

**Growing up in Guayaquil's Barrios:  
A Collaborative Ethnography with Children**

by

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to the children and women across Guayaquil's barrios who have trusted me with their stories and invested their time in teaching me and collaborating to produce this dissertation. I thank them for their love, support, and generosity, as they embraced me as a friend, partner, *madrina*, and *comadre*.

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## ABSTRACT

My dissertation explores everyday life in Guayaquil's shantytowns and the histories of these communities to better understand the impacts of social and spatial inequalities on families from the city's poorest neighborhoods to the South, North, and East. I focus on children's experiences growing up in these neighborhoods and how their understanding of family, poverty, violence, and city spaces influences the ways they internalize and imagine their own social positions and possibilities for their futures. My central research question asks: how do poor children growing up in Guayaquil's barrios approach their everyday lives and how do their interactions and the relationships they develop with peers, family, and spaces across the city speak to larger societal issues on the production and regulation of childhood, race, and socio-spatial inequalities? To answer this question, my dissertation presents: **1)** how the histories of the shantytowns reflect a history of Guayaquil's socio-spatial segregation, repositioning ideas surrounding socioeconomic aspirations of poor urban communities; **2)** how violence in children's households influences their development and socialization, often leading girls, in particular, to form new families and to simultaneously navigate girlhood and motherhood; **3)** how children and their mothers think about their childhood and how their everyday experiences influence the ways they imagine their futures; **4)** how poor children think about and experience everyday life in their neighborhoods and across the city, especially in relation to racism and segregation. My dissertation reinvigorates theories of childhood, family, and poverty, highlighting how the experiences of poor children in the shantytowns and across Guayaquil overlap discussions of political economy, children's rights, and legacies of

colonialism. Through a presentation of new methods and methodologies for collaborative research agendas with children, this dissertation also deconstructs the colonialism that not only forms part of everyday life in Guayaquil, but that also forms part of ethnographic interventions.

**Chapter 1**  
**The Day of the Child**  
*An introduction*

Based on more than two years of ethnographic fieldwork and nearly four years of interactions and growing relationships with children and their families from the north, south, and east sides of Guayaquil, Ecuador, this dissertation is about growing up in the city's "barrios" [shantytown neighborhoods]. Informed by post-structural feminist approaches (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1991; Cotera 2008; Ho 2004; Puar 2005; Smith 1999; Spivak 1988), my research considers the historical contexts and social conditions through which the children and their families have come to understand their own social positions and their relationships with people and spaces across the city. By describing their social worlds and sharing their stories, I present diverse ways in which childhood is lived in Guayaquil's poorest sectors. I examine what forms of selfhood and subjectivity are made possible within these contexts and how the children, in particular, imagine and discuss their own experiences: past, present, and future.

Through my research, I understand childhood as a process whose speed and trajectory are driven by the relationships in children's lives with people and spaces: those they had, those they have, and those they seek to have. Observations and analyses of children's everyday lives and of memories and interpretations of childhood from their mothers and grandmothers have taught me about family, poverty, race and racism, the histories of Guayaquil's barrios, and the social and spatial exclusions that continue to structure the city today. I must emphasize that this learning process has been collaborative, as children and families have worked with me to create a project we have all learned from and crafted with deep interest and investment. In this project,

collaboration serves as a critical methodology that works toward a decolonization of ethnography, contributing specific research strategies to the decolonized approaches of other scholars, like Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Nelson Maldonado Torres (2009), and Catherine Walsh (2013).

As an anthropologist, I view decolonization as an aspiration to make the research process horizontal by transforming our ways of acting and thinking (see also Walsh 2013). A decolonizing frame in anthropology acknowledges its imperialist roots and the colonialist agendas of early ethnographic pursuits (e.g., Benedict 1946; Morgan 1851; Pritchard 1969[1940]); it recognizes the traditionally one-sided nature of ethnographic research in which researchers act as the sole guides of how projects progress, including what they want to learn, and what they do with what they learn (e.g., Geertz 1973; Leach 1954). Collaboration has served as a strategy to disrupt traditional hierarchies embedded in the research relationship (see also Scheper-Hughes 1995, Smith 1999, and Mato 2000 on collaboration). As collaborators, the children and women with whom I have worked are not being studied; instead, they are participating in a learning relationship, taking on the roles of interviewer and interviewee. Their own critical reflections of their everyday experiences guide questions and major points of interest, and we are always involved in a dialogue of our interpretations of what we learn together.

My aim for decolonizing childhood relies on involving children in the research and writing process as partners and collaborators; and, it requires writing about childhood by writing against it – that is, resisting limiting definitions from academics and practitioners of childhood that overlook the diverse ways in which childhood is lived and conceptualized by children. Ecuador’s 2015 census determined it was a “young” country because the majority of its

population is comprised of children and adolescents. The Guayas province, which is where Guayaquil is located, identified the majority of its population as being between the ages of 10 and 14. In Guayaquil, a city governed and largely structured by the imaginations of its wealthiest leaders and families, I share ideas and experiences that move beyond the ethnographies of poverty in Latin America, by thinking and analyzing *with* my research collaborators as we un-learn to re-learn the city together – decolonizing anthropology.

Guayaquil played a large role in my childhood and the memories I have of growing up. My trips there throughout my life and my strong connections to my family in the city have shaped how I think about and imagine the world, and they have influenced my own understandings of and relationships to family and home. Guayaquil is the city where I became a researcher; it's the place where I found stories to tell. And, along with the children and their families, it is a central character in this dissertation.

### **Part I: Guayaquil, Ecuador – of Memory and Imagination**

Named after the imaginary equatorial line that runs through it, Ecuador is uniquely situated as a country shaped by the imagination; and, through their life histories, observations, interactions, and ideas, this dissertation presents how children and women from the poorest sectors of Ecuador's largest city imagine their country, their city, their neighborhood, and their roles and futures within these spaces. This dissertation demonstrates how the socio-spatial histories of the city, which are delimited based on race and class, are interconnected with the socio-spatial positions of poor, young people in Guayaquil today; it is about how the city – and their homes and neighborhoods within this city – shape the ways they come to understand their everyday lives and the futures they are able to imagine and work toward.

My approach to anthropology, as this dissertation demonstrates, follows a philosophy of a decolonization of the discipline through the practice of fieldwork and writing. And this decolonizing process is one I personally felt as I unlearned the city of my own childhood to re-learn it through the eyes of today's children.

Walking through Guayaquil's downtown, I've tried to imagine the Guayaquil of my mother's childhood, and the Guayaquil displayed in the paintings and the black and white photographs that lined the walls of my house while I was growing up in Tennessee. There were fewer people, fewer cars, and fewer buses, but it still felt full. That's how my mom describes it.

While I was growing up, my grandparents lived downtown, across from Guayaquil's Parque Centenario. I visited them every summer for a decade, starting in '84. I remember jumping in taxis with my family and always wanting to be the first to tell the driver where to take us: 4to Piso B, Vélez y Pedro Moncayo.<sup>1</sup> My sister would laugh at me, and tell me I didn't have to be so specific. The driver would often laugh, too. That encouraged me to continue providing these same instructions.

My first memories of Guayaquil are of *el centro* -- the downtown, the heart of the city. I remember my summers living on the corner of Vélez and Pedro Moncayo. The honking, the shouting, the vendors announcing they were selling "¡Lotería!" I was mesmerized by the pages of colorful lottery tickets and stood next to my grandmother as she selected the luckiest numbers for the week. My mom and grandmother would take me to *la plaza central* to buy fruit and to a *panadería* [bakery] on our street to buy the sweet bread I ate for breakfast: *pan de dulce*. Aside

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<sup>1</sup> Vélez and Pedro Moncayo are two downtown streets, and my grandparents' apartment was located at this intersection. It was on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Apartment B.

<sup>2</sup> "Suces" served as Ecuador's currency from 1884 through 2000.

<sup>3</sup> *La 9 de octubre* is long and lined by local businesses, offices, apartment buildings, banks, hotels, restaurants, a new movie theater, the Iglesia San Francisco, and the former-U.S. consulate where I spent hours waiting for documents to be stamped, signed, and approved so that I could remain in Guayaquil as a researcher and, later, as a resident.

from the smell of fresh bread and sweets coming from the *panadería*, I remember foul street smells of trash, sewage, and urine.

Water dripped on my head as I walked along, either from air conditioning units or from women tossing dirty water from buckets out their windows. My mother would hold my hand tighter when we walked past beggars, and she instructed me not to look because it would make me sad. “*Qué pena, qué lástima. Pobre gente*” [*How sad, what a shame. Poor people*], my mother would say. I looked anyway, and as the summers passed, I was allowed to give them *sucres*.<sup>2</sup> My grandmother, however, would become angry at the indigenous women who begged with babies on their backs. She bought milk for their children and scolded the mothers for giving them coca-cola and for dressing them in woolen clothes during such extreme heat. “*¡Ignorantes!*” She often offered them jobs. They would refuse. “*¡Vagas! ¡Desgraciadas!*” [*Lazy, miserable women*], she would shout at them. She told me that beggars were lazy. Asking for money was easier than earning it.

An artist came to el 4to Piso B before we flew back to Tennessee. It was 1988, and we had spent a year living there because of my father’s research. My parents bought three new paintings to take with us. I picked the one that had purple in the sky and rocks on the ground that you could feel with your fingers. The houses in the paintings were wooden with chazas: shutters that pushed up. El Guayaquil antiguo. The old Guayaquil, the traditional Guayaquil – of memory and imagination.

For my first 13 years, the Guayaquil I knew was *el centro*. But since then, my summers and my years in the city have moved me North, South, and East of downtown. My point of reference downtown is its major avenue: *la 9 de octubre* – the street whose name commemorates

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<sup>2</sup> “Sucre” served as Ecuador’s currency from 1884 through 2000.



the day of Guayaquil's 1820 Independence.<sup>3</sup> From that street, I can find the intersection of *Vélez y Pedro Moncayo*. The *metrovia* station, "Plaza del Centenario," is located in front of my grandparents' former apartment. The blue *metrovia* buses, one of the city's two public transportation options, began running in Guayaquil in 2006 when I moved to the city for the first time on my own.

La columna de los Próceres, the central statue of the Parque Centenario, was inaugurated for Guayaquil's 100 years of independence and has three female that represent the past, present, and future, and one male figure that represents space.<sup>4</sup> *El centro* is a fitting space for such a statue, as Guayaquil grew out of its Cerro Santa Ana, and mayoral projects and presentations of a new and more modern Guayaquil often begin here. If you walk down the central avenue, *la 9 de octubre*, toward the river, you reach Guayaquil's premier boardwalk – and what is arguably the city's strongest symbol of urban renewal: *el Malecón 2000*. This boardwalk along with the Cerro Santa Ana and its "Peñas" neighborhood were remodeled nearly two decades ago to bring in the new millennium, emphasizing Guayaquil's modernity and competitiveness on a global scale.<sup>5</sup> Jaime Nebot, Guayaquil's mayor, and his mentor and predecessor, León Febres-Cordero, envisioned the *Malecón 2000* as a symbol of change and the beginning of *la regeneración*

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<sup>3</sup> *La 9 de octubre* is long and lined by local businesses, offices, apartment buildings, banks, hotels, restaurants, a new movie theater, the Iglesia San Francisco, and the former-U.S. consulate where I spent hours waiting for documents to be stamped, signed, and approved so that I could remain in Guayaquil as a researcher and, later, as a resident.

<sup>4</sup> Through the local newspaper, *Diario El Universo*, Guayaquil's Municipality publishes historical magazines during October to celebrate Guayaquil's month of Independence; here, the female and male figures of the columna de los Próceres are described as representations of time and space. These yearly magazines provide histories of the city, focusing especially on *el centro*, as its urban regeneration is one of the accomplishments Mayor Jaime Nebot showcases the most. One of these issues also featured the renewal projects – running water, legalization of lands – in Guayaquil's shantytowns. In 2015, these magazines took on the mayoral theme of "Guayaquil es mi destino" [Guayaquil is my destiny].

<sup>5</sup> I make this note to distinguish between the "barrio" of Las Peñas with those I describe throughout the dissertation. El "Barrio Las Peñas" is Guayaquil's first neighborhood. There are several "barrios" that form part of the traditional Guayaquil and are located in the city's *centro*, like the "Barrio Centenario" and the "Barrio del Seguro." The label of "barrio," however, also became used to refer to the city's shantytown neighborhoods, which are often referred to by media, politicians, and Guayaquileños who are not from those neighborhoods as "el suburbio" [the suburbs], "barrios marginales" [marginal neighborhoods], or "barrios populares" [popular neighborhoods]. The residents of these neighborhoods refer to them as "barrios," which is the terminology I also use.

*urbana*. Urban renewal. The New Guayaquil. The Modern Guayaquil. Increased security to protect the newly renovated areas formed part of their plans to change their city; they hired consultants from London and New York to participate as architects of their vision (see also Andrade 2005 and Garcés 2004).

In downtown Guayaquil, at the intersection of the boardwalk (*el Malecón 2000*) and its central avenue (*la 9 de octubre*), there is a statue of the Liberators of South America: Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín. Both men are shaking hands, just beyond the steel gate that separates the *Malecón* from the city traffic. Tourists are always standing in front of them, posing for pictures. This statue commemorates their 1822 meeting in Guayaquil in which they made their final plans for liberation from the Spanish. This was a secret meeting and their conversations remain the subject of mystery and speculation (see, for example, Jorge Luis Borges' "Guayaquil"). They had different visions for the future of the region and neither vision was ever realized. Instead of a united Gran Colombia or several regions with a monarch, independent nations were formed. Ecuador was one of them.

There are pictures as you reach the end of the malecón to make your way into the historic Peñas neighborhood located in the Cerro Santa Ana: the birthplace of Guayaquil. Before and after shots are displayed on the sides of houses to remind tourists and Guayaquileños of the city's progress (Garcés 2004). There are 444 steps as you climb the Cerro Santa Ana, surrounded by the brightly painted houses of the traditional Peñas neighborhood. The top is designed as a fortress with cannons, a reminder of the pirate attacks of the seventeenth century – one of the dangers of being a coastal city (see Gómez Inturralde in Núñez 1997).<sup>6</sup> At the top, you can walk

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<sup>6</sup> As a port city, Guayaquil's connection to water has been central since its inception. Bodies of water in this city are unique in that *agua dulce* [sweet water] and *agua salada* [salt water] mix. The *estero salado* [the salty estuary], where many of the kids I work with swim, is the waterway that connects the city's rivers with the Pacific Ocean.

in the chapel, look up at the lighthouse, or pay to see the city through binoculars: The New Guayaquil as observed from the oldest point of the city.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Cerro Santa Ana was referred to as the “ciudad vieja” [old city], and the governor opposed the building of new houses in this sector as a means of encouraging people to move to the “ciudad nueva” [new city]. In the 1700s, between the old and the new cities, shantytown communities first came about, alongside the bridges that united new homes and neighborhoods; these were all built above five tributaries (Núñez 1997). As I describe in Chapter 3, Guayaquil’s present-day shantytown neighborhoods, emerging in the second half of the twentieth century, began on the city’s South Side, as the city’s poorest residents and migrants were pushed – often, from *el centro* – to Guayaquil’s outskirts to build their homes and neighborhoods above the swamplands.

The column de los Próceres, the statue of Bolívar and San Martín, the Cerro Santa Ana, and the Malecón 2000 project all come together in *el centro* as symbols of the city’s past, present, and future. This dissertation privileges narratives of Guayaquil that trace the city’s history, its present, and imaginations for the future that come from its barrios. These narratives highlight the city’s legacies of exclusion and exploitation of the poor alongside the efforts and triumphs of barrio residents to create and fight for their homes, neighborhoods, and communities.

### ***Situating Guayaquil in Ecuador***

A geodesic mission in the 1700s sent a group of French and Spanish astronomers and geographers to study the earth’s circumference around the equator (see Safier 2008); that is, the imaginary line that runs through Ecuador and is responsible for the country’s name. Since its inception, Ecuador, located upon an imaginary division across the center of the world, has been a

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Historian Willington Paredes (2006) describes Guayaquil’s “condition” as a “ciudad-puerto” [city-port] as the reason for its open spirit (55) and idealizes its “destino mariner” [marine destiny] (71).

space of competing imaginations. Ecuador's population of nearly 16.5 million is sustained primarily by its raw materials – cacao, coffee, bananas, flowers, and oil. Today, “oil accounts for approximately 50 percent of Ecuador's total exports (520,000-550,000 barrels per day) and has been the mainstay of the economy for the better part of 50 years” (Fitz-Henry 2012:267). Wealthy Ecuadorians have become and continue to become even more wealthy as entrepreneurs and businessmen who export, import, and exploit what their country has to offer. Although President Rafael Correa has set policies and guidelines (e.g., the Law of Inheritance; the Surplus Law) in an effort to combat the economic power of select members of the country's oligarchy, Ecuador is run by an elite group of millionaires whose investments – sometimes inherited by the decisions of their grandparents and great-grandparents – set the pace of the economy and structure the possibilities for the country's laborers – those who physically harness Ecuador's raw materials.

Guayaquil is located on Ecuador's Pacific coast. Often called “la perla del pacífico” [the Pearl of the Pacific], Guayaquil has a population of approximately 4 million. The city was founded on several separate occasions, starting in 1534. Wars and uprisings against the Spanish moved Guayaquil from the highlands, near Quito, to its present-day location on the coast. July 25, 1538 was its final “día de fundación” [foundation day] and is the one that we celebrate today (Ayala 2005). As a port city, Guayaquil endured pirate attacks; and, from its beginnings on the country's coast through the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Guayaquil endured countless fires that destroyed it. Historians of the city have documented these fires, the use of hydrants, and the physical changes in construction to protect the city from burning down. Historian Jorge Núñez (1997) reflects on Guayaquil's unique beginnings with its multiple founding sites and dates and with its constant need to rebuild itself on account of fires: “El curioso fenómeno de una ciudad

modelada y reorganizada por el fuego” [the curious phenomenon of a city modeled and reorganized by fire] (14). Certainly, Guayaquil is a curious phenomenon and the ways in which the city continues to be modeled and reorganized by the competing interests, needs, and imaginations of the Municipality and of Guayaquileños from the poorest to the wealthiest neighborhoods represents the challenges and societal exclusions inherent in (re)building the city (e.g. Andrade 2005; Garcés 2004).

