instances of reporting the crime. With the collective's help, she had placed a *denunica* or official complaint with the police department against her rapist. So far, nothing had come of it. Heidy saw the collective as a way to enlighten not only herself, but hopefully the community at large, about rape culture and the role that law enforcement authorities continue to play in it.[133] In the vein of disrupting hegemonic historical processes, the anti-vaxxer movement has a certain appeal. The movement has gained momentum by calling out the billion-dollar industry behind pharmaceuticals, in addition to making claims about vaccines as harmful to the health and wellbeing of children. While the former is grounded in a growing global sentiment that critiques the unbridled capitalist accumulation of wealth by a few individuals and corporations, the latter is grounded in misinformation that threatens the health and safety of communities everywhere.

Ultimately, the collective's turn towards the anti-vaxxer movement points towards a bigger question about power and knowledge production. As Reyes Cruz (2008) reminds us "Knowledge (capital K) is produced and validated by people with power over many others and their impersonators, people who hold the cultural and social capital to impose and reproduce their authority" (653). As an academic in solidarity with grassroots movements and the idea of decolonization, it would naturally follow to support subaltern women as they take charge of their health and become "experts" in topics like healthcare—which have primarily been a "man's world". But what happens when this expertise and knowledge threatens the lives of the very people

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[133] I say *continue* to, as rape was a violent tactic the Guatemalan Army deployed against civilians during the Armed Conflict.

it is trying to exalt? Though it would be possible to discount the collective's efforts as missing the mark of the decolonization movement, or not truly grounded in indigenous alterity, this does not change the very real consequences that their efforts at radical empowerment have in their community—both positive and negative. The use of decolonizing language by Rosa and others demonstrates how discourse of decolonization can filter down into everyday language. This discourse is being taken up at different conjectures and articulated in unique ways as different communities make meaning of the discourse.

A short survey of anti-*anti*-vaxxer (those who speak against anti-vaccination) posts online reveals a swift and merciless condemnation of so-called "mommy blogs" and "mother groups". The posts do little to hide their sexism and disdain for the opinions and emotions of "non-experts". This type of online mocking only highlights the gendered nature of, not just this debate, but the knowledge-based economy behind healthcare a whole. Though many academic sources on the subject consider the role that social media, misinformation, and even fearmongering have played in the rise of the anti-vaxxer movement (c.f. Hussain 2018), it is essential to consider the role of gendered power inequalities.

In Guatemala as in many other places, women are less likely to hold positions of power. For the collective, the anti-Vaxxer movement was a refreshing source of female-circulated knowledge. For Rosa, a condemnation of the anti-vaxx stance by health officials only confirms the "coloniality" of vaccines. Academic literature on the topic, most of it in English and so inaccessible to the collective, is also seen as a hegemonic source attempting to squash their movement. My own attempts at trying to share my pro-vaccine views were met with a disappointed sigh from Rosa, followed by a couple of messages sharing more posts on the dangers of vaccines. For her, it was a

matter of not just keeping her kids "safe" but really of challenging the power of health institutions in the country.

A couple of days after receiving Rosa's first Anti-Vaxxer email, I received a WhatsApp message from her asking if I could do some research into the dangers of vaccines. Via voice-note she explained that my knowledge of English and academic background would be great for finding more sources and suggested I could help the collective out by translating such articles to share with the group. I was trapped in a philosophical/logical loop where the more I shared about vaccine research the more Rosa was convinced it was rooted in Western coloniality. As I pondered how to approach the topic, I began to question my own knowledge and the implications it carried. Thinking back to Bourdieu's "reflexive sociology" (1990) I considered the implication of hegemonic power behind the so-called objectivity of Western science in my own thinking. How did I know this was "the" truth and not just "a" truth? How could I know that I wasn't under the hold of the coloniality of knowledge, as Rosa implied? More importantly, what right and what authority did I—as someone who *did* attend elite schools, and come from a well-off family—have to challenge Rosa? Where did my trust in Western medicine come from?

I was not a part of the collective, not truly, I was a researcher who had been welcomed into the group. But would I be acting unethically if I did not try to convince Rosa vaccines were good, knowing that doing so meant being at odds with the collective? In her analysis of Bourdieu's reflexive sociology, Navarro (2006) points to the importance of self-critical knowledge. In her view, one that discloses the sources of power and reveals "the reasons that explain social asymmetries and hierarchies" has the potential to become "a powerful tool to enhance social emancipation" (Navarro 2006: 15-16). In practice, however the potential of critical self-knowledge as a tool of participatory research was outweighed by my ethical unease with supporting an anti-

vaxxer movement. I had come face-to-face with "the colonial broom closet[134]" (Kennemore and Postero 2020) and while my discomfort held important lessons about the coloniality of knowledge for my own research, I could not justify promoting an anti-vaxxer stance (a decision reinforced later on, with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and an increase in anti-vaccination propaganda around the globe). So, I walked away from the collective.