From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, migration to the coast, and to Guayaquil in particular, grew on account of the cacao industry. From the 1940s through the 1960s, banana production promoted migration as well from the other provinces. The petroleum boom of the 1970s increased migration both to the capital – Quito – and to Guayaquil. As migration increased, the city center overflowed, forcing Guayaquil to expand physically. This expansion in the 60s and 70s began by growing south, above the “manglar” [swamp]. The majority of the older people I met during my research who live in Guayaquil’s barrios migrated to the city from the province of Esmeraldas. This province, along with the highland community of the Chota Valley [Valle del Chota] in northwestern Ecuador, is associated with the strongest Afro-descendant presence in the country; while this is the association that is typically made, as I discuss in Chapter 6, Guayaquil has the largest population of Afro-descendants. Although municipal projects over the last two decades have filled the “streets” of water with sand and rocks and replaced a majority of the elevated houses supported by poles of bamboo, these still form part of the southern shantytowns today. They are reminders for those who founded these neighborhoods and who were born there of the histories of the barrios – of Guayaquil’s history.

It is these shantytown neighborhoods as well as those along the northern and eastern sides of the city that form a perimeter around Guayaquil. This perimeter of poverty is not an

imaginary line; the unpaved roads, empty lots littered with trash, and wooden homes of “caña” and grey cement are among the images that make this division visible. Nearly half of Guayaquil lives in the barrios, which are the city’s poorest communities. Many of these homes do not yet have basic household services, especially running water; and, particularly on the North Side, roads remain unpaved. Residents of all ages from these communities move across the city to work in houses as maids, bodyguards, and chauffeurs or to work as lower-level employees in businesses: bag boys at grocery stores, servers at restaurants, custodians at shopping malls. Men also work independently as electricians, plumbers, painters, and as “todólogos” [an extreme form of the “handyman;” literally, those who can do “todo,” everything]. Many also work on the city streets and on city buses; children, for example, juggle tennis balls, wash windshields, and beg for money at traffic intersections. Men sell lottery tickets and bags of limes and mangos, running from car window to car window to make their sales. Women carry babies on their backs as they sell roses and candy. People with visible tumors, in wheelchairs, and on crutches move along the intersections during the red lights, holding signs describing their disability and how it makes it impossible for them to attain a job. These are the images outlining the city.

As I accompanied children from their shantytowns and across Guayaquil, I observed the extent to which they internalized the inequalities that characterize different city sectors; these inequalities inform the decisions they make about their poverty, their race, and their future. Although Ecuador’s National Institute of Statistics and Census Data (INEC 2014) indicates that in urban areas, like Guayaquil, approximately 17% of the population lives below the poverty line and only 4%, approximately, lives in extreme poverty, the ways in which they classify “poverty” do not coincide with the ways it is lived.<sup>7</sup> The majority of the people with whom I work earn

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<sup>7</sup> The INEC classifies poverty as a monthly income of \$83.29 and extreme poverty as \$46.94. The minimum wage for 2015 is set at \$354 per month, and the “Canasta Familiar Básica” is set at \$668.57. This “Basic Family Basket”

less than the minimum wage; they work informally selling food, cleaning different people's houses, and cooking; the domestic servants who have a steady job at one house do earn the minimum wage, though these jobs have been difficult to attain (and then to maintain) for many of the mothers I work with.<sup>8</sup> Their average household income is less than \$500 per month, and the average number of people living in their household is seven. Although there are "official" ways with which to quantify poverty, my research in the city's shantytowns indicates a much higher index. As part of my project, the children who worked as research assistants gathered statistics in their neighborhoods; but, this quantitative piece is not what drives my conclusions. It is my observations of people's homes and their everyday experiences that, I believe, are much more telling of how their monthly income shapes their possibilities – of how poverty is lived.

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represents the products that families need per month to survive. These baskets are based on a 4-person household and are comprised of 75 products from a list of 359. The INEC's report from January 2015 states: "Los productos que conforman estas canastas analíticas, se considera que son imprescindibles para satisfacer las necesidades básicas del hogar considerado en: alimentos y bebidas; vivienda; indumentaria; y, misceláneos" [The products that make up these comprehensive baskets are considered absolutely necessary to meet the basic needs of the household: food and beverage; household expenses; clothing; and, miscellaneous].

<sup>8</sup> Elisa, for example, is one of the mothers who works as a maid and has confronted her bosses about the injustices she believes she faced in those households: having to work additional hours and holidays without extra pay, being denied reasonable amounts of food for her lunch, being accused of stealing. After she resigned from one of her jobs in 2015, I encouraged her to file a formal complaint with the Ministerio de Relaciones Laborales [Department of Labor], to which she responded: "¿Qué puede hacer uno sin plata contra uno con plata? El pobre contra el rico nunca va a ganar, Hermana" [What can one without money do against one with money? The poor against the rich will never win, Sister].



**Figure 1** In 2014, Ecuador’s minimum monthly wage was \$340. This woman holds up a sign in protest, addressed to President Rafael Correa: “Mr. Correa, with \$340, we do not have a dignified life, as you say we do.” Ecuavisa, Nov. 19, 2014.

My ethnographic fieldwork with children and their families in Guayaquil is based on participant observation, individual and group interviews, workshops and focus groups at a non-profit school for street children (Fundación Crecer) and with children and their families across the city and in their homes and neighborhoods. They live in barrios along the northern, southern, and eastern poles of Guayaquil. Nearly all of the biological parents and grandparents of those participating in this project were born in the province of Esmeraldas and moved to Guayaquil as teenagers and adults. Some of the children I have worked with have been abandoned by their biological parents and are raised by aunts, cousins, grandparents, or group homes. More than half of them have worked on the streets. A majority of them have undergone emotional,



physical, and/or sexual abuse, and their mothers recall similar experiences from their own childhood.

Children's changing relationships with city spaces as they move across Guayaquil form a large part of this dissertation. I demonstrate that social class divisions in Guayaquil are not only created by the levels of inequality in people's resources and opportunities, but by people's interpretation and analysis of these inequalities and how these structure their everyday life. Poor children are aware of their social positions as their surroundings change, and they react accordingly, demonstrating the depth with which their social class and its accompanying stereotypes are imprinted upon them and even accepted by them (e.g., Bourdieu 1977; De Certeau 1984; Fanon 1967[1952]). I also present how children discuss their understanding of race, moments in which they have encountered racism, and how they responded. My findings indicate that children's understanding of race differs within their neighborhoods versus outside of them (see also Sheriff 2001). This difference emphasizes how city spaces and those who dominate and invade different parts of the landscape change the ways in which children traditionally think about each other and themselves, leading, at times, to the children's own manifestations of racism.

Scholars of the Andes have discussed strategies people employ to gain access to higher (and whiter) social settings, such as consumption, education, and migration (e.g., de la Cadena 1998; Roberts 2012; Weismantel 2001). In Guayaquil, however, the rigidity of social stratification renders possibilities for "whitening" and "belonging" to other social sectors improbable. Moreover, people from the shantytowns do not strive to leave their neighborhoods or to imitate the styles of their whiter, upper-class peers. Instead, their goals and aspirations revolve around their family and their neighborhoods. In addition to the power of segregation and

inequality, this attachment to their neighborhoods lies in their personal connection to their shantytown's history and their families' continued struggles and efforts to improve their communities.

### ***Children as Folklore and (versus) the Future in Guayaquil***

There have always been tensions between two of the most powerful Guayaquileños in Ecuador: right-wing Jaime Nebot (Guayaquil's mayor) and left-wing Rafael Correa (Ecuador's president). In televised speeches, radio interviews, and over Twitter and Facebook, they criticize and make fun of one another, not only politically, but personally. These attacks are both entertaining and embarrassing for many Ecuadorians, and they are largely representative of Ecuadorian politics today. While "la Revolución Ciudadana" [the Citizen's Revolution] that Correa has campaigned on for nearly a decade initially appealed to people from the poorest sectors, like Guayaquil's shantytowns, he has lost popularity since I began my fieldwork, and my research collaborators are now split (see also de la Torre 2015 and his discussion of populism as authoritarianism in relation to Correa's presidency). Some love Correa, some hate him; some love Nebot, others hate him. But, the most popular explanation I have received from my research collaborators is that the tensions and hatred between the two are beneficial for them and their barrios. Correa and Nebot always want to out-do one another with projects, so they each go out of their way to create better ones. People from the shantytowns benefit from this competition through new boardwalks, parks, roads, and clinics.

In the fall of 2014, Nebot placed bronze statues on various streets in Guayaquil's downtown whose purpose was to recall and rescue the city's history. On his Facebook page, he gave examples of the bronze figures: *cangrejero* [a person who fishes for crab], *betunero* [a shoe shiner], *afilador de cuchillos* [an apparatus to sharpen knives]. Correa criticized, in particular,

the statue of the child shoe shiner – “el niño betunero” – stating that it is horrific to glorify the sad reality of child workers: “Cómo puede ser aceptado esto en el Ecuador del siglo XXI, esto es un insulto para la pobreza, para nuestra niñez trabajadora, esto debería ser un monumento para recordarnos lo que debemos cambiar” [How can this be accepted in 21<sup>st</sup> century Ecuador? It is an insult to poverty, to our child workers; this should be a monument to remind us of what we should change].<sup>9</sup> Nebot defended his statues by explaining that he was highlighting historical moments as a way of making all Guayaquileños feel like they belong to the city. Nebot wrote on his Facebook page that through these statues “se espera propiciar el mejoramiento del autoestima ciudadano, que conlleva el sentido de pertenencia y consecuentemente el sentido de protección de los nuevos espacios” [the hope is to improve citizens’ self-esteem which, in turn, leads to feelings of belonging and a desire to protect new spaces]. These statues are reminders of the effort and improvement – “el esfuerzo y la superación” – and that things changed for the better, Nebot explained. This, he suggested, should be applauded and recognized positively, not with bitterness, like that held by the President who, he said, has apparently forgotten Guayaquil’s history after so many years living outside the country and city.<sup>10</sup>

This debate and the presence of the statues stood out to me, as I thought about the kids I work with, many of whom have worked on the streets. What are the implications of highlighting the past with images of child workers when these children still form part of present-day

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<sup>9</sup> These quotations are from an article published on November 2, 2014 in the *Diario El Universo*: <http://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2014/11/02/nota/4174321/correa-cuestiona-escultura-centrica-nino-betunero>.

<sup>10</sup> These temporal conflicts embedded in Nebot’s bronze statues remind me of literature, particularly *indigenista* writings coming from the Andes, that demonstrate a dilemma of space and time surrounding the figure of the Indian. The Indian in the Andes symbolizes a temporal conflict, as a figure of a romanticized, pre-colonial past that comes into the present as an embodiment of backwardness and pre-modernity (e.g., Mariátegui 1928). This idea of space and time in the Andean imagination is especially important as twentieth century nation-making projects campaigned around forward-looking imaginations, grounded in discourses of the future (as a way out). This temporal conflict is also reflected in the “colonial wound” (Mignolo 2000), which continues existing in the present and in preparation for the future, complicating plans for nation-making and leading to strategic discourses, like *mestizaje*, that attempt to conceal the wounds, though, in the process, they merely widen them.

Guayaquil? Saying they are part of the folklore is a form of exclusion as it denies their realities. These “official” representations of the city’s past, then, instead of promoting belonging, as Nebot states, serve as reminders of the disconnect between the Municipality and poor communities. These communities, located along Guayaquil’s perimeter, are consistently the ones that are “left behind” in city planning and basic infrastructure; the fact that their realities are “officially” conceived of historically demonstrates more powerfully the extent to which these communities are overlooked.

These statues were inaugurated as my fieldwork came to a close in 2014, reminding me of “official” representations and ideals surrounding childhood in the city. In the following section, I discuss how childhood is conceptualized “officially” by academics, policy-makers, and by the children with whom I work. A majority of Ecuador’s population is between the ages of 10 and 14 (INEC 2015), and my fieldwork has positioned me to produce a dissertation that shares the experiences and perspectives of some of these children. As an ethnographer, my own treatment of time in my ethnographic writing counters tendencies, like Nebot’s statues, that render certain communities as being in the past. Johannes Fabian’s (1983) discussion of *coevalness* highlights a contradiction inherent in anthropology, as fieldwork involves co-existing with one’s collaborators, while ethnographic writing is often framed such that it renders one’s collaborators as being in the past and disconnected from the rapport and camaraderie they once shared; these collaborators, then, are defined, described, and left behind as history, like Nebot’s statues. As part of a decolonizing project, Fabian’s critique serves as a critical reminder of the importance of not treating communities with whom one works as having an endpoint, just because the fieldwork ends. Accordingly, in this dissertation, while I describe moments and interactions as having occurred in the past, many of my observations and descriptions are in the

present, as my research collaborators are still very much alive and engaged in actively creating their social worlds. I also remain connected to many of them, and they form part of my everyday life, even though I am now writing versus actively conducting research.

Anthropologist Rosalind Shaw (2002, 2007) has been interested in the ways in which thinking about memory – like recalling elements from Guayaquil’s supposed folklore – can be useful in terms of thinking toward the future, which I discuss more directly in Chapter 5. Her work in Sierra Leone (2007), for example, focuses on an “anthropology of social recovery,” in which people who lived through the civil war use their memories of war as a means of overcoming its traumatic legacy. In this way, they work toward different futures, drawing strength from what they overcame. In a more recent review in *Cultural Anthropology* entitled *Provocation: Futurizing Memory* (2013), Shaw highlights the important and emerging interest in anthropology about the future, underscoring how an interest in memory and the past have tended to overlook people’s futures:

Just as the ethnographic present in colonial ethnographies rendered “other” societies ahistorical, might equating time primarily with pastness and memory—however thoroughly reconfigured by the present—render places and people futureless?

As discussed in the following section, historically, children were conceptualized as miniature adults (e.g., Aries 1962), and the critique of ethnographers of childhood since the 1970s (e.g., Hardman 1973), has been that children should be judged and analyzed as children versus as future adults – that is, conceptualizing children as children versus as the adults they may become. This dissertation does both, describing children’s memories from their younger years, their everyday experiences and ideas about these experiences, and their ideas about their futures. Part of what I emphasize through my own research with children from poor communities is the importance of discussing their future possibilities with them not only as a means of learning

about how their surroundings influence their aspirations, but as a pedagogical strategy to encourage them to have aspirations and to create plans to achieve them.

## **Part II: Decolonizing Childhood**

For anthropologists who work with children, the question of “what is childhood” and the differing cultural contexts in which “childhood” is understood, experienced, and imagined emerge as fundamental concerns (e.g., Scheper-Hughes and Sargent 1999; Schwartzman 2001; Hecht 2002). Within my own fieldwork, particularly since I have worked with children who live in poverty and who work informally, I have constantly faced paradoxical images that distorted Western middle-class ideologies of childhood and adulthood: 10-year-olds running their households in place of going to school; 8-year-olds crossing busy intersections on their way home on the city buses; 14-year-olds working construction jobs on weekends and holidays to help support their family; 12 and 13-year-olds having babies.<sup>11</sup> Margaret Mead, one of the most important pioneers of American anthropology, most notably placed an emphasis on children through her research in Samoa and New Guinea (1920s, 1930s). Through her work, conversations and discussion arose about cultural differences in child rearing and how forms of adult care and societal expectations influenced child development. Since the time of Mead and her school of anthropological thought of Psychology and Personality, studies have become more focused on childhood development and socialization across the world, from towns to cities; such projects, for instance, have focused on language and interaction (e.g., Goodwin 1990; Heath

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<sup>11</sup> Historian Philippe Ariès’ (1962) pioneering work traces conceptualizations of childhood throughout history, reflecting on children as “miniature adults” in medieval paintings and on children’s needs for protection from the realities of adult lives. Decades later, anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2000) suggests that we have “returned full circle to...the child as a miniature adult,” though in a different way than Ariès describes: “as a dangerous urban predator, an indispensable drug courier...as a dependable foot soldier or guerrilla in civil wars and other political struggles through the world” (423). Alongside idealized notions of childhood are the realities of child soldiers, adolescents in gangs and dealing drugs, and street children whose life experiences challenge the innocence and vulnerability traditionally linked to a Western frame of discussion.

1996; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986; Wortham 1992), poverty and violence (e.g., Kovats-Bernat 2006; Scheper-Hughes 1993; Wolseth 2011), relationships with peer and adult groups (e.g., Bucholtz 2011; Mendoza-Denton 2008; Hirschfeld 2002; Shuman 1992), and forms of care and protection (e.g., Fonseca and Leinaweaver 2007). From Samoa to the U.S. to Latin America, a comparative evaluation of these works demonstrates the diversity of children's lived experiences and, in the process, illuminates the need to break from an attachment to Western ideals in which children are vulnerable and passive receptacles of care. These ethnographic efforts reveal children's protagonism in constructing their everyday lives and coincide with a push by anthropologists, geographers, and other scholars of childhood to study children as children, not merely as adults-in-the-making (see also James and Prout 1990; Jenks 1996; Stephens 1995).

In his famous article *Why Don't Anthropologists Like Children?* (2002), Lawrence Hirschfeld rejects anthropologists' treatment of children as appendages of adult culture. He cites Charlotte Hardman's (1973) call to anthropologists decades earlier in *Can There Be an Anthropology of Childhood?* where Hardman criticizes anthropologists who

see the child as continually assimilating, learning and responding to the adult, having little autonomy, contributing nothing to social values or behaviour except the latent outpourings of earlier acquired experiences [1973:87]. [2002:616]

Hirschfeld insists that studying children, particularly in their peer groups, is crucial to our understanding of the ways in which learning can and does happen: "children are theoretically crucial: anthropology is premised on a process that children do better than almost all others, namely, acquire cultural knowledge" (2002:624). By studying the ways in which children from Guayaquil's shantytowns think about their social positions as they move across the city, my work demonstrates the multiple forces at play as children acquire cultural knowledge – as they grow up. Because I worked with the children in their peer groups, by themselves, with their

families, and with people from other socio-economic classes, and because we worked together at the non-profit school (Fundación Crecer), in their homes and neighborhoods, and across the city, I had the opportunity to gain a more holistic understanding of the social and spatial forces that the children make sense of on a daily basis. Doing fieldwork across spaces and interactions exposed me to the diversity of ways in which children grow up and how they reflect on these processes of socialization and development. Additionally, the collaborative emphasis of this research project gave me the opportunity to make sense of contradictions and discrepancies and to arrive at these conclusions with the children.

### ***Defining Childhood, Resisting Generics***

In this dissertation, I use English equivalents of the ways children and mothers with whom I worked referred to themselves, each other, and their everyday experiences: “niños” [children], “niñez” [childhood], “adolescentes” [adolescents/teens], “muchachos” [kids], “jóvenes” [young/youth], “ser madre” [to be a mother/motherhood]. The kids referred to themselves primarily as “niños” and “muchachos,” though when we engaged in more technical discussions or when they wrote down answers they chose to refer to themselves as “adolescentes” or “jóvenes.” These labels coincide with the UN definitions of “children” (18 and under) and “youth” (14-18) (see Horschelmann and van Blerk 2012 for additional observations on the UNCRC and categorizations of childhood and youth based on age). Ecuador’s constitutional code for children and adolescents – El Código de la Niñez y Adolescencia – defines a child [niño (boy) / niña (girl)] as a person who has not yet turned 12, and an adolescent as being between 12 and 18. There is an additional clause that states that if there are any doubts about a person’s age, one must assume the person is a child before assuming she is an adolescent; and, the person must assume she is an adolescent before assuming she is



over 18. At 15, adolescents are able to obtain any job, but their work schedule cannot go beyond six hours per day and five days per week and should not interfere with their right to receive an education. I use “young people,” “kids, and “children” interchangeably to refer to the groups I have worked with (18 and under), drawing on participants’ own categorization.

Among my initial research interests when I traveled to Guayaquil to begin my fieldwork was trying to define “childhood,” particularly in poor and dangerous environments like the city’s barrios. In February of 2013, during my second month of interviews, I sat down with two 13-year-old boys – Alex and Milton –, and for the first time planned to have a more formal conversation about childhood.<sup>12</sup> Alex explained: “adulto es cuando ya tienes hijos – cuando ya es viejo” [an adult is when you already have children – when one is old]. A “niño,” he said, is “cuando tiene novia; adolescente: cuando se va a casar; y adulto: cuando ya tiene hijos, ¿cierto?” [when one has a girlfriend; adolescent: when one is going to get married; an adult: when one has kids, right?]. Milton immediately responded into the voice recorder: “Pienso lo mismo” [I think the same thing]. When they finished, I asked if someone who never gets married, then, is eternally an adolescent. Alex sat back to think about it, but Milton responded instantly: “Adolescente [es] cuando ya tiene usted 15 años y adulto cuando ya tiene hijos y niño digamos que yo ahorita, soy un niño” [An adolescent is when you are already 15 and an adult is when you have kids; and a child, well let’s say that me right now, I’m a child]. Alex tried to clarify further, explaining that I was a “señora” [Mrs. / ma’am] because I had a husband, but his 15-year-old sister was an adult because she already had kids.

Through our conversation that afternoon, I encountered the challenges of defining childhood. Milton self-identified as a child as a 13-year-old, Alex saw his 15-year-old sister as an adult because she was a mother; Alex categorized children as having a girlfriend, while

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<sup>12</sup> Interviews, like this one, formed part of the second phase of interviews with partners (see Chapter 2).

adolescents got married, and adults had children. He described adults, when they had children, as being “old,” although his sister was only two years older than he was. Prompting them to explain the differences between these phases was not something they had done before; there was no need to make these categorizations in their everyday lives. But, their explanations underscored, for me, their understandings of life phases as experienced by their families, friends, and neighbors from their barrios. Although their categorizations were inconsistent, they were confident in their knowledge, as they aimed to teach me the differences between each phase.

Children’s life-courses differ and the pace at which they grow varies and influences their perceptions of age and notions of growing up and becoming adults. Marriage and motherhood factor in to who counts as an adult, as both boys described. In Chapter 4, I discuss how these borders between ages and phases cannot be clearly delimited as each person lives and internalizes these experiences differently. For example, anthropologist Virginia Caputo (2001) reflects on the difficulties of defining childhood, especially as researchers become more aware of the blurred boundary between “child” and “adult.”

Remembering Alex and Milton’s interview alongside the diverse experiences of the other children and women with whom I worked during my field research in Guayaquil, I decided to share my definition and reflections with some of the kids. Thus, already drafting my dissertation and removed from observations and interviews, I brought a small group back together to ask and answer questions like we had done so many times before. I organized a workshop with Hólger, Kaín, Tito, Sarita, and Mayra, five of the kids who I worked closely with during my fieldwork. Based on the data I gathered over the years through observations, conversations, and interviews, like the one with Alex and Milton, I wanted to get this group’s feedback on how I was discussing “la niñez” [childhood] and distinguishing between “niños” [children] and “jóvenes” [youth].

“Uno por dentro siempre tiene un niño” [One always has a child inside], Hólger explained. He said that in life, “Uno solo crece de cuerpo” [The only thing that grows is the body]. Childhood, he continued, means “No preocuparse por los problemas de la vida sino que vivirla” [Not to worry about life’s problems, just to live it]. His answers were great, but they did not appear to reflect his childhood. I asked him if he thought he had had a childhood. He said that he did, but different from others: “Sí tuve niñez pero distinta a los demás.” He said that not having to worry about life’s problems is only possible for those raised by their mom and dad: “Sólo es posible si tienes tu papá y tu mamá.” He added, “Viví una niñez con mi abuela” [I lived a childhood with my grandmother].

When I asked Hólger how he would explain to someone what it means to be young, he said he would tell them that you have to live it again to figure out what it means for you: “Hay que vivirlo otra vez para que él mismo sepa.” Kaín said he would explain it “De forma breve” [Succinctly]: “Un joven pasa bastantes métodos, dolores” [A young person goes through many methods, pain]. When I asked him what he meant by “métodos,” he explained it as “maltratos” [abuse] and said that things get better as you get older: “Va mejorando al hacerse mayor.” As you grow, your mother can’t mistreat you anymore: “Va creciendo y ya la mamá no lo maltrata.” There is a sense of safety and security in Kaín’s version of “growing up.”

Tito, however, explained it differently: “Yo le explicaría que cuando uno es joven nunca tiene que andar en malos pasos porque se le daña su futuro” [I would explain that when one is young, he should never stray from a good path because his future will be ruined]. I was impressed by Tito’s future-oriented reflection. Not unlike two and a half years earlier when we began these conversations, the children had different ways of defining childhood and of negotiating their own lived experiences with the definitions and explanations they chose to give.

Based on the diversity of responses and observations from and of them and the other kids who had participated in the research project, I shared my definition of childhood as a process whose speed and trajectory are driven by the relationships in children's lives with people and spaces: specifically, relationships from their past, their present, and potential ones they envision for their future. Tito stared and slightly nodded in agreement and Sarita smiled through her spoonfuls of ice cream. "Es lo que yo dije" [That's what I said], Kaín interjected: not everyone feels grown up at the same age. That's right, Hólger chimed in, and "no todos tienen dos padres – hay diferentes relaciones" [not everyone has two parents – there are different relationships]. "Yo no voy a meter la pata como las otras muchachas" [I'm not going to make a mistake (pregnancy) like the other girls], Mayra added, personalizing the way she envisioned her own speed and trajectory.

This definition captures the relational nature of the experience of childhood. As I told the children that day, my interest in Guayaquil and in their neighborhoods fits into this definition, as it implies that their homes, their barrios, and the city play a role in their development and socialization. And, just as they each gave different ages for when one stops being a child – 10, 12, 14, 15, 18 –, not all children "grow up" at the same pace. Mayra made an interesting observation when she said that as one grows up, the body changes; but, she explained, those changes don't necessarily mean that one is more emotionally mature. Because many of the girls I have worked with already have children and become pregnant as young as 12 years old, I asked them if they thought that a 12-year-old could be a mother and a child simultaneously. They disagreed on this point; Tito was the most insistent that as soon as you become a mother, your childhood ends. In Chapter 4, I discuss the experiences of young mothers and their interpretations of the overlap between girlhood and motherhood.

One of my goals in writing about my research and what I have learned is approaching this phase the same way I approached my fieldwork: attempting not only to decolonize the practice of research, but also the practice of writing about this research. For example, the definition I provide for childhood is broad and open, resisting generic declarations about young people (see Leslie 2008 on “generics”). Additionally, I share this definition and seek feedback from the kids – the ones whose experiences it is intended to capture. Through this collaboration and exchange of the written form of the research, the children – and their mothers who I have also shared parts of my writing and presentations with – were able to react, disagree, and, in the process, edit this segment of the research process.<sup>13</sup> The people with whom I work are not accustomed to interacting with anthropologists, and by sharing the written form of the work with them, what they participated in became more tangible. Transparency about the research project, process, and participants’ leading roles is integral to decolonizing the research relationship; it leads to developing relationships of trust and respect, enhancing what we are all able to learn from each other.

Because this research project has involved the participation of nearly 100 people, I do attempt to include several stories and direct quotations throughout this dissertation, as those who have participated in the project wanted their interviews, their neighborhoods, and their ideas to be included. While not all of their individual stories are shared in this text, I learned something from all of them and they all form part of this dissertation. There are certain children, families, and neighborhoods that I focus on in particular as part of Lila Abu-Lughod’s (1991) decolonizing strategy of doing “ethnographies of the particular.” This serves as a methodology

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<sup>13</sup> Naber (2012) serves as a powerful example of an anthropologist who presents her written work to her research collaborators.

for writing against culture; that is, for writing against imperial traditions of creating generalized “others.”

By focusing on the particular, Abu-Lughod’s methodology resists attempts to make broader claims that are not always representative of different cultures and communities. As my workshop with the kids demonstrates, even by focusing on a small group, they each have different and particular ways of understanding and expressing their experiences and ideas surrounding childhood and growing up. While Abu-Lughod’s focus on the particular allows her to move away from imperial traditions of creating generalized “others,” A.L. Becker (1984), Susan A. Gelman et al. (2014), and Sarah-Jane Leslie (2008) are useful in clarifying what particularities resist by distinguishing between generalizations and generics. Particularities can occur at the same time as generalizations, but not at the same time as generics. Generics are reflections of how things become conceptual and by not being falsifiable, they unfold almost immediately into dangerous stereotypes. Leslie (2008) uses the generic statement, “mosquitoes carry the West Nile virus,” to underscore how such a statement appears “so patently true,” while “mosquitoes don’t carry the West Nile virus,” which is true in 99 percent of cases, appears false (2). She explores “the basis for this odd distribution of truth-values” and explains that children instinctually employ generics when they begin to speak (2).<sup>14</sup> Generic statements are dangerous in that they make claims about groups or categories rather than claims about particular people; and, these dangers are exacerbated as this style of speaking develops naturally among children. By focusing on the particular, then, researchers, like Abu-Lughod, obviate generics. Ultimately, her argument is really against generics, not generalizations.

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<sup>14</sup> Hirschfeld’s (2002) discussion of cooties and how children instinctually discriminate is relevant for consideration alongside Leslie (2008) whose study of generics highlights how children begin speaking through dangerous, stereotypical declarations. In Chapter 6, especially, as I discuss race and racism in Guayaquil, it is useful to consider children’s instincts to discriminate while considering the experiences of those who, as children, become aware of discrimination, as they are the ones being discriminated against for their poverty and their race.

As the examples in this chapter demonstrate, there are many contradictions among the children and highlighting those places further emphasis on the importance of ethnographies of the particular. On the one hand, these contradictions demonstrate a sense that these children have of “right” answers and “correct” forms of childhood, which I further discuss in Chapter 4. On the other hand, these discrepancies serve as reminders

that others live as we perceive ourselves living, not as robots programmed with ‘cultural’ rules, but as people going through life agonizing over decisions, making mistakes, trying to make themselves look good, enduring tragedies and personal losses, enjoying others, and finding moments of happiness. The language of generalization cannot convey these sorts of experiences and activities. [Abu-Lughod 1991:158]

As researchers, we must find strategies in our writing and research practices that recognize and are sensitive to the natural discrepancies and incoherence that make up our everyday lives. For that reason, Abu-Lughod (1991) demonstrates ethnographies of the particular as a decolonizing strategy, focusing on particulars to resist generics.

First, refusing to generalize would highlight the constructed quality that typicality so regularly produced in conventional social scientific accounts. Second, showing the actual circumstances and detailed histories of individuals and their relationships would suggest that such particulars which are always present (as we know from our own personal experiences), are also always crucial to the constitution of experience. Third, reconstructing people’s arguments about, justifications for, and interpretations of what they and others are doing would explain how social life proceeds. It would show that although the terms of their discourses may be set (and, as in any society, include several sometimes contradictory and often historically changing discourses), within these limits, people contest interpretations of what is happening, strategize, feel pain, and live their lives...By focusing closely on particular individuals and their changing relationships, one would necessarily subvert the most problematic connotations of culture: homogeneity, coherence, and timelessness. Individuals are confronted with choices, struggle with others, make conflicting statements, argue about points of view on the same events, undergo ups and downs in various relationships and changes in their circumstances and desires, face new pressures and fail to predict what will happen to them or those around them. [1991:153-154]

Anthropology, then, a field that has historically aimed at presenting cultural processes and experiences to “explain” entire cultures and towns and countries, is challenged by strategies like

Abu-Lughod's. Ethnographies of the particular provide insight into certain people's experiences and ideas, complete with contradictions and incoherence. In this way, they resist "explanations" of entire groups of people and communities and, instead, offer a smaller group through which to begin to ask questions, analyze, and suggest.

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Perhaps, the most telling examples of "What is childhood?" from our workshop that afternoon took place as we were getting ready to leave. We were sitting at a food court, and I was on the phone, calling each kid's family, letting them know that we were going to walk to the bus stop soon. As I sat next to them, talking on the phone and answering their families' questions about the workshop and what topics we had discussed, the kids' laughter distracted me. When I was done calling, I asked what was so funny. Tito told me that they had made up new questions they were asking each other.

Hólger started with his: "Estás en una playa con mujeres guapas y se aparece un león, ¿qué haces?" [You are on a beach with attractive women and a lion appears, what do you do?]. I told him that I'd probably run. "¿Tú qué harías?" [What would you do?] I asked in return. "Fácil. Saco mi rifle 3,74, me pondría piel de caracol y lo eliminaría" [Easy. I take my 3,74 rifle, I'd put on the shell of a snail, and eliminate him]. We all laughed, Kaín and Sarita especially, even though it was the second time they heard his explanation. But how do you get the rifle? I asked Hólger. He responded with another question: "¿Y cómo sacaste el león?" [And how'd you get the lion?]. He told us that the psychologist at his school took him in for a session and asked him this. Kaín laughed again when he said this and asked why a psychologist had to talk to him. Hólger shrugged in that way he does when he's about to say something funny: "soy un bacán" [I'm cool like that].



Tito followed up with another question (that also involved lions!). “Hay tres calles. En una hay un león que no ha comido en dos meses; en otra, hay una casa incendiándose; y en la otra hay hombres con espadas y machetes. ¿En cuál se atreve a salir?” [There are three streets. On one, there is a lion that hasn’t eaten for two months; on the other, there is a house on fire; and on the other, there are men with swords and machetes. Which one would you dare to walk into?] Tito immediately answered his own question: “¡Si no ha comido en dos meses, entonces se ha muerto!” [If he hasn’t eaten for two months, then he’s already dead!]. Hólger made us laugh again by saying that he could take down the men on the third street with his 3,74 rifle.

As Sarita started asking her question, Hólger looked over my notes and corrected my “374” with “3 (comma) 74,” insisting that everyone who read it would know what he was talking about. “Y ¿por qué un limón tiene pepas?” [Why does a lemon have seeds?] Sarita asked the group. She answered: “Porque va al gimnasio,” [Because he goes to the gym – *pepas* means seeds, but can also be used to refer to defined ab muscles]. Hólger, sharp as always, was quick to add: “Pero la naranja también tiene pepas, entonces va al gimnasio...y la toronja!” [But the orange has seeds, too, so it goes to the gym then...and what about the grapefruit!] And the questions continued as we made our way out of the mall and to the bus stop.

This concluding interaction reminded me that it was through these moments that I gained a stronger sense of who these kids are. While analyzing data and generating conclusions with the children has served as an important collaborative learning tool, moments like these, after workshops and interviews, have been critical to my own learning process of the kids: their opinions, their ideas, their interactions, their sense of humor.