Walking away from Rosa's group was also tied to an important logistical component: the lack of funding the collective had made their workshops and events outside of social media more infrequent. "Walking" away was not as physically noticeable with infrequent meetings, rather, I found myself engaging less in social media, unfollowing certain people, ignoring certain emails. Rosa's hectic schedule had made it hard to get a hold of her when I did have a collaboration and project in mind. I kept in touch with some of the other collective members, especially Marleny. Her own busy schedule had kept her from a couple of events before Rosa's anti-vaxxer activism had picked up, but we still met occasionally for coffee or beers. She never asked why I had stopped attending events. When we met, she usually shared stories about her work with a new foreign environmental group in the region and later about her older girlfriend, a European expat with anti-vaxxer ideas of her own (ironically, someone with the cultural and social capital needed to validate her budding vaccine hesitancy)[135].

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[134] Postero and Kennemore (2020) use the term to refer to the way that "anthropologists benefited from the suffering of Others" to produce career-building knowledge about marginalized communities (*Ibid.*). Their analysis of different collaborative projects in anthropological research make it clear that, as social scientists, we must critically assess the research we conduct to understand the ways it might challenge (or be complicit) with "the structural situations of vulnerability and inequality" that make up the "broom closet" (Postero and Kennemore 2020).

[135] I finally stopped responding to Marleny's WhatsApp messages, along with many others (both family, friends, and interlocutors) during the COVID-19 epidemic. The amount of misinformation and *spam* I was receiving from my Guatemalan contacts during the start of the pandemic was overwhelming. I would receive the same strangely anti-masker messages with religious undertones from my Grandma in El Salvador and one of the K'ekchi' reproductive health activists from Alta Verapaz. The nature of forwarded WhatsApp messages like these, however, made my lack of response less noticeable, or at least no one called me out on my silence (though I did engage with many of my immediate family members on dispelling damaging myths regarding COVID-19 and the COVID-19 vaccine).

Most of the advocating the collective was doing on a day-today basis was taking place in Facebook and WhatsApp, and even sometimes through email. This was part of the critical differences that the collective, as a grassroots organization, had with state or foreign funded NGOs: the odds were stacked against them. Other reproductive health organizations in the area were stronger because they had support and money from the very institutions the collective was trying to challenge. This meant no other group was remotely as vocal about controversial topics like abortion, same-sex marriage, or sex work as the collective.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I consider the ethical implications tied to the vernacularization of academic discourses like decolonization and conscientización. Many in Latin America have critiqued the way decolonial movements can continue to reproduce patriarchal exclusions (Escobar 2010; Hernandez Castillo 2009) and culturalist approaches (Postero 2017; Rivera Cusicanqui 2010; Portugal 2011). These critiques have raised the question: Is decolonization just another stage in the management of cultural difference? Or can indigenous peoples truly use their ontological difference to radically change the nature of Latin American democracies? I add here a third consideration: What happens when the language of decolonization is used for idiosyncratic forms of empowerment beyond indigenous resistance? How do we respond to ethical dilemmas produced by the popularization of these discourses? This last one is an especially relevant question here considering the collective was not necessarily an indigenous organization nor did they emphasize indigenous epistemologies or ways of being. The collective had chosen to vernacularize decolonization as an issue of gendered power dynamics and Western biomedical hegemony, leaving them in a gray zone when it came to an academic debate on decolonization.

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In this chapter I addressed the ambiguous potential of postdevelopment by analyzing an attempt at alternative articulations of development by a local feminist collective in Sacatepéquez, Guatemala. This case study is not representative of other attempts at postdevelopment, but rather is an ethnographic look at the ways discourses about radical equality can enter the popular lexicon and so gain local significance in unexpected ways. In his earlier work on postdevelopment, Escobar's (1995) call to focus on groups that seek to move beyond Western knowledge included a question I continue to find relevant: "how to understand the ways in which cultural actors—cultural producers, intermediaries, and the public—transform their practices in the face of modernity's contradictions" (*Ibid.*: 219). Though as a discipline we have moved away from discourses on cultural hybridity, his query continues to be relevant in the era of decolonization.