***Writing Against “Childhood”***

Notwithstanding the difficult realities of many of the children with whom I work, some kids, like Milton, still referred to themselves as “niños.” Simultaneously, while children across interviews described childhood as a happy time and a time without concern or responsibilities, kids, like Adriana, spoke of never having a childhood.<sup>15</sup> Hólger defined his own childhood as “different” from the one he defined for the dissertation, noting that not being raised by his parents changed his possibilities for being a kid. Although contradictory and impossible to delimit, their observations considered alongside their everyday experiences taught me how they grappled with “right” answers in the face of their own realities. As I have learned from the children, there is not one answer or one theory that completely captures their experiences; and, as Abu-Lughod (1991) explains, the key is not to theorize about the particular, but to find ways to write about it. The ideas of the children from our dissertation workshop and my interview, years earlier, with Alex and Milton, form part of the many voices and stories that I have incorporated throughout this dissertation. Stories from children, mothers, and grandmothers, are shaped by contradictions, humor, imagination, tragedy, and youthful energy that provide multiple perspectives and descriptions of being young and of growing up in Guayaquil’s barrios.

Despite the struggles and fears that characterize some of the children’s pasts and some of their daily experiences, they find ways to enjoy themselves. At Fundación Crecer – the non-profit school where I began my fieldwork – the kids played soccer and jumped rope during recess. They laughed hysterically during lunch at the nicknames Hólger gave everyone. At the workshop, as we reminisced about these nicknames, Sarita told Kaín that he laughed now, but when he first got his nickname at the Fundación – “Orejón” [big ears] – he had cried. In their neighborhoods, the kids played soccer, too, sometimes on the streets and sometimes in empty

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<sup>15</sup> Adriana’s story closes this chapter.

lots; they stood outside their houses talking and laughing with friends. They swam in the river, “El Salado.” They had fun.

I do not find it productive, then, to question whether or not children in Guayaquil’s shantytowns can have a childhood. Rather, based on my research with children and their mothers and grandmothers, I share glimpses of their everyday lives and analyze some of their experiences and some of my observations as a means of better understanding what it is like to grow up in Guayaquil’s poorest communities and what that can teach us about social and spatial exclusions in the city and possibilities for children’s futures. Bestselling works like *There are No Children Here* (Kotlowitz 1991) and notions that “childhood is a privilege of the rich” (e.g., Goldstein in Downe 2001:172) are unfair to the kids from this study and to their friends and neighbors; these are ways of invalidating their experiences and their lives. Thus, unlike Kotlowitz (1991) and his famous line, “They’ve seen too much to be children” (x), I am not questioning whether their experiences fit Western middle-class ideals of appropriate childhoods; I am interested in how they make sense of these experiences and the decisions they make as they navigate their everyday lives.

Essentially then, by “decolonizing childhood,” I refer specifically to two pieces: 1) involving children in the research and writing process as partners and collaborators; 2) writing about childhood by writing against it – that is, resisting limiting definitions from academics and practitioners of childhood that overlook the diverse ways in which childhood is lived and conceptualized by children. The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is cited as a critical historical moment for children’s rights (e.g., Jans 2004; Verhellen 1996); Ecuador was actually the first Latin American country and the third in the world to ratify it (Swanson 2010). The UNCRC is applauded by academics as a turn in the ways in which

children were conceptualized on an international scale. Through the UNCRC, children became “subjects of rights and active agents” (Ennew and Swart-Kruger 2003). Certainly, a document of that magnitude is an important global statement for children’s wellbeing. But, what do children’s rights and children as “active agents” actually look like across the world and how are children actually engaged in these rights? How do their social positions influence the extent to which they are the subjects of rights? To what point are “rights” as defined by the UNCRC relevant to children? By writing against “Childhood,” then, I am writing against simplified discourses of rescue and safety in the name of “good” and “proper” forms of experiencing being young; and, I am writing against a concept that, historically, has been used against children, limiting their possibilities to be agents and to be considered as social actors capable of making important societal contributions and of teaching important societal lessons. Instead, I demonstrate ways in which young people living in Guayaquil’s shantytowns are “active agents” who are constantly making sense of their surroundings and, through their actions, negotiating “Childhood” with their actual childhood.

### **Part III: Decolonizing Methods and Methodologies with Children**

Beginning in September 2012, I engaged in two and a half years of research in Guayaquil with approximately fifty children and thirty adults (see Figure 2 below). My approach to the research process allowed me to learn from and alongside the children and their families. I conducted participant observation at a non-profit school (Fundación Crecer), in children’s homes and neighborhoods, and with children and their families across the city. I held individual interviews, partner interviews, small group interviews, and workshops and focus groups with children, mothers, and grandmothers. Children also played roles in leading interviews, drafting and asking questions to guide our conversations. In 2014, a dozen of the kids led interviews

independently with their neighbors based on methods and methodologies workshops we held together (see Figure 3 below).

<b>Category</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male / Female</b>
Child Participants from the Shantytowns	From 10-18	55	26 M / 29 F
Adult Participants from the Shantytowns	From 30s – 60s	28	3 M / 25 F
Active Child Participants (from the same list as above)	From 14 - 22	19	6 M / 13 F
Active Adult Participants (from the same list as above)	From 30s – 60s	18	2 M / 16 F

**Figure 2** If I were to include all of those who participated informally, such as younger siblings and older neighbors and family members I have come to know and learn from, there would be more than 100 participants.

<b>Research Method</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Start Date – End Date</b>
Participant Observation	Fundación Crecer, Children’s neighborhoods and homes, across the city (shopping malls, restaurants, parks, museums, bus stops, city streets, boardwalks, etc.)	September 2012 - present
Scheduled Individual Interviews	Airport, food courts, Fundación Crecer, my neighborhood	January 2013 – October 2015
Scheduled Partner Interviews	Airport, food courts	February 2013 – September 2014
Scheduled Small Groups: conversations and children-led interviews	Food courts	February 2013 – August 2014
Scheduled Small Groups: workshops	Food courts	February 2014 – August 2015
Scheduled Focus Groups	Alysa’s house, Las Malvinas neighborhood	Fall 2013
Children-led Interviews	Their neighborhoods	Spring 2014
Informal conversations	Everywhere, including phone calls	September 2012 - present

**Figure 3** The interviews were scaffolded by phases: 1) individual; 2) partner; 3) small groups. I always went back to the first two phases, as it was useful to go back to individual interviews, for example, after visiting kids’ homes and neighborhoods. Going back to partner interviews was also helpful to analyze certain topics more directly. Essentially then, Phases 1 and 2 were useful follow-ups to Phase 3, focus groups, workshops, and home visits so that

I could ask clarifying questions and delve more deeply into our initial conversations with additional knowledge about their opinions, relationships with their peers, and their home life.

While I discuss my research methods and methodologies at length in Chapter 2, in this section, I present these methods as a way to introduce my methodology, as methodology is the theory and analysis behind why and how particular methods are selected and crafted (see Harding 1988 who highlights this distinction in her work on feminist research practices). Specifically, a collaborative framework, which is revealed, for example, through research methods in which children draft questions, lead interviews, and analyze data, represents an inclusive methodology that believes research should proceed by working *with* one's collaborators; the focus, then, shifts from being "about" them to being a collaborative learning project with them. Such collaboration challenges a traditional verticality embedded in a researcher-informant relationship, creating a project in which researchers and collaborators actively participate with the power to define the path of the research and the research relationship. Theoretically and analytically, this methodology is representative of my ethnographic attempt to decolonize the research relationship by employing innovative and inclusive field methods that make this a project we are all investing in and invested in.<sup>16</sup>

Through collaboration, this research project was flexible and relied on improvisation, as my research collaborators were the ones who largely determined the flow of information, guiding what and how we learned. Decades ago, Robert Cresswell (1968), in response to Kathleen Gough's problem-oriented anthropology, stated: "anthropologists must become relevant to the changing world...but I feel that one aspect of the problem has not been sufficiently stressed: the *value*, for society, of the conclusions of the committed social scientist" (411). Certainly, the "value" becomes evident when research designs, execution, and presentations are collaborative

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<sup>16</sup> In this project, decolonization serves as a useful analytic methodologically, but also in regards to the colonial legacies that continue to penetrate the why and how of everyday interactions, self-reflections, and exclusions in Guayaquil.

ventures that all parties find important and relevant. Again, a methodology based on collaboration serves as an effort toward decolonizing the ethnographic experience, as research collaborators serve as informants, guides, leaders, partners, teachers, and students in an attempt to create research that is real, relevant, and valuable in our opinions and based on our experiences.

### ***Fundación Crecer***

Fundación Crecer, the non-profit where I began my research, had a mission statement that focused on providing education for children in place of street work. The practices of the organization evolved over its 24 years, beginning as a group home for street boys, becoming a school for street boys and girls, and finally serving as a tutoring and resource center for former street boys and girls. Although the realities of the children they worked with changed, they still used the same mission statement and language centered around the “niños trabajadores” [child workers] to secure funding from international organizations and local donors. My research project on “street children,” then, became a project about children from the poorest sectors of Guayaquil. Though none of the children I work with are homeless, some juggle on street corners for money, some sell candy on city buses, some once worked on the street, and some never worked on the street. In essence, my project evolved into a study of family, of growing up, and on children’s day-to-day life in the barrios and across Guayaquil.

When I arrived at the Fundación in September 2012, the group of students was much smaller than it had been in previous years. In addition to fundraising challenges, the CEO and principal knew that that academic year (2012) would likely be their last one, and they did not admit new students. In the first of the three grade levels, Módulo 2, there were 8 students led by Elena. In the following grade, Módulo 3, there were 28 students led by Magda. Samsa taught

the final grade level, Módulo 4, with 21 students. After passing Módulo 4, the students completed their primary education and left the Fundación to enter “colegio” [high school]. In previous years, there had also been a Módulo 1, but they did not have a budget that year for a fourth teacher or for more students.<sup>17</sup> Graduates of the Fundación’s primary school came in the afternoons to eat lunch, do their homework, and to meet with the psychologists if they needed it. This was a special scholarship program; when I was at the Fundación in 2012, there were 5 students who came in the afternoons: two girls and three boys. The Fundación helped these scholarship students purchase their school uniforms and supplies at the beginning of the school year.

During my preliminary fieldwork in 2011, I worked with Módulo 3 as the teacher’s assistant; the following year, I worked with Módulo 2 in the mornings as the teacher’s assistant (and a researcher), and taught English to Módulo 4 in the afternoons. By working with all three groups, I knew almost all of the children fairly well. For those who I did not spend as much time with, we approached each other during lunch and recess. At Fundación Crecer, children saw me in my role as a researcher, taking notes in my journal; during other periods of the day, I was their tutor, their English teacher, their soccer teammate (or opponent) during recess. The children arrived at the Fundación between 7:30 and 8:00 and the entire school ate breakfast together at 8:00 in the cafeteria; the children sat according to their Módulo. A staff person selected a student who led the group in a morning prayer, reciting “El Padre Nuestro,” “Santa María,” and concluding with a more personalized prayer of the student’s choosing in which she or he gave thanks for another day, for Fundación Crecer, for the food they were going to eat, for each other, etc. The principal also used this time to make important announcements, which ranged from

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<sup>17</sup> Módulo 1 was equivalent, in the U.S., to Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade; Módulo 2 to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>; Módulo 3 to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>; and Módulo 4 to 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades. Eighth grade is considered the first year of “el colegio” [high school] and is referred to as “1er año de básica.”



reminders about Flea Markets, field trips, or parent meetings to behavioral reprimands accompanied by stricter rules. On Mondays, volunteers from churches taught catechism and the students were divided up based on their “level” – those who were preparing for their upcoming baptism and first communion and those who were preparing for their confirmation. I often “led” the confirmation group, as their volunteer frequently missed Mondays. The session became more of a general conversation, since I did not consider myself well-versed in Catholicism.

During the school day, the students were divided up based on their Módulo and each teacher followed her curriculum. I noticed the teachers relied almost exclusively on having their students copy work from their dry erase board. This teaching method was accompanied by little interaction between teachers and students; after copying the lesson on the board, the teacher waited for the students to show her their notebooks to prove they had finished copying. Workbook assignments generally followed and occupied a big part of the learning day. Aside from the English classes with me, which I offered to Módulo 4, students remained in their classroom until the 12:30 recess period when the whole school played outside. The gardener and I were the two adults who participated in recess.

The final activity of the day was lunch. At 12:30, the students ate lunch, following the same structure from the morning. In addition to leading the prayers, different students were always selected to help serve the food and clean up afterward by wiping the tables, sweeping, and mopping the floors. Students were also expected to give their teachers 25 cents before lunch as their collaboration for the donated food they ate. The food, the utilities for the Fundación’s building, and the salaries of all the staff people were paid for in part by private donations and in part by a small fund from the Ministry of Education. Guayaquil’s mayor was a strong supporter of Fundación Crecer, as he used the funds from the 2001 Teletón to create the building that

would house this non-profit group. Part of his commitment to the Fundación was visible through Victoria who was the staff person he provided to lead fundraising initiatives and to supervise the day-to-day activities.

In Chapter 5, I discuss Fundación Crecer more directly as I analyze the effects of its closure on the children and their families. Because of a 2013 legislative measure for educational reform that sought to standardize education in Ecuador, Fundación Crecer could no longer exist as a school; by offering two grade levels in one, the Fundación's model did not fit the government's standardized plan. Because many of the students the Fundación served entered school for the first time at 10, 11, and 12 years old, the two-in-one model was strategic in helping them catch up to the grade level that corresponded to their age. Although the Fundación's CEO, with the support of her friend, Guayquil's mayor, fought the Ministry of Education, emphasizing the importance of the Fundación's model for its population of students, their request was denied. Accordingly, for its final year (2013), Fundación Crecer served as a tutoring and resource center, helping its students with their transition into their new schools. This program ended in January 2014 and, at that point, I worked with the kids and families from the non-profit to extend some the Fundación's programming – fieldtrips for kids and families, workshops for mothers –in addition to our fieldwork.<sup>18</sup>

In 2013, after the school component of Fundación Crecer closed down on account of state-wide educational reform, I served as the Fundación's Co-Coordinator of Educational Programming, which involved creating and leading academic and extra-curricular activities with the children and training the private high school volunteers who met their community service requirement at the Fundación. Before the start of this new project, the Fundación fired its teachers and the cook, retaining the gardener, the accountant, the principal, and the secretary.

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<sup>18</sup> Refer to Appendix 1 for more information on our extra-curricular projects after Fundación Crecer's shutdown.

Victoria, the other co-coordinator, was an employee of the Municipality, and she remained on the Fundación's staff, as she posed no additional cost for the non-profit. Similarly, I was a volunteer and did not receive any form of payment.

When the Fundación shifted from a school to a tutoring and resource center, the students no longer went to the Fundación from Monday through Friday; the activities were only held Wednesdays and Fridays. There was a morning group for students who attended school in the afternoons (typically from 1:00 to 6:30) and an afternoon group for the students who attended school in the mornings (typically from 7:30 to 1:00). Victoria and I led the activities for the students and the group of volunteers from a private high school worked with us in the afternoons. In addition to these two sessions, Victoria and I organized fieldtrips for the students.



**Figure 3** Students from the Módulo 4 pose for a picture in the school's parking lot as they stand in line and wait to enter for their final assembly (January 2013). Moments later, after performing a song for the parents and guardians in the auditorium, the CEO announced to the whole group that the school would officially close.

Certainly, my relationships at Fundación Crecer were the strongest with the children, their mothers and grandmothers. These are the only relationships I still have. Before the school component closed, however, I became friends with Elena and Samsa who were the two teachers I worked most closely with during the day. They were shocked that I invited them to my apartment, explaining that people from their social class did not usually mix with people like me. They rationalized these interactions, telling me that I was American and still not aware of the ways social classes worked. Victoria, for example, who was the other co-coordinator is from Guayaquil's elite social class – her last name alone distinguishes her; she arrived at the same conclusion as Samsa. While Victoria got along well with the teachers at the school, Samsa emphasized that she would never be seen with them outside of Fundación-related activities. Accordingly, before even beginning interviews with the Fundación Crecer students, my interactions with the staff already exposed me to Guayaquil's social norms and my own social position within these as a white American married to a white Guayaquileño from a higher socio-economic class.

My understanding of these divides was cemented more deeply on account of the negative exchanges between the principal, Victoria, and me. The school's CEO also forms part of Guayaquil's elite and has known Victoria and her family, for example, for years. The principal whose income placed her in the middle socio-economic bracket felt threatened by the team the CEO created to lead the Fundación in its final year: Victoria and me. She cancelled our staff meetings, refusing to meet with us unless the CEO or a member of the non-profit's board of directors was present. She argued against the authority we thought we had as we crafted the educational and extra-curricular project we were asked to lead. While the heated arguments

between us angered me as I sought to employ what, in my opinion, were the best projects for the students, as I stepped back, I saw how deeply we were embedded in a class-based struggle. Victoria pointed this out, telling me that “Es una chola que quiere tener autoridad” [She’s a “chola” [low-class person] who wants to have authority].

The children and mothers caught on to our disagreements as the principal went out of her way to belittle us and exclude us from her meetings with the parents and guardians. Because in 2013 I began to go to the children’s homes and developed even closer relationships with them and their families, the principal also became angry with me because of this. Mothers would show up at the Fundación asking to meet with me; her anger was evident to them, and Jaqui and Norma, in particular, called and apologized to me, telling me they had gotten me into trouble. Jaqui, not unlike Samsa, explained one day that the principal was threatened by me because of my social standing. She repeatedly referred to me as “una voluntaria” [a volunteer], refusing to acknowledge that the CEO positioned me as a co-coordinator for the project. These social tensions that categorized the staff relationships during the last year of the Fundación were read across social classes with corresponding interpretations.

### ***Re-defining Research Relationships***

When the principal allowed me to formally introduce my project to the parents and guardians during a school assembly at the end of November 2012, I realized that their children had already talked to them about the research project and about me. Before the assembly, I felt more confident about the speech I was about to make when two mothers approached me to ask where to sign up their kids. They had photocopies of a form to take home and another to sign and return to me, and we went through them orally.