While the call for alternative development was an effective tool for deconstructing the discourse of development in my work with the NGOs, I was not quite sure what to make of my experience with the collective. Despite the rigidity and often apolitical work of women's health NGOs in Antigua, many were doing critical work to provide reproductive services to communities that would otherwise be lacking. In the end, I consider the possibility that sometimes, alternative development is not better just because it is "alternative". In fact, the very nature of the precarious neoliberal healthcare landscape we as Guatemalans find ourselves means working with government-aligned and/or foreign-funded organizations is often the only way for women to receive much-needed reproductive care. In the end, *la lucha* and the work of groups like the collective will likely be essential to challenging the structural hegemony of development and its alignment with the coloniality of knowledge, but in the meantime, women continue to rely on NGOs. Moreover, as I hope this dissertation has shown, the work of NGOs is not always

depoliticizing: there is room for everyday political action as women vernacularize discourses of equality in their own everyday contexts.

Conclusions

"You know how it is in Guatemala," Monica (a local performance artist and charla organizer that introduced me to Keilin) lamented, "all these NGOs, all this aid, this foreign help: for indigenous women, for youth, for the environment…" she trailed off, staring into the courtyard of her house in the outskirts of Chimaltenango.

"You don't think these groups should be getting aid?" I asked, curious where her lament was going.

'It's not that. Everyone's been marginalized here, and God knows they deserve [that help], but think of all this money that's supposed to be here, all these organizations in Guatemala, but what about us? The women who don't fit into that, I'm not indigenous, not a teenager, but I still live here… there's just holes for us (*hay un vacío*)…I feel abandoned[136]" she continued slowly.

The frustration in her voice and the deep look in her eyes made it clear how much she felt this "vacío." I watched her reflect, not saying anything as my coffee cooled. She was sitting in an unsteady plastic chair, her feet outstretched in front of her. She had recently started working at a local women's shelter and so was on her feet most of the day, coordinating safe transportation, food, clothing, and other necessities for the local women who managed to make it out of situations of domestic violence. We were sitting in a small room to the side of her house, which she and her husband shared with her mother, father, and two younger sisters. I had gotten a ride to Chimaltenango to "officially" interview her about the women's shelter and the way it related to

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[136] For a more in-depth analysis of the way NGOs and humanitarian interventions "abandon" certain populations see Kevin O'Neill (2013): *Left Behind: Security, Salvation, and the Subject of Prevention.*

her performances (most of which dealt with women's domestic oppression and public sexual harassment in the streets).

"I'm not expecting anyone to give me gifts" she eventually continued, "*pero ala gran* (but *man*) … we need *something,* people in Guatemala can be just so chauvinistic (*machista*)!" A small figurine of the virgin of Guadalupe looked over us as she vented. A subtle reminder of the expectations of motherhood and marriage both of us had from our Catholic families.

I had met Monica at one of Rosa's events but, like Rosa, Monica was involved in a myriad of projects and organizations across the region and so did not have time to make it to the Collective's events in Antigua, particularly given the rising issue with traffic in Chimaltenango. As a ladina from a middle-class family in Chimaltenango, Monica had grown up with more privilege than many of the other women I worked with throughout my fieldwork. This privilege had allowed her to explore her artistic interests and develop her identity as a feminist. With her parents now aging and her younger sister pregnant, her middle-class positionality seemed precarious. Her work at the women's shelter had really highlighted just how many women felt these "vacíos. For Monica, these were holes for women who sought justice, who were mistreated, who were *angry* to fall through. The pessimism with which she spoke was not unusual, our talks usually turned to our frustrations regarding the state of things in Guatemala.

I considered asking her why she wanted "aid" money, instead of having the government provide services, but the question was futile. The government was not going to provide anytime soon, but foreign aid and NGOs were here now, with new projects and swag to promote them. In the introduction I described the way indigenous women's bodies[137] have been the target of

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[137] Despite her assurance that indigenous women "deserved" NGO aid, Monica's comments here reveal some undertones of what Charles Hale (2006) calls the "racial ambivalence" of ladinos in Guatemala.

development, and so governance, throughout different regimes of citizenship in Guatemala. The previous chapters explored how adolescent women are also seen as subjects of intervention, and how even young men fit into NGOized discourses of empowerment. Monica's comments were a poignant reminder that development and humanitarian interventions need docile bodies. As much as empowerment is seen by many participating in nonprofit reproductive health projects as enabling personal forms of liberation and consciousness-raising, these interventions are simultaneously a tool of reproductive governance.