Afterward, I sat at a table that Paulina, the Fundación's secretary, had set up for me so that parents or guardians could submit the signed form or ask any additional questions. I realized that many mothers did not know how to write, so I printed their names on the form as they told them to me. I did not know that in Ecuador, when signing formal documents, ink is provided so that people can leave their thumbprint in place of having to sign their name; this strategy anticipates a population with limited literacy. Anaís who had spoken enthusiastically about her nieces' and nephew's participation, became nervous when I showed her where to sign, telling me "Yo casi no sé de eso" [I barely know about that (how to do that)]. She did not know how to sign her name. I told her that whatever she could do signature-wise would work, demonstrating my own signature, which was highly illegible. Hólger's grandmother came up the line shortly after and told me that next time, I needed to get the ink: "Me está pidiendo mucho" [You're asking a lot of me] by having her sign. I printed her name for her and she collaborated with a few squiggly lines that she laughed through, reminding me to get ink, "Y ahí le pongo mi dedo gordo bien bonito" [And then I'll put my thumb on there for you real pretty]. When the line was about halfway through, Paulina brought me some ink.

Tito and Kaín were among the most enthusiastic about participating, but their mother, Jaqui, left that morning and never signed them up. When I asked the boys about it later that day, they said that she wanted to talk to me. At the next report card pick-up, Jaqui approached me in the cafeteria and took me into the hallway that led to the psychologists' offices and the staff restroom. She interrupted my explanation of the project and asked me directly: "¿Es para bien o es para mal?" [Is it for good or is it for bad?]. "Para bien," I answered; "Será una forma para que sus hijos me enseñen a mí sobre sus experiencias y sus ideas y opiniones" [It will be a way for your kids to teach me about their experiences and their ideas and opinions]. She grabbed the

papers from my hand and placed them on the wall to have a hard surface on which to sign. “Si es para bien. Todo lo que hacen mis hijos tiene que ser para bien” [If it’s for good. Everything my children do has to be for good]. Jaqui and her children have become three of the most important research collaborators; additionally, my husband and I are her youngest daughter and son’s godparents, making us *compadres* [co-parents].<sup>19</sup>

This research project has involved developing mutual relationships of care, trust, and love in which we all look out for each other and support one another in the ways we know how (see Appendix A). The women, especially, always give me advice on the foods that I eat and on the shoes that I wear, telling me that people of my social class – which they label as the “millonarios” [millionaires] of Guayaquil – cannot wear flip-flops; those are reserved for poor people, like them. They constantly criticize my hairstyle and tell me that I need to learn to use gel and not to put it up in a ponytail so often. An insistence on remaining detached and neutral does not allow for effective research, because one cannot build rapport if the relationships are rigid and narrowly defined. Particularly because of the deep divide and hierarchy between the “millonarios” and people from the barrios, my everyday interactions with my research collaborators – receiving and giving advice – underscored the strength of our relationship. They had confidence in me and in our relationship to the point that they told me things I should and should not do. They felt a sense of authority and camaraderie between us; such relationships are rare between social classes when the guidance comes from the bottom versus the top. I believe the collaborative framework that guided this project has been the biggest contributor to the horizontal relationships we have formed.

Over the last decade, ethnographers of children have engaged in conversations about action and participatory research initiatives (e.g., Caputo 2001; Connolly and Ennew 1996;

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<sup>19</sup> Jaqui is one of my five *comadres* [co-mothers] from Guayaquil’s barrios.

Downe 2001; Ennew 1994; James 2007; Schwartzman 2001; see also Fals-Borda's (1986) Participatory Action Research paradigm). For example, in a joint publication by a small group of educational anthropologists, they reflect on the strength of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), explaining that it: "engages participants in critical reflection and action related to issues within their own communities and institutions and highlights youths' insights" on the ways in which they are represented (Wissman, Staples, Vasudevan, Nichols 2015:188).

Although they have not labeled it as such, ethnographers have started to adopt a decolonizing methodology that seeks to create research agendas that make children feel safe and that provide multiple venues for children to express themselves. A palm-reading method, for instance, has been employed as a playful strategy to encourage children to discuss their futures (Leinaweaver and Fonseca 2007). Particularly for children who have experienced severe trauma and abuse, methodologies and methods are being contemplated so as not to contribute to the processes of violence these children are already subjected to (e.g., Brown 1995; Taylor 1994). In the case of ethnographies with street children, the physical, emotional, and social injuries children endure are undoubtedly real and anthropological interventions must recognize the ways they could (negatively) impact children by interpellating them into the research process.

Anthropologist Patricia Márquez (1999), for example, employed a journal-writing strategy that encouraged children to write about their experiences on their own, away from the ethnographer.

In my own research, during the first set of interviews I held individually with children, several were uncomfortable answering questions related to their street work. Since I was affiliated with their non-profit school that pushed children and their families to study instead of work, this made them uneasy; additionally, they were embarrassed. Tito, for example, was one of the boys who spoke out against children working and said that he had never done it. After



several individual, partner, and group interviews and after visiting his home, we got to know each other well. It was only then, when we engaged in another individual interview, that he told me about his experience working downtown with his grandfather, which he started doing when he was eight. Hecht (1998) refers to an ethnographic “commonsense,” that guides the improvisation inherent in fieldwork (13), and as an ethnographer, I have learned the importance of being able and ready to improvise. Such improvisation involves being willing to abandon your agenda for the day, as there are unexpected moments in which children may become emotional or may not be ready for certain conversations. Time is critical. The children – and study collaborators of all ages – need time to feel comfortable opening up. Time allows for more trust, and building rapport is one of the central building blocks of anthropology.

To develop trust and rapport, creating settings in which research participants feel safe and comfortable is critical. One of my strategies for interviews and workshops was to have the children complete questionnaires before we started talking. These were then the basis of the conversations we would have that day. Some topics are difficult to talk about and some are ones that the kids may not have thought much about. Having time to process the information on their own and to establish their opinions before, perhaps, being influenced by their peers, protects the children while also serving as pedagogical strategy that I believe makes for stronger ethnography. I push the kids, too, not just to answer “yes” or “no” or “that’s just how it is,” but to think of *why* those are their answers and *why* that’s just how it is. These pedagogical strategies encourage children to develop their critical thinking skills and also expose them to the ways research projects work. This awareness has been crucial for our collaborative project so that the children could comprehend the why and how of ethnography.

Making the research process collaborative is an essential transparency strategy that creates mutual trust and respect among research collaborators. Collaborative decision-making avoids children's injurious incorporation into the research process, as they take part in defining the direction the project takes. As part of this research project, the children created questions of their own that they then asked each other or that they prepared for me to ask another group of their peers later that day or that week. They were curious to learn the answers to their questions. It was useful for me, too, to prepare summaries of the children's answers for their peer groups. In this way, the children became actively involved in the research process, contributing the type of information we were seeking and evaluating it themselves when I provided the results. Their reactions sometimes invalidated their peers' responses and provided interesting insight into a variety of topics, like their experiences at Fundación Crecer.

One of the final pieces of this research project involved the children conducting interviews on their own in their neighborhoods; they introduced the project and sought consent as recommended by the University of Michigan's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the same way I had done with them and their families (see Chapter 2). It was through this experience, in particular, that they began to understand more deeply how an ethnographic research project works. Certainly, these collaborative research methods and methodologies that situated the children as research assistants correspond to the push from ethnographers of childhood to find ways to incorporate children so that they are active subjects rather than mere objects of study:

We must also begin to develop ways to incorporate children as collaborators into our studies with important and legitimate roles to play in the development of an anthropology which is not *of* children but *with* children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century [Schwartzman 2001:10].

Children's collaboration as research assistants – drafting questions and surveys, conducting interviews in their neighborhoods, and participating in dissertation writing workshops – is the

primary piece of my methodology that works toward the decolonization of the practice of ethnography. Decolonizing the hierarchy inherent in research is a process and this project created several methods that form part of this process. As I discuss more extensively in Chapter 2, pedagogy forms a large part of my collaborative research platform. I have found it useful, theoretically, to differentiate between pedagogy as teaching and “pedagogización” (Villa Amaya and Villa 2014), which emphasizes the process of pedagogy as part of a decolonizing framework; that is, projects should strive to go beyond teaching and learning collaboratively and think critically about the devolution of the knowledge that is created through teaching and through research, contemplating different ways to collaboratively analyze and apply data for the forward progress of the community groups involved.

#### **Part IV: El día del niño, Adriana’s Story**

The blue cafeteria tables were pushed alongside the walls and the plastic chairs were lined up in rows for the children to sit during their celebration. I turned the six switches for the ceiling fans to the highest setting, though one was broken and another was highly unreliable. One of my students, Vinicio, turned the switch on and off to see if he could jump-start the one in the corner; his friends sat beneath it and stared up at the dusty white wings to see if they would turn. The breeze that came through the steel bars that secured the room’s windows wasn’t strong enough for today’s group. The “cooler” temperatures of the summer were in the 80s. The cafeteria was Fundación Crecer’s largest room, and we were hosting our own students in addition to the high school volunteers who were organizing the day’s celebration. It was *el día del niño* [The Day of the Child].

The non-profit no longer opened on the weekends, so we were celebrating The Day of the Child a day early: May 31, 2013. Our funding limitations during our final two years led us to

rely on a private high school whose community service requirements led them to us – to Fundación Crecer. Although the non-profit was associated with helping Guayaquil’s street children choose school over street work, Fundación Crecer and the population of children and families that it supported changed over the three decades that it served as one of the city’s leading organizations for “at-risk” youth; that is, children living in extreme poverty in the city’s shantytowns.

In September 2012, after my first two weeks of dissertation fieldwork at the non-profit, I became the school’s English teacher; and, after a national education law banned alternative school models and the non-profit changed from a school to a tutoring and resource center, I became the co-coordinator for educational programming. Part of my role involved training the high school volunteers who worked with our students. These were the same volunteers who were organizing *el día del niño*. By organizing this event, the volunteers earned additional community service hours – a graduation requirement at their private school and at all private schools in Guayaquil. Public schools do not have these requirements, as they are usually on the receiving end of such services.<sup>20</sup>

As much as I “trained” the high schoolers and their teacher sponsors about the importance of establishing horizontal relationships with our students, the verticality could not be avoided. They were there twice a week to teach our students how to read and how to solve math equations; our students were around their same age, some were younger and some were older. On this day, The Day of the Child, I was uncomfortable seeing a volunteer group of kids congratulating our kids on their special day, as though our students were the only children present. Our students were positioned as the ones in need of this celebration for children. Our students – some of them 18 years old – were the ones who should laugh at the clown costumes

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<sup>20</sup> There are exceptions, but overall, the service curriculum is different between public and private schools.

that the volunteers wore; they were the ones who should participate in the dance contest to receive candy.

The volunteers – most of them 16 and 17 – were the leaders of this event. They aimed to make it a “special” day for the poor kids of Fundación Crecer: the ones worthy of this celebration. The 11-year-olds were thrilled and many of the older kids were also enjoying themselves, often laughing at their friends’ dance moves. I moved around from chair to chair to laugh alongside my students and tried to convince myself that maybe I was the only one who was uncomfortable with this celebration. The principal wasn’t there. It was rare for her to stay late, especially on a Friday. She only asked Victoria and me to make sure the volunteers cleaned up the mess they were going to make before they left.

*El día del niño* is celebrated annually across Ecuador and in several other countries on June 1, as this date coincides with the International Day for the Protection of Children. The celebration for our students that year involved contests, prizes, and lots of junk food. They happily ate hard candy and Doritos and strategically asked some volunteers for more napkins to wrap up the food that other volunteers were handing out. Their pockets and backpacks were stuffed with chips, lollipops, and cake. Our students always saved for later, even the youngest ones, the 8 and 9-year-olds. The girls and the younger kids, in particular, would wrap an extra piece of cake for their mother or grandmother at home when we organized the monthly birthday parties.

The kids laughed and cheered on their friends during one of the dance competitions. As they danced, their feet had to remain on the newspaper; and, as the songs changed from one reggaeton number to the next, pieces of newspaper were removed, shrinking the size of their

dance floor. Daniela was the last one standing, dancing on her tip-toe. She responded with an embarrassed laugh when I congratulated her and asked for lessons.

The older students, like Mateo and Vinicio, were already 18 and felt too old to participate. The volunteers asked me to encourage them to dance along with the clowns and to join the water balloon toss, but I didn't. The activities were fun to watch, especially since the younger kids were so excited, but they were intended for younger participants. I spent most of the celebration sitting with these two and talking to them to keep them entertained and to try to get them to overlook the awkwardness they felt from having students younger than them organize a child's day for them.

When I got up to help pass out pieces of cake, I noticed Adriana was sitting in a corner chair. Her arms were on her knees and her hands were propping up her face and covering it at the same time. She appeared to be looking down at a notebook on her lap. Adriana was always very social and eager to participate in any of the Fundación's events. She always arrived before lunchtime laughing and smiling; she gave the best hugs, wrapping us up in her skinny brown arms. Today, however, she was crying. I kneeled down next to her, and she nodded when I asked if she wanted to go talk in another room. As we walked out, I glanced at the celebration that was still going strong. Vinicio seemed to be the only one who noticed we were leaving.

The door to the *Auditorio Amarillo*, the cream-colored "Yellow Auditorium," was unlocked, and we sat down at the table I sat at every morning with the first group of students. Students in Guayaquil's public schools either have a morning schedule (approximately 7 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.) or an afternoon one (approximately 1 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.); our students who studied in the mornings came to Fundación Crecer in the afternoons, after their school day ended. Our morning group was the smaller of the two, and we all sat together in the *Auditorio Amarillo* to

work. This was where they did their homework before we played trivia games and competed in dry erase board challenges. Office Depot gave me free dry erase markers when I told them we were going to use them at a non-profit in Ecuador that worked with street children; I, too, fell into the “street children” marketing trap, at times, when obtaining donations. The kids were excited by all the color choices, and even more thrilled to learn they were from the U.S.

I looked forward to these games as much as they did. I stared at the activity from that morning. Hólger’s handwriting stood out and I smiled at the sentence that had won his group the spelling competition: “*Humberto vendió veinte huevos y cuarenta aguacates en el Guasmo.*” They consistently struggled to spell words with a silent H, to use accent marks, and to distinguish between the B and the V and the C and the Q. It was a good sentence.

I broke the silence by telling Adriana about the morning’s competition. I pointed to the sentence and explained the game. She asked me questions about who was on which team. I had already held several interviews with Adriana outside of Fundación Crecer, and I knew her very well. She was one of the few participants who opened up during our first one-on-one interview, sharing very personal and private details about her upbringing. I wasn’t sure what had happened on this particular afternoon to upset her. Even during interviews when she described traumatic and difficult experiences, she rarely cried, and when she did, her tears fell, but her voice never broke. I had always been impressed by her poise.

I decided to ask her directly what was going on as our discussion about the fictional Humberto selling avocados in the Guasmo neighborhood came to a close. “Es duro para mí cuando celebramos el día del niño y los cumpleaños de los muchachos” [the celebrations [at Fundación Crecer] for *el día del niño* and for birthdays are hard on me], she began. She made it through without a break in her voice, but she started crying again after she said this. I squeezed

her hand and waited. On days like these, she told me, she was reminded that her mother never wished her a happy birthday. In fact, only two years earlier had she learned her actual birth date. I didn't ask, but I imagined that two years earlier when she enrolled as a student in Fundación Crecer, she had to submit a birth certificate.

She continued speaking, and she emphasized that these special occasions and celebrations highlighted the depth of her sadness: the sadness of never knowing her father and of the relationship she had with her mother. And, the sadness of longing for the childhood she never had. "Nunca tuve una niñez," she told me. *I never had a childhood.*

Because of our interviews, I knew that her story, not unlike the stories of many of the children I work with, was lined with hardship and tragedy. At 14, she was no longer with her mother who had forced her to work from a young age in place of going to school, carrying sacks of rice, tending to the fields and the housework. She was no longer with her stepfather who had sexually abused her, while her mother ignored her claims and accused her of lying. She had moved from these experiences in a rural community about two hours north of Guayaquil to live in the city with her cousin who reluctantly agreed to raise her.

During more than two years of working with children from the city's most dangerous and impoverished neighborhoods as a teacher and an anthropologist, I became accustomed to hearing sad stories. But, there were always stories and events that took me back to the beginning: to the shock and the impact I felt in those initial interviews. This particular day – The Day of the Child – was one of those occasions in which I was hit by the enormity of this young girl's interpretation of her first 14 years of life. She lamented and resented the fact that she never had a childhood. She acknowledged that she longed for a life that she felt should have belonged to her – that she deserved.



Upon hearing her reflections, I responded, and attempted to focus on positive elements, like her move to Guayaquil. I reminded her that she was finally studying and that her whole life, as she had told me during an interview, she had dreamed of being able to read a book, to write her name, to learn in a classroom with a teacher. “¿Recuerdas que me dijiste eso?” [Do you remember telling me that?] As she nodded, I saw that she did remember and she appeared surprised and pleased that I had, too, when she confirmed: “Yo le conté eso” [I told you that]. I told her she was smart and capable and that everyday she was making strides toward creating a different future for herself and the children she might have one day. She laughed again when I told her that she had to wait until she was at least 30 before thinking about having these children.

As I spoke and tried to encourage her, I also wondered to what extent education and determination are powerful enough to provide different futures for children and youth in Guayaquil’s shantytowns. To what extent was my optimism false? More than two years later as I read through my notes, listen to our interviews, watch our focus groups, and remember the many moments, like The Day of the Child, in which I was confronted with new ways of experiencing and thinking about childhood, these same questions remain. What possibilities does Guayaquil have to offer children from the public schools, children from its poorest neighborhoods? How do children’s experiences and opportunities frame their imagination and the possibilities they envision for their futures? Particularly for the children with whom I work who are surrounded by neighbors and family who drop out of school to have children, join gangs, work, or go to jail, discussions about their futures are imperative. It is important for children to think beyond “next week” and “next year;” it is important to set long-term goals as a strategy to set them up for success.