Ultimately, this dissertation was an exploration in vernacularization, in the way that young, marginalized women understand and re-articulate ideas about power and equality in completely unexpected ways. It was an exploration into ambiguous consequences, both as acts of quotidian politics and neoliberal governance. It demonstrates that the NGO model of development is here to stay, at least for now, despite the growing academic critiques to it. Taking a look at these unanticipated and deeply ambivalent ways that development plays out in daily life illuminates what is at stake for young women in their ordinary lives. That is, the way that young women come to see themselves as empowered reveals deeper transformations of the self that allow them to use their rights-based education and the language of human rights and biomedical development to authoritatively alter uneven power relationships in their own lives.

Continued NGOization

NGOs and development initiatives operate very much as a form of governmentality that aligns with modernity and the implied coloniality of knowledge that so many Latin American scholars have pointed out for decades (Escobar 1991; 2010; Blaser, Feit, and McRae 2004; Ferguson 1994). Inadvertently, the work of many NGOs closely align with a coloniality of power:

there is an implied ethnic and class (and within each of those, gender) dimension to "improvement." The critiques made by academics about this coloniality are not necessarily reflected in structural changes to NGOs per se, although there is a rise in decolonial action across Latin America and to a lesser extent Guatemala However, these structural critiques we can make of development are often not as easily reflected in the attitudes of many NGO workers.

Throughout my interviews with NGO workers, it became clear that they work hard and seek out institutions of development to work in, not just because it is a job open to women that provides some promise of upward mobility, but also because they believe in building a more equitable country. They believe that everyone deserves human rights, that women should be equal to men, they acknowledge and react to the growing inequality in the country. On a less pessimistic note, I would like to believe that the commitment of youth and other leaders in many Guatemalan communities to the work of NGOs might lead to some structural changes further in the future. After all, discourses of improvement and development, like that of human rights and empowerment, have built-in space for interpretation. I am cautiously hopeful that young women (and men) can change the nature of development to be more equitable just as they have come to challenge the gendered power imbalances in their own lives. I am thinking here of the way Yasmín challenged her brother to do his own laundry in Chapter 2 or the way Roberto helped his mother make tortillas in Chapter 3.

Furthermore, although Escobar and Alvarez (1995) underscored the many "voices" calling for an end to development decades ago, and development has certainly been transformed by these decolonizing challenges, I continue to find it relevant to understand how people's daily lives are impacted in Guatemala by development organizations and their projects. My research has highlighted that, despite the academic critiques, development and humanitarian interventions have

become the way people place demands for social services and goods, and the way they come to understand *rights* in their everyday lives. Monica's lament about the lack of funding her own interests and organizations were receiving, and my own hesitation to even bring up the role of the state reveal as much. Moreover, one of the premises of this dissertation is that labeling the work of reproductive health organizations solely as depoliticizing obscures efforts to challenge deep-rooted power inequalities in the intimate and daily lives of marginalized women.

Ultimately, my dissertation shows how young women learn to navigate different tensions (socioeconomic, racial, moral, religious, generational) as they move through nonprofit interventions and vernacularize discourses about rights in accordance with local understandings of a good life. By considering these seemingly apolitical interventions as highly contested affective sites for reimagining a good life in post-war Guatemala, I address three interrelated issues. First, I add to the literature of human rights and development interventions, particularly the way they serve as a form of both apolitical governance and a decolonizing tool of collective action in the continuing neoliberal era. I see dissensus as a way to address questions of agency within policing biopolitical states, especially as questions of rights are increasingly medicalized. Second, viewing the ethical processes occurring within these spaces as political underscores their democratic nature, contributing to a broader conversation regarding politics as a practice of world-making that constantly redefines our understanding of ethical engagement as political. Finally, allowing for a wider consideration of the positive, negative, and ambivalent consequences produced by this form of politics and policing illuminates other dilemmas: what happens when the popularization of global discourses impinges upon the wellbeing of local communities? And, how do we frame NGO governmentality in a way that also allows for the deeply powerful sense of self-transformation it enables in young women?

Understanding the participation of young women in NGOs as political is paramount to understanding and addressing the precarity that most Guatemalan women live in, as well as in recognizing their agency in the face of neoliberal policing. It is only by understanding reproductive health as an inherently political project that we can address the persistence of deep inequalities experienced by marginalized women and their corresponding claims to substantive citizenship rights.

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