These questions are not unique to Guayaquil. When I worked in an inner-city neighborhood on Chicago's South-Side, I often wondered the same things. Reading other ethnographies about street children in Nepal (Panter-Brick 2002), shantytowns in Brazil (Scheper-Hughes 1993), and youth violence in Honduras (Wolseth 2011), I see that other ethnographers contemplate and describe similar worlds, albeit in other countries and regions. Indeed, these works have motivated, in many ways, my own interests in exploring these issues in Guayaquil, which is a city I have always been connected to through my family. Those who study Ecuador typically focus on the highlands or the Amazonian region; ethnographies of the city in Ecuador tend to focus on Quito, the capital. My research provides an ethnography that is in discussion with other works on children and youth in developing countries and from the poorest sectors of cities; Guayaquil is the central focus of my Ecuadorian fieldwork, providing people within and outside the city and the country with ethnographic material that demonstrates how very real issues and struggles with poverty and racism are extremely pertinent to our understanding of this city and of youth growing up in the city. This dissertation demonstrates Guayaquil's relevance to larger socio-cultural discussions on Ecuador. And, although many themes and questions that I do ponder are common across the literature on poor children in Latin America, my research methods and methodologies are innovative and provide new possibilities for educators and anthropologists to do ethnography as they learn alongside their study participants.

The questions I ask and think through in this dissertation have been asked, answered, re-written, and re-considered by my research partners, like Adriana and Vinicio. They are the ones who motivated me and led me to these questions, transforming my initial research proposals to think critically about their everyday lives and how these inform our understanding of Guayaquil,

of family, and of childhood. In this dissertation, I present multiple narratives and voices selected from nearly 100 study participants, ranging from eight year olds to 70 year olds. Their diverse experiences, opinions, ideas, and imaginations guide this text.

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I jotted down my concerns in my notebook that day about the disturbing verticality embedded in the high school volunteers' organization of a child's day for poor kids around their same age. But, it was my conversation with Adriana on that Day of the Child in which I felt this project taking shape. I wrote down questions based on what Adriana shared with me: What is "The Day of the Child" for children, like Adriana, who say they never had a childhood? What is childhood and what does it mean to be a child? What does it mean to celebrate being a child and who wants to celebrate this and why? In the case of Adriana, are we celebrating her resiliency? Are we celebrating the possibility of a better future? How can we talk about childhood, youth, and growing up in the city's shantytowns and how can these conversations allow us to better support young people and their families in these communities as they grow?

Through the stories and experiences of children and their mothers and grandmothers, I address these questions. There are no "answers" or "solutions;" however, as much as I disagreed with the decisions of the Fundación's principal and Board of Directors on several occasions, I believe non-profits like that one are an important resource for the children and families with whom I work. I believe further collaborative fieldwork in which people like those with whom I work are able to guide research projects about themselves and their communities are important. It was powerful for the children and women I worked with to say "Yo le enseñé eso" [I taught you that]. I always emphasized that they were my teachers and that I was learning from them. I became an anthropologist with a deep attachment to what I later learned that others refer to as

“decolonizing anthropology” (e.g., Tuhiwai Smith 1999). My approach to anthropology follows this philosophy of a decolonization of the discipline and the practice of fieldwork.

### ***Unpacking “El día del niño”***

My dissertation explores everyday life in Guayaquil’s shantytowns and the histories of these communities to better understand the impacts of social and spatial inequalities on families from the city’s poorest neighborhoods to the South, North, and East. I focus on children’s experiences growing up in these neighborhoods and how their understanding of family, poverty, violence, and city spaces influences the ways they internalize and imagine their own social positions and possibilities for their futures. My central research question asks: how do poor children growing up in Guayaquil’s barrios approach their everyday lives and how do their interactions and the relationships they develop with peers, family, and spaces across the city speak to larger societal issues on the production and regulation of childhood, race, and socio-spatial inequalities? To answer this question, my dissertation presents: **1)** how the histories of the shantytowns reflect a history of Guayaquil’s socio-spatial segregation, repositioning ideas surrounding socioeconomic aspirations of poor urban communities; **2)** how violence in children’s households influences their development and socialization, often leading girls, in particular, to form new families and to simultaneously navigate girlhood and motherhood; **3)** how children and their mothers think about their childhood and how their everyday experiences influence the ways they imagine their futures; **4)** how poor children think about and experience everyday life in their neighborhoods and across the city, especially in relation to racism and segregation. My dissertation reinvigorates theories of childhood, family, and poverty, highlighting how the experiences of poor children in the shantytowns and across Guayaquil overlap discussions of political economy, children’s rights, and legacies of colonialism. Through

a presentation of new methods and methodologies for collaborative research agendas with children, this dissertation also deconstructs the colonialism that not only forms part of everyday life in Guayaquil, but that also forms part of ethnographic interventions.

The five body chapters of this dissertation shift from situating this project as an effort toward decolonizing ethnography by incorporating the children as collaborators and leaders to a history of the barrios, focusing especially on girls' and women's experiences growing up there. The dissertation goes on to contemplate how families' experiences in the shantytowns and how their experiences moving across the city influence the ways in which they conceptualize their social positions and possibilities for children's futures. More specifically, **Chapter 2** presents my research methods and methodologies, focusing on collaboration and pedagogy as transformative research practices. I describe our collaborative learning processes, underscoring, for example, the critical questions children answered, drafted, and asked to move the research project forward. The methods and methodologies presented in this chapter situate this project as an effort toward decolonizing ethnography, offering strategies for researchers, teachers, and other practitioners of childhood as they engage in projects with children.

While all of the chapters incorporate the shantytowns throughout their discussion, **Chapter 3** focuses on these neighborhoods. I explore Guayaquil's barrios primarily from the stories and memories of the women who built and founded their neighborhoods; their histories describe migrations to Guayaquil, informal land appropriations, the reign of neighborhood crime bosses, and efforts to form solidarity among neighbors. By considering these histories alongside children's experiences growing up in these neighborhoods, I argue that the histories of Guayaquil's shantytowns serve as an important historical narrative of the entire city, tracing a

history of socio-spatial segregation from the second half of the twentieth century through the present.

The physical, emotional, and structural violence described in **Chapter 4**, presents the contexts from which girls and women from the shantytowns are motivated to make decisions for their wellbeing, from leaving with husbands, to becoming pregnant, to joining new families, and to raising their own families. These decisions reflect the overlapping phases of girlhood and motherhood and highlight the ways in which girls and women conceive of safe spaces and the importance of feeling love and a sense of belonging. By analyzing girls' and women's conceptualizations of and aspirations for family, this chapter emphasizes the complexities of growing up in the shantytowns and the types of childhoods and families that result from these complexities.

Drawing on the influence of children's surroundings – their shantytown neighborhoods, their families, Fundación Crecer –, **Chapter 5** builds upon the preceding chapter by focusing on the ways children imagine their futures. I question the extent to which children's imagination and aspiration compete and comply with the futures that are being constructed for them in their present-day lives by their schools, their surroundings, and the city's *de facto* segregation. Because this chapter focuses on the futures of poor children, I reflect on what it means for shantytown families for poverty to be inherited and how parents, in particular, reflect on this inheritance in relation to imagining their children's futures. I argue that public education and interventions of non-profits, like Fundación Crecer, are near-sighted in envisioning and creating opportunities for the children they work with; and, in response, I explore how using the future as a reference point can be a useful tool to encourage children to think beyond survival and to craft long-term goals as a strategy to nurture their aspirations and their possibilities for attaining them.

This chapter begins to address more directly how socio-spatial segregation influences children's imagination, particularly as it relates to their future.

Finally, **Chapter 6** draws upon the socio-spatial segregation inherent across the dissertation and focuses on the experiences of children from the shantytowns as they move across Guayaquil: from the shantytowns to Samborondón, Guayaquil's wealthiest township. In this chapter, I explore socio-spatial segregation in the city from the perspective of poor children, many of whom are Afro-Ecuadorian. I think of their social positions as they move across the city and reposition "street childhood" in the context of Guayaquil. I relate their experiences in the city and their analyses of these experiences to other literature on the Andes about race and place. In contrast to other literature, the socio-spatial segregation in Guayaquil creates a different set of expectations and ambitions in the shantytown neighborhoods; ideas and aspirations in the shantytowns are not based on whitening or on fitting in to other socioeconomic sectors. Instead, they are focused on progress within one's same neighborhood and same plot of land. I show how segregation frames everyday experiences and interactions across the city, and ultimately argue that children's internalization of this socio-spatial segregation informs the ways they think about themselves, their city, their race, their poverty, and their future.

I conclude Chapter 6 by reflecting more directly on my own social positioning as a daughter of a Guayaquileña, the wife of a Guayaquileño, an American anthropologist, and as someone who is connected to the shantytowns while living in Samborondón. My efforts to decolonize ethnography by working collaboratively with children and women, designing a project whose questions and direction are interesting and relevant to all of us, gave me the opportunity to learn *from* and *with* the experts. While ethnographers traditionally live among the communities they study, my research collaborators – the people I studied *with* – were positioned

along three city poles. My physical placement in Samborondón placed me between the families on the East Side and the North Side; and this placement provided for an ethnography that was able to study up, down, and across (Nader 1972, 1988, 1995), constantly demonstrating the divisiveness and exclusiveness of the city and leading me to question my own positioning amidst these tiers. My own movement across the city toward the children and children's movement across the city toward me and our movement around the city together have all been pivotal to our understandings of Guayaquil and of each other's spaces and worlds.

As I think of our social positioning and our (possibilities for) movement across Guayaquil, I am reminded of the layers of movement that make up this ethnography, creating paths through which to think about and from; these paths, at times, converge and at other times seemingly take us off course and re-direct us toward other questions, concerns, and goals. Educator, scholar, and activist Catherine Walsh (2013) describes how Afro and indigenous social movements, particularly in Ecuador, take paths that are rarely lineal; they are not concerned with following a straight path or an easy road, she explains. Instead, they are committed to building paths toward a decolonial horizon: "...la construcción de caminos – de estar, ser, pensar, mirar, escuchar, sentir y vivir con sentido o horizonte de(s)colonial" (24); that is, paths of being, thinking, looking, listening, feeling, and living.<sup>21</sup> As part of a project that also works toward a decolonial horizon, our physical, intellectual, and emotional paths throughout our experiences in Guayaquil and our participation in this research project have set us up to observe and to be

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<sup>21</sup> Walsh omits the "s" intentionally in "de(s)colonial" to emphasize that coloniality is always present: "Lo decolonial denota, entonces, un camino de lucha continuo en el cual se puede identificar, visibilizar y alentar 'lugares' de exterioridad y construcciones alter-(n)ativas" (2013:25) [The decolonial denotes, then, a path of continued fighting through which 'places' of exteriority and alter(n)ative constructions can be identified, made visible, and encouraged].



observed and to make sense of what those observations mean about our social positions in relation to each other and to Guayaquileño society.

Through these observations and discussions, this dissertation is written, in part, for practitioners of childhood and for organizations that intend to support and work collaboratively with women, children, and families in Guayaquil's shantytowns and in inner-city communities across the globe. Beginning with the questions from "The Day of the Child," this dissertation allows us to think holistically about the ways the barrios, families, children's potential futures, and socio-spatial segregation frame how children from Guayaquil's poorest neighborhoods grow up. As an ethnographer, a teacher, and someone who truly cares about the children with whom I continue to work, I do celebrate "The Day of the Child" in honor of all of my research collaborators who are growing up and facing the challenges and conflicting expectations and imaginations of family, society, and themselves. We can talk about childhood, youth, and growing up in the shantytown communities, and we should talk about it; and through this dissertation, my hope is to offer the background, the personalized stories, the failures, disappointments, and triumphs so that we can find ways to continue to work collaboratively, to better support young people and their families from Guayaquil's shantytowns as they grow.

Many ethnographies of children and youth who work or live on the streets or who live in impoverished communities, highlight kids' resiliency alongside the tragedies and hardships they endure in their everyday lives (e.g., Hecht 1998; Márquez 1999). Resiliency appears as a "conclusion" of these texts: life is rough, but the kids keep going. Certainly, I have observed similar reactions from the children with whom I have worked in the face of their own experiences. At times, Adriana and other kids, break down; at other times, they make poor decisions as they contemplate ways out of difficult situations. Kids, like Jota (see Chapters 5 and

6), have turned to drugs, theft, his neighbor, and God as strategies, not necessarily to move forward, but to achieve change. The many days in the lives of the children with whom I have worked are portrayed across this dissertation; but, they are not positioned as “conclusions” of resiliency. Instead, they are intended to underscore the diverse ways in which childhood is experienced, including how children respond to personal hardships. Their everyday decisions are influenced by their families, their surroundings, the (threat of) violence and abuse they may endure; and, they are influenced, in part, by their own aspirations for their futures.

Because I remain connected to many of the children and their families, I am more aware of the fact that their stories have not concluded. While some of the kids have turned to drugs, have joined gangs, have ended up in prison, others have graduated high school, have passed to the next grade level, have had children of their own, have moved in and out of their mothers’ homes. The days in the lives of these children, for me, have been important in my own learning process of different ways in which kids grow up, develop, socialize, and mature. And, children’s experiences, ideas, opinions, and aspirations across the hundreds of days we have spent together in various capacities are important to share so that we may all become more observant, not only of children’s resilience, but of children’s astute reflections about their own social worlds and their roles within them.

**Chapter 2**  
**Decolonizing Anthropology:**  
**The Power of Pedagogy in Collaborative Ethnography with Children**

Decolonizing anthropology is an aspiration. Catherine Walsh (2013) uses the term “de(s)colonial” and intentionally omits the “s” to emphasize that coloniality is always present and that decolonial endeavors are works in progress – “un camino de lucha continuo” [a path of continued fighting] (25). As part of my efforts toward decolonizing ethnographic research, I have employed specific methods and methodologies to work against the one-sided, mysterious nature that has traditionally structured the research process – a process that has created a knowledge gap between the researcher and the researched. In this project, collaboration has served as the critical methodological component, emphasizing transparency and partnership to bridge the knowledge divide between an anthropologist and her “informant.” The kids and women with whom I have worked are my “research collaborators.” They developed a stronger sense of the research process by drafting and asking questions themselves, analyzing responses, and providing feedback on my own analyses. Such forms of collaboration, which I present throughout this chapter, disrupt traditional hierarchies embedded in research projects in which the researcher solely determines the why and the how of the learning process.

In this chapter, I present my research methods and methodologies and explore these from my perspective and from the perspective of my research collaborators, relating my approaches with my findings; that is, how I learned, what I learned, and why I learned what I learned. My approach to the research process allowed me to learn from and alongside the children and their families. As part of my methodological emphasis on collaboration, I demonstrate that

collaborative research with children involves teaching – how the research process works, why and when certain questions are asked. Accordingly, I propose that researchers of childhood create projects that integrate teaching into their methodology. Teaching makes the research process transparent for children and allows them to collaborate as fellow researchers and as teachers themselves. These horizontal approaches applied to ethnographic fieldwork enhance the research relationship and, in the process, enhance what we are all able to learn from each other.

I begin this chapter at Fundación Crecer, the non-profit where I began my fieldwork in Guayaquil. With the children at the Fundación, I worked toward transparency, trying to make my role as an anthropologist one they could understand. It was also at the Fundación where I struggled to negotiate my own positioning as an anthropologist, a teacher, and as someone deeply invested in the children and their wellbeing. I discuss how this project draws strength from these positions. To better situate my own research methods and methodologies, I discuss them alongside decolonizing approaches in Latin America and in Childhood Studies; to conclude these analyses, I underscore the power of pedagogy in fieldwork. Through the specific field methods I describe, I demonstrate how they form part of my methodology toward a decolonization of the practice and theory of fieldwork and emphasize why fieldwork methodology is critical for anthropology's "path of continued fighting" toward a decolonial horizon (Walsh 2013).

### **Part I: Fieldwork (and Fieldnotes) at Fundación Crecer**

Through my earliest interactions with the children, I learned how my reactions to them, their stories, and their feelings influenced what sort of project this was going to be. I was never an unobtrusive or objective observer. By starting my fieldwork at Fundación Crecer as a tutor and classroom teacher while also working as a researcher, these multiple positions gave me

insight into the kids as students and led to a deep interest on my part in their education. Beyond learning about and from them, I was always invested in enhancing their educational opportunities and growth. Indeed, these relationships fueled a project in which pedagogy formed part of our collaborative methodology.

To situate how pedagogy and collaboration formed part of the fieldwork, I begin with my early days at the Fundación, largely reflected through my fieldnotes. My first fieldnote entries detailed my initial months there. Looking back, I am struck by my descriptions of certain kids who I now know quite well; it feels strange to think of a time when I did not yet know their names.

From the beginning, I selected a notebook that would draw attention to my note-taking, reminding the kids that I was not one of the volunteers they generally saw who passed through the Fundación. I employed methods that in addition to drawing attention to my notebook, opened it up for kids to better understand that (and how) they were being described. This was a strategy to make our ethnographic process more transparent. Ethnography, then, moved beyond Clifford Geertz's (1973) "thick description" toward a thicker understanding for these children to shift from more traditional informant roles to become, instead, research collaborators.

Jean Jackson (1990)'s "I am a Fieldnote" shares accounts from nearly 70 anthropologists, trying to understand what fieldnotes mean to them – how they are used, how they are crafted, how private they are, what they demonstrate. The answers vary widely, emphasizing how this note-taking method, which has always been a central part of fieldwork's data collection for anthropologists, is shrouded in mystery. Although the diversity of responses challenges a unified understanding of fieldnotes across the discipline, Jackson concludes that "fieldnotes and fieldwork do represent an individualistic, pioneering approach to acquiring knowledge" (32); she

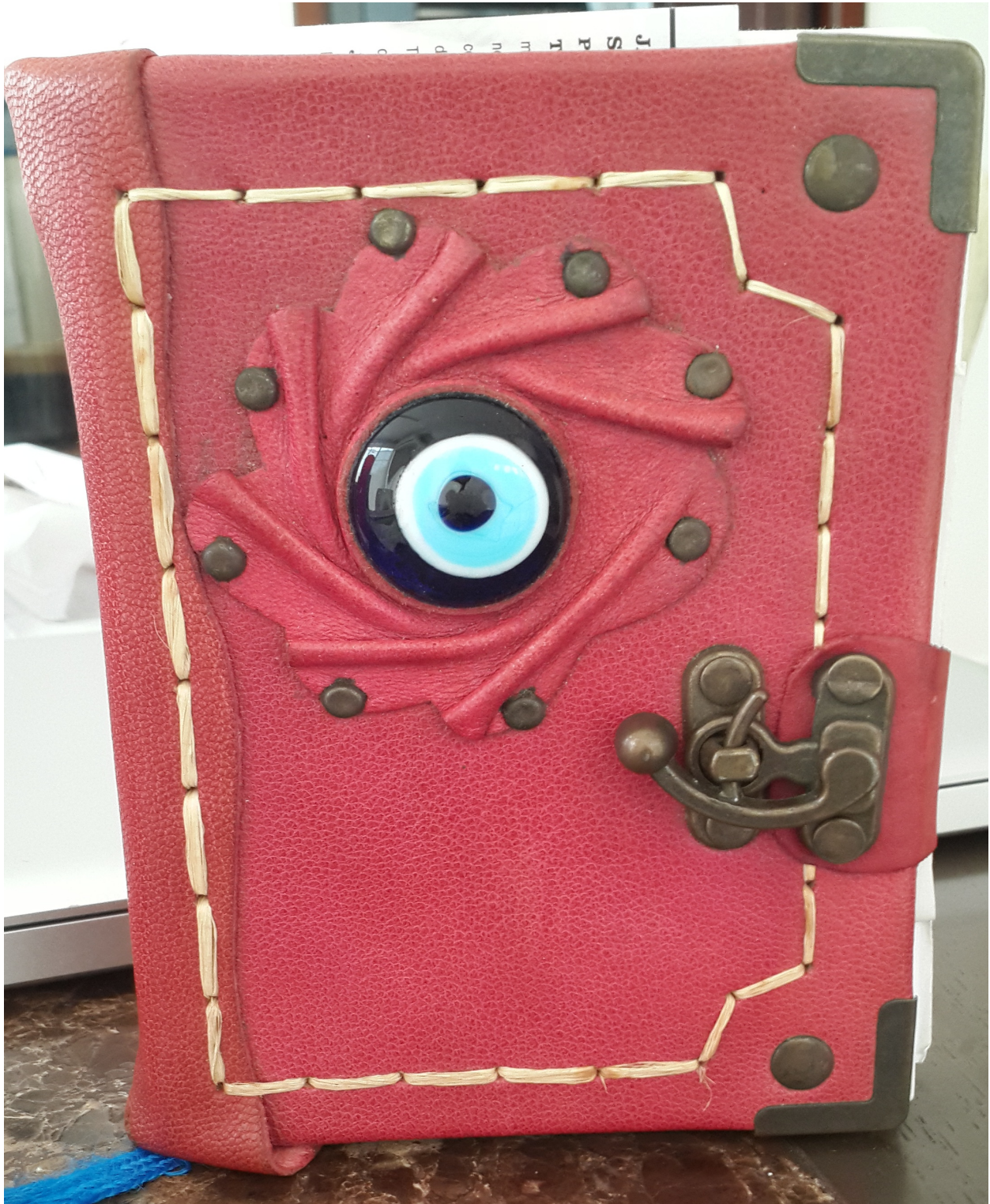
links the lack of direct discussion about fieldnotes as “part of a hidden curriculum designed to force the student to become an active creator, or re-creator, of anthropological technique” (32-33). By allowing the kids to engage with my fieldnotes, I took on an anthropological technique that worked against the “certain secrecy” (52) of fieldnotes that James Clifford (1990) noted in his follow up essay to Jackson’s: “Notes on (Field) Notes.”

### ***There is no “Antropólogo” in Spanish and Other Stories***

I purchased several journals in Istanbul in August, just a few weeks before returning to Guayaquil for fieldwork in 2012. I selected the magenta one with a large blue Turkish eye in the center of it as my first official journal for this new research period. I liked these journals because they were small enough to fit in my purse, and I loved the blue Turkish eyes and how they contrasted with the pinks, browns, and navy I chose. The piece of fabric with a metal hook allowed me to keep the journals closed and to store slips of paper I might accumulate during a day of fieldwork. The magenta cover and the eye, in particular, made my journal stand out at the Fundación and my act of writing in it even more noticeable. I liked that it stood out when I purchased it; I wanted my act of writing to be noticeable as a means of underscoring my role as an anthropologist, and not as a typical volunteer at Fundación Crecer.

In my magenta journal, I described one particular moment in Fundación Crecer’s lunchroom when Gigi, who I didn’t know well, asked me about the eye. I told her I wrote my observations down in the journal; I pointed to the “ojo turco” [Turkish eye], and told her it was for good luck. She was much more interested in the mythology of the eye than on what I wrote inside of it. She put her fingers on it, closed her eyes, and began rubbing it aggressively while saying: “Que me de comida, casa, y dinero” [May you give me food, a house, and money]. As she opened her eyes, and removed her fingers, she told me that she wanted \$100. “What would

you do with \$100?" I asked her. "Para comprar cachitos" [To buy chips], she responded, prompting her friend's laughter and my own.



I always took my journal with me to the Fundación, and in between tutoring, teaching, and hanging out with the kids and staff, I jotted down my notes of various observations and interactions from the day. Jefferson and JJ, in particular, who I worked with on reading, writing, and math skills, were always curious about my journal. They wanted to read it; I attempted to write primarily in English in case I lost it or in case someone –like them – tried to read it. But, I used these moments as an opportunity to make my positionality within the non-profit and within their lives more clear.

In one instance, for example, I asked Jefferson: “Remember when you described the cock fights in your neighborhood that you help organize?” He did, and I showed him the pages where I had written about that. I then picked out details from his story and showed him where they were. He was confused by the fact that his words were in English – he did not understand how the word “gallo” [rooster] was not “gallo.” But, he felt excited that his story made its way into the journal. I sat next to him as he flipped through the pages of my writing of his translated words; as he did this, he asked variations of “¿Esto dije yo?” [I said this?]. This was an opportunity to help make my role as an anthropologist more transparent, making Jefferson aware of his role in what I was learning.

Similarly, with JJ, I showed him where I had written about the birds he killed. I asked him what the words were that he had used to refer to his slingshot; he watched closely as I wrote down “cauchera” and “flecha.” I handed him my journal and asked if they were spelled correctly, even though I was sure they were. My role was to help him with his reading and writing every morning, and I took this opportunity for us to switch places. He told me I was correct.



Jefferson and JJ were the two boys I spent most of my mornings with during my first two months at the Fundación. After our discussions of my fieldnotes, they seemed to have a better understanding of my journal and the fact that I wrote down things I observed and things they shared with me. In the cafeteria one day, Jefferson called me over and asked why I didn't write in my journal when they ate lunch. I rarely had an opportunity to, as I constantly moved around during lunchtime, using it as a chance to talk to the students from the other classes, like Gigi. But, I told Jefferson that I did make notes after lunch; he told me he was going to watch to see if I did. Although Jefferson and JJ seemed to have a better understanding of some of the aspects of anthropology, both boys explained to me that, in Spanish, "anthropologist" means "detective;" there is no "antropólogo," Jefferson assured me. Just as "gallo" did not appear as "gallo" in English, "antropólogo" was not a word in Spanish. There was literally not a word for who I was and what I was doing there.

My first journal entries from my fieldwork at Fundación Crecer describe the students, like Jefferson and JJ, and their Módulo 2 classroom. I describe, for example, Elsitita and Kerly as they shared a plastic bag of green prunes. The girls passed the bag back and forth, sucking up the remaining juice. They tried to hide behind the table as they brought the bag to their lips. They were safe, I noticed, because their teacher was more focused on her cell phone than on them. Although I was assigned to work with Jefferson and JJ, Elsitita and Kerly were at the table next to us, and I often checked in with them. I noticed that Elsitita enjoyed this individualized attention and began walking up to me to ask questions, even though in some cases I suspected she already knew the answers. The teacher noticed one day when she pulled her chair up to work alongside me and the two boys and asked her to move back. The teacher reminded me that I should focus on Jefferson and JJ; they were the only ones who needed extra help.

I quickly jotted down our interaction when Elsitita asked me about my journal that morning. The teacher ignored that Elsitita had once again moved her chair next to mine (and so did I). I wrote:

I tell her it's in English. She sees the word 'plastic,' which was weird because it was about her plastic bag with prunes. I should've used that moment to be more upfront, though I did say that I write what I observe. She just interrupted again and asked if people read this later – I said I did – she said when – I said, like in 2 months from now, I can look and remember. She said, you can't remember what you did yesterday? She told me to remember the days by the color of gum I chew – yesterday, she said it was orange. Today, green. Which will it be tomorrow, she asks?

I remember writing down this moment. I was struck by how complex Elsitita's simple reflections were. She was inquisitive. It wasn't enough to say I wrote something down. She wanted to know why. She wanted to know why I wrote the word "plástico." This practice of note taking was foreign to her. Her own memory and attention to detail were clearly polished, as she revealed her own set of observations orally, suggesting a different way to organize what I observed: my Trident gum. These early interactions with Elsitita, Gigi, JJ, and Jefferson set the stage for creating a project that was transparent, collaborative, and appreciative of children's insight and the multiple spaces and ways in which it was revealed.

### ***Janice and the Cinderella Stickers***

Although Janice was only at the Fundación during my first three months, my interactions with and memories of her have stayed with me. The morning we spent together when she told us about her experiences working on the streets (see Chapter 6), she showed me her locker and how she had decorated it with sparkly Cinderella stickers that a volunteer had given her the previous year. Janice was tough and unafraid to go up against anyone, I had observed. I was moved by this exterior juxtaposed with her organized, pink locker, neatly decorated with stickers from fairytales.

In the days before we never saw her again, Janice was withdrawn. Instead of being the first one to complete her classwork, she put her head down and only “worked” by scribbling doodles in her notebook when her teacher scolded her for being lazy. Worried by her behavior, I asked the teacher if Janice could accompany me outside, since she clearly wasn’t working. Janice wanted to remain indifferent, but quickly got up and followed me.

Although the teacher overlooked her change in attitude, I could not. Janice was one of my favorites. We walked out to the playground, and I remember sitting above the step so I could face her, and so she could face forward, toward the far wall of the Fundación’s perimeter that separated us from the airport. I felt like she had something big to share, and it would be easier not to have to look at me while she said it. She didn’t want to talk about it and shrugged her shoulders instead. So, I talked about something else, until we were engaged in a conversation about mosquitos and my “sangre dulce” [sweet blood]. I can’t remember how she finally opened up, but I learned that she had been spending the night at the Fundación. She would stay behind and sneak into the infirmary where there was a cot. She was quiet while the teachers were still in the building, but afterward, she was free to move around. She mostly just slept on the cot, though.

Her mother was upset with her, mainly because her stepfather didn’t like her. She didn’t feel comfortable with her stepfather. Her father couldn’t take her in, because he worked at night as a trash collector and his new wife did not want to take care of Janice. Her mother had threatened to cut her up with a machete if she ever went back home to their neighborhood in “la Isla Trinitaria,” a southern shantytown. She was upset that Janice was working on the streets and upset by her behavior toward her and her husband.

Janice seemed to be in an unsafe situation, and I couldn't think of any advice to help her out of it. I knew that hiding out in the Fundación could not last forever; there had to be alternatives. The psychologists, I told her, likely had connections to a place where she could sleep; or, they could, perhaps, speak with her mother. She was unsure at first, and told me not to worry, that she wouldn't spend the night at the Fundación anymore. But, after speaking for more time, we walked to Ursula's office and Janice told her what she was living through. The principal came to sit with us, too. They gave Janice a towel and soap so she could shower before going back to class, while we kept discussing where she could go. She was not involved in this discussion.

The psychologists said that the situation at her house likely wasn't safe. They were going to try to talk to her father, but in the meantime, there was a shelter for teens downtown that cost 75 cents per night; the Fundación could pay for her to sleep there. As they gave me more details, this center seemed dangerous for Janice. She could be raped or attacked, I commented. I became upset when this was the only option they offered. With an empty guest room in my apartment, I asked if Janice could stay with me until they were able to contact her father. The principal spoke to me, highlighting that I was new to this. Although I am still unable to picture it, she told me that she reacted the same way when she first started working with children in these settings. She wanted to take all of the kids home with her. But, wanting to help in this way was naïve, she emphasized. Janice could accuse my husband of abuse; maybe, she said, Janice wouldn't want to, but her mother would find out and convince her to accuse us as a strategy to make money.

I insisted, then, for them to let Janice stay at the Fundación. There was an alarm system, she could read books, do homework; we could leave food for her in the kitchen. The donors

would not allow this, the principal told me, annoyed that I couldn't accept the shelter as the best option. As I found out the following day, Janice went to the shelter, but didn't stay the night. After asking about Janice everyday for several days, the principal told me to stop asking and that she would let me know if she heard anything. I never heard anything, until months later when I met Janice's father; he went to the Fundación for copies of her academic records. He told me that she was staying with him, and he was going to enroll her in another school. He was pleasantly surprised when I told him what a wonderful student she was and how much we had missed her. I ran to the Módulo 2 classroom to give him Janice's pink box and hairbrush that she kept in her locker; but, weeks earlier when the school year ended, everything was donated to other students or thrown away.

All of these moments with Janice were recreated from my own memories and the very limited notes I forced myself to write days after she left the Fundación for the last time. There are silences in fieldnotes. Although there are "big" moments during fieldwork, for me, this one was too heavy and too big to write about. The journal has not always been the right resource for me. Particularly when my relationships with the children and their families became friendships and even family-like with my godchildren and "comadres" [co-mothers], my journal was not always an appropriate companion. Sitting with women and children in our homes as we cried about something we were living through or as we laughed together upon hearing a funny story, I could never imagine, in such moments, detaching to take notes. My multiple roles in children's lives and the different types of relationships I shared with them and their families have not allowed me to wear all of my hats at once.

But, just as my experience with Janice led me to question what kind of anthropologist I was and what kind of project this was, I have come to realize that the friendship and the love do

not supersede the anthropology; instead, they are inextricably linked to what anthropology is and what it does. Anthropology has allowed me to know and to bond with a remarkable group of children and families who are always teaching me, challenging me, and supporting me as friends and collaborators; I, in turn, attempt to do the same. Brought together by Fundación Crecer and by this research project, our relationships have changed over time. Trust is rarely automatic and nearly four years together have allowed us to form our own kinship ties, moving beyond a conventional researcher-informant dichotomy by promoting an open-ended dialogue and practice of collaboration. Through this chapter, then, and throughout this dissertation, I continually situate myself in the scenes, as an observer, as a friend, as a critic, as a teacher, and as an anthropologist as a way of complicating how my positioning influences the material presented here. Shannon Speed who identifies as an activist anthropologist and who works collaboratively with indigenous communities in Mexico on pertinent issues surrounding their human rights, emphasizes “the importance of ‘situating ourselves’ – incorporating a reflexive consideration of how our positioning affects the knowledge that we produce” (2006:74).

Certainly, my positioning as a researcher, a friend, and an ethnographic writer have continued to change over time, as my relationships with my collaborators have evolved; a constant shifting of my situated self in the lives of my research collaborators has influenced the knowledge I have gained and my choices in presenting it. A “reflexive consideration” of the strength of our relationships convinces me that this project is stronger because we have situated ourselves in each other’s lives in ways that are not narrowly-defined; in fact, because of the depth of trust in our collaboration, some of my research collaborators have served as editors of this text by listening to my ideas and my arguments, giving me feedback on these and on my interpretation of everyday life in their communities. Part of situating myself, then, led me to

realize that my research collaborators could not be separated from my ethnographic writing. That is, the collaboration could not end when the research ended; and, because I remain in Guayaquil and in contact with my collaborators, I am still always learning and refining my own ideas and observations from the last four years, “consistently embrac(ing) unfinishedness, seeking ways to analyze the general, the structural, and the processual while maintaining an acute awareness of the tentativeness of our reflective efforts” (Biehl 2013:583).

Opening up my fieldnotes to help children better understand how I was perceiving them and how their stories remained with me and asking my research collaborators to provide feedback on the content of my writing, served as decolonizing strategies, emphasizing transparency and collaboration. In this chapter, I discuss major collaborative strategies I employed in my research as part of a larger aim to decolonize ethnography through fieldwork and writing. Focusing specifically on fieldwork, I demonstrate the ways in which children served as leaders in this project and introduce how a teaching methodology when working with kids can also serve as a useful tool for ethnographers who are engaged in enhancing children’s educational opportunities and growth.

The children I worked with helped draft interview questions and led interviews themselves with their peers and in their neighborhoods. Although I organized workshops about research methods, they sometimes chose not to follow scripts or guides. They approached and thought about ethnographic research in the ways that made sense and seemed relevant to them. A collaborative framework is essential when working with young people, and their role as collaborators serves as a significant step toward decolonizing ethnographic research.

### ***Research Collaborators***

I first met the children at Fundación Crecer during a preliminary fieldwork visit in 2011 and returned in September 2012 to begin my dissertation fieldwork. In 2012, there were 75 kids registered on the donation list, which corresponded with the number of students enrolled. I met all of those students and interacted with them either as a tutor, as a classroom English instructor, or as a participant observer during their school day, particularly at recess and during lunch. When the Fundación closed and became a tutoring and resource center for its final year (April 2013 - January 2014), new students enrolled with whom I interacted very closely as the program Co-Coordinator; two of these students, for example, were Cristi (Chapter 3) and Mayra (Chapter 5) who both became important research collaborators. In addition to these students and through more than two years of research and more than four years of actively interacting with my research collaborators, other children have also formed part of the participant observation component of this project. Many of these kids are siblings and neighbors of my research collaborators, a majority of whom I know very well after all of our time together. Although I did not formally interview children under the age of 10, many kids, like Carolina's brother Jefe, like the Cáceres sisters' younger siblings, and like Mayra's sister Yani, have contributed a great deal to what and how I have learned about kids, families, and growing up in Guayaquil's shantytowns.

In addition to the younger children, older siblings, aunts, and uncles also formed part of the everyday life of this research project, which incorporated people from birth through their 60s, like Manuela and Alfredo whose stories I share in Chapter 3. Although many adults did not participate in formal interviews or focus groups, they knew me and about my research project and contributed through informal and unstructured conversations and interactions, which have served as critical learning moments for me. My initial research plan did not involve the formal



participation of adults; however, when I started interviewing the children in the Winter of 2013, mothers and grandmothers became upset, asking me why they were being excluded from the project. They insisted that they also had things to share with me; the children were not the only ones. Their involvement, then, became a natural extension to the research project, emphasizing how the families were always involved in shaping our course. In the first phase of interviews with women, it was an opportunity to hear their life stories. Manuela seemed unsure at the beginning, but I soon realized that I was misreading her uncertainty for boredom during my introduction to the interview. She asked me if I was done, took the recorder, and proceeded to speak for nearly two hours.

I valued the power the women and children felt when participating in these interviews; I saw how they embraced their roles as protagonists, sharing stories, ideas, warnings, and advice as they spoke. The University of Michigan's IRB emphasizes that when working with "vulnerable populations," including children and poor people, researchers must be attentive to the potential coercion in involvement, as people with limited socioeconomic means often decide to participate because they seek to be remunerated economically. Similarly, the Principal at the Fundación asked that I not pay the children and that I only reimburse them for their bus fare. I could, she agreed, "pay" them with food, which is why a majority of our interviews took place in food courts across the city. Although compensation for participation in a research project, as the IRB cautions, could be the motivating factor for certain people to participate, the natural extension of women's participation in this research project demonstrates an interest that goes beyond a free meal or \$10. Instead, their desire to participate was routed in a desire to share their opinions in a forum in which they recognized that their stories and their points of view

mattered. Manuela, for example, felt confident and powerful speaking into the voice recorder about her experiences growing up, looking at me as her student throughout her narrative.

Jaqui, Tito and Kaín's mother, was one of the women who insisted that she be included, saying: "Todo ser humano tiene una inteligencia" [Every human being has an intelligence]. She emphasized that she, too, had something to give. She went on to say "...algunos no la saben aprovechar y otras que no sabemos sacarle la inteligencia de los niños" [...some don't know how to take advantage of it and others of us don't know how to **get the intelligence out** of our children]. She said that she liked that her children worked with me in the interviews, because I knew how to get their intelligence. In addition to this desire to share their experiences and opinions – and, in the process, their intelligence – and in addition to the value women saw for their children's development, for Jaqui and other collaborators, this project was also a way for us to remain connected as a community after the Fundación closed down. Jaqui emphasized that she and the other families felt abandoned when the non-profit closed: "nos quedamos abandonados, sin ese respaldo" [we were left abandoned, without that support]. She and others saw the interviews I held as a way to stay supported, because we remained as the Fundación community. Informal workshops and interviews with the women, in particular, made them feel like they were at the Fundación where the psychologists had held workshops with parents that encouraged them to share their feelings and to lean on one another.<sup>22</sup> What I enjoyed most about these workshops was seeing how the women gave each other advice, highlighting their intelligence and their abilities to "**get the intelligence out**" of the others when they were stuck or struggling with something in their lives.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Refer to Figure 3 in Chapter 1 (page 34).

<sup>23</sup> Our connection that began through the Fundación and continued as a type of extension of the Fundación could, perhaps, be considered as a relationship of dependence on me as the remaining staff person of the non-profit. I, however, view this extension as a mutual dependence on each other to maintain our bond as the Fundación

Figure 2 in Chapter 1 lists the numbers of those who participated formally and with IRB consent and approval in interviews, focus groups, and/or informal conversations and workshops related to this project; part of the list also notates those who are still actively engaged in the project. By being actively engaged in the project in 2016, these collaborators form part of the dissertation writing process, giving feedback and ideas along the way as I present segments and challenges to them; and, they are people who still form part of my everyday life, talking on the phone or meeting in person, always involved in my own cycle of coming to know and understand them, their experiences, and their Guayaquil. As João Biehl (2013) emphasizes in *Ethnography in the Way of Theory*, the connections we establish with our research collaborators and the ways in which we each may influence each other's lives is unique to ethnography: "In contrast to the subjects of statistical studies and the figures of philosophy, our ethnographic subjects have a future – and we become a part of it, in unexpected ways" (578). Jaqui, along with other mothers and grandmothers, became concerned when I began writing my dissertation, because the interviews with their children ended. In addition to seeing me as a positive influence and example for their children's everyday lives and futures, the women saw our time together as opportunities for their children to think and to learn, to "sacarles la inteligencia" [extract / gather / motivate their intelligence].<sup>24</sup> It was this concern that encouraged me to involve them in the writing process – another natural extension that helped frame this research project. Although I have spent less time with them while drafting my dissertation, they have enthusiastically participated in the feedback process, inspiring me and helping me move forward.<sup>25</sup>

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community. The non-profit was central to their lives and quickly became central to my own during my year and a half there.

<sup>24</sup> While mothers and grandmothers were often enthusiastic about their children's participation, the children participated willingly and eagerly. Although they did enjoy a free hamburger at the food court, they took pride in their participation, demonstrating interest and focus on our discussions.

<sup>25</sup> Because I remain in Guayaquil, the project itself has remained open-ended; it is that longitudinal flexibility that also allows for reinterpretation and negotiation. Part of this reinterpretation, for example, is discussed in Chapter 5

## **I. Decolonizing Methods and Methodologies through Collaborative Ethnography**

Methods and methodologies for conducting research with children and the ways in which ethnographers can and should make the ethnographic process transparent and collaborative, allowing children to serve as partners and leaders of the research project, form a large part of my own work. In many ways, my research project has become a project *about, from, and with* the communities with whom I work. This collaborative ethnographic framework aligns itself with attempts to decolonize ethnographic methods and methodologies (e.g., Hale 2006a; Mato 2000; Scheper-Hughes 1995; Smith 1999). To begin a process of decolonization, a distinction must be drawn between methods and methodologies. As Sandra Harding (1988) differentiated, a research method is a “technique for (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence,” while a research methodology is “a theory and analysis of how research should proceed” (2) (Smith 1999 also highlights this distinction). As the theory behind why particular methods are employed, methodologies encourage theoretical reflection on one’s research methods, pushing ethnographers to apply theory outside of ethnographic writing and academic presentations. Critically evaluating and conceptualizing one’s methods leads ethnographers to consider the impacts of their presence and interventions in the field as they reflect on how to proceed.

Theorizing one’s research methods implies a critical reflection and analysis on the impacts of the ethnographer’s techniques and interactions with the people with whom she intends to work. In my experience, this reflection highlighted the knowledge gap between the people I was going to work with – kids who informed me that “antropólogo” did not exist – and myself – the researcher who had already drafted detailed proposals and plans about my intended

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as children’s ideas for their futures changed over the four years, as some of them, for example, became mothers or dropped out of school. When projects extend beyond more traditional 18-month to 24-month periods, new challenges develop in the writing process as, in my case, I come to know how stories unfold and end, often leading me to revise and re-think conclusions and analyses.

fieldwork. I wanted to even the playing field between us, and my analysis of potential research methods convinced me that transparency would inspire collaboration. By giving the children visual access to my notes about them, by following up with them about a story or a comment they had made on a previous occasion, by encouraging them to create their own questions, by allowing them to serve as leaders of interviews, my research methods granted us all the opportunity to guide and learn about the research. These methods provided a self-reflection and understanding from my collaborators about the project that an IRB script and standard protocol – in the form of participant observation, fieldnotes, interviews – do not.

Accordingly, by making research as transparent and as collaborative as we could, I believe – and as my examples in this chapter demonstrate – we were able to learn more than we would have if only I had access to the data and if only I were the one drafting the questions and determining our next steps. The stakes, then, for conducting “anthropology as usual” results in “anthropology as usual.” This form of anthropology, which privileges theory in the analysis and writing versus the fieldwork, exposes us to knowledge, experiences, and ideas based on the ethnographer’s interests and priorities. These ethnographer-centered models add on to the classical hierarchical traditions that have guided anthropological research since the nineteenth century.

Although anthropology’s “writing culture” debates of the 1980s and 90s (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1991; Behar and Gordon 1995; Clifford and Marcus 1986) questioned and challenged traditional approaches to ethnography, welcoming the perspectives and unique positioning of feminist and “native” ethnographers, methods and methodologies for the actual fieldwork process remain largely overlooked. Charles Hale (2006), for example, made the same observation:

Consequently, since the 1980s, we have seen anthropological writing incorporate a hyperawareness of its own power-laden constraints, whereas anthropological field research methods have remained relatively unchallenged and unchanged over the same period. [101].

For two decades, ethnographers of children have engaged in conversations about action and participatory research initiatives (e.g., Caputo 2001; Connolly and Ennew 1996; Downe 2001; Ennew 1994; James 2007). They have adopted a decolonizing methodology that seeks to create research agendas that make children feel safe and that provide multiple venues for children to express themselves (see also Leinaweaver and Fonseca 2007 as discussed in Chapter 1). Nevertheless, alongside such calls for changes toward more horizontal research relationships between researchers and children (see especially James *et al* 1998), there are few projects from these scholars that succeed in such endeavors in practice versus in theory.

Even though, as Psychologist Melina Czymoniewicz-Klippel (2009) summarizes, “...research *by* children is the model of choice that researchers are currently encouraged to employ” (4), there are few projects that adopt the model beyond theorizing its importance; although she tries to employ this method in her own research, her reliance on research assistants and the short duration of her research do not enable her to develop the rapport with her collaborators to achieve this engaged methodology. While I find that the work of cultural geographers, like Stuart Aitken (e.g., 2001) and Tracey Skelton (e.g., 2007, 2008), strives to engage deeply with children by exploring how research and how involving children in research can positively impact children’s lives, many of these projects are short-term and largely depend on research assistants as part of their data collection, which hinders the depth of the relationships that are developed with the children and the extent that research can truly be collaborative and “come to know” people beyond interviews and questionnaires.

In contrast, Hecht's *At Home on the Streets: Street Children of Northeast Brazil* (1998) is one of the best examples of an ethnography in which children naturally become collaborators, taking the recorder from Hecht and leading interviews themselves, for instance. Through his work, Hecht is also able to decolonize the questionnaire structure by incorporating children, allowing them to create the questions; additionally, he uses the questionnaire as part of his dialogue with children as opposed to the traditionally silent, written response form. Like my own questionnaire, Hecht's was "designed...as a guided conversation" (1998:13); it "was used to complement the other methods of research, not replace them (13)."

In this section, I present examples of these efforts toward a methodological decolonization, focusing most specifically on my own methods. While my methods and methodologies rely on transparency, improvisation, and collaboration as strategies toward a decolonial horizon for ethnography, I remain the authority – etic and emic perspectives co-exist. Although we collaborate across fieldwork and writing, I am the one who makes the final decisions about our next steps, the one who makes the final decisions on the written text; and, other anthropologists grant their final approval. Again, decolonization is an aspiration, and what I have been able to achieve with my research collaborators through this fieldwork project provides strategies for other ethnographers to consider as they approach their research – specifically, the power of collaboration in bolstering what, how, and why we are all able to learn together.

### ***Collaborative Methods and Methodologies***

As part of a decolonizing effort to disrupt hierarchical research traditions, my research methods, marked by transparency, improvisation, and collaboration, serve as valuable strategies. On the surface, my methods appear standard; but, the layers I apply from my collaborative

methodology make their effects more profound upon all of the participants and what we learn. In Charles Hale and Lynn Stephen's edited volume on collaborative research in Latin America (2013), they reflect on the research of Jocelyn A. Géliga Vargas, Inés Canabal, and Tania Delgado Hernández in Puerto Rico in which "open-ended oral histories permitted those giving testimonials to engage in a critical reinterpretation and negotiation about the meanings of being Puerto Rican" (10). In my own work and not unlike the aforementioned ethnographers (among others), diverse research methods have allowed for both formal and informal conversations with individuals and with groups. Shifting from conversations with individuals, partners, and small groups allowed us to revisit pertinent issues and discuss certain topics on different planes. Individually, the kids were not influenced by their peers and spoke more openly about their personal experiences. Small groups provided new accounts of stories from individual interviews, as a collaborative retelling can change the ways collaborators remember and describe (Abu-Lughod 2000). Undoubtedly, our questions and discussions across the various research phases gave me insight into their experiences as children; and, the time I spent with them during interviews, at the non-profit, in their neighborhoods, and across the city taught me more about their everyday lives. As an ethnographer, I am committed to conducting fieldwork in multiple spaces and contexts to provide diverse opportunities and venues for research collaborators to share their stories and ideas.

My primary research methods, which I scaffolded strategically – not unlike a lesson plan – served as a means of building rapport.<sup>26</sup> A combination of participant observation, interviews led by me, interviews led by the children, focus groups, and workshops all with varying levels of formality and structure and all taking place across Guayaquil, comprised the general layout of my methods. Because these methods incorporated the children as leaders, because the children

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<sup>26</sup> These are outlined in Figure 3 in Chapter 1 (page 34).



saw my fieldnotes and even wrote their own, these “standard methods” deviated from a standard protocol by infusing them with transparency and collaboration. I conducted participant observation at Fundación Crecer, in children’s homes and neighborhoods, and across the city in shopping malls, restaurants, parks, museums, bus stops, city streets, and boardwalks. The interviews we held were primarily at the food courts of local malls, though some of them began at the airport food court, as Fundación Crecer was located next to the Guayaquil’s airport.<sup>27</sup> Many of our topics of conversation were private and personal, but this public space felt private because the children were not surrounded by people they knew. They felt they could speak freely. In fact, the children voiced their preference for the food court and some even commented that they would not have certain conversations in their own homes. Carmen said, “Son unos sapos” [They’re nosy], in reference to her family who she was sure would try to listen in to our conversations.

My relationships with the children and their families continued developing as our bonds grew through participant observation, interviews, and my continued work with them as a teacher at the Fundación. In August of 2013, then, I began going to children’s neighborhoods and homes. The Fundación was in the process of closing, and I felt more freedom and less restrained by the principal’s initial expectations. We began holding focus groups in kids’ neighborhoods and in my own home (see Chapters 3 and 6). One of our final methodological innovations took place in March, April, and May of 2014 when the children independently led interviews in their own neighborhoods.

In Chapter 3, I include segments from a neighborhood historiography project that formed part of our focus groups on the South Side. Sarita who was 12 at the time along with Vanessa

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<sup>27</sup> As previously stated, when I approached the principal with my project, she gave me permission as long the children did not go to my house and as long as I did not pay them. She agreed that I could buy them food as payment, which is why the food courts became an ideal setting.

who was 13, were my research assistants; they took turns recording and taking notes during the interviews and focus groups. Sarita created her own historical summary based on what they learned about the history of *Las Malvinas*.<sup>28</sup> Her mother, Diana, was extremely invested in her daughter's participation, hoping she would develop a better understanding of their struggles and efforts to build their community over the years. Diana's level of engagement with the project demonstrated that the importance of our work went beyond my own research requirements and truly resonated and mattered to the people involved. As collaborators, kids like Sarita took something personal from the project – in this case, history lessons from her mother and neighbors.

All of these layers fit within a larger decolonizing frame, as they show how this project belonged to all of us. Orlando Fals-Borda (1986) reminds us of the importance of the devolution of knowledge through his Participatory Action Research (PAR) paradigm. Collaboration in our research project addresses the ethnographic gap in the devolution of knowledge, as collaborative projects – some of which adopt methods from Fals-Borda's PAR – incorporate us all into the project as knowledge-makers and takers. In the case of Sarita, she not only contributed as a research assistant, but she took lessons with her that she learned from the focus groups about the research process and about her barrio – she learned note-taking and information collecting skills along with histories of the neighborhood where she was growing up.

The trajectory of these research methods developed naturally, based on the children's interest and involvement. This natural progression relied on improvisation and flexibility, as these are critical for the decolonization of methods; they allow for changes based on the needs and ideas of the group. For example, the focus groups, which I initially anticipated would be a primary research method, were not as engaging as the small group conversations and workshops.

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<sup>28</sup> Refer to Appendix B for a copy and translation of Sarita's report.

The ways in which the children engaged – writing interview questions that they thought were the most pertinent, leading interviews with their peers and in their neighborhoods – also made them leaders in this project, shaping its course. In this way, these methods formed part of a methodology of collaboration, in which the children were also researchers themselves.

For the remainder of this section, I draw specifically on children’s leading roles in our interviews together and in the ones they led in their neighborhoods to show specific examples of our methodology of collaboration in action. These examples showcase the children as protagonists in this study, asking questions that guided our next steps. They show how this project also belonged to them and nurtured them in their own learning and growing processes.

### ***--Interviews: Drafting and Asking Questions***

The interviews I held with the children were scaffolded by phases: 1) individual; 2) partner; 3) small groups. I always went back to the first two phases, as it was useful to go back to individual interviews, for example, after visiting kids’ homes and neighborhoods. Going back to partner interviews was also helpful to analyze certain topics more directly. Essentially then, Phases 1 and 2 were useful follow-ups to Phase 3, focus groups, workshops, and home visits so that I could ask clarifying questions and delve more deeply into our initial conversations with additional knowledge about their opinions, relationships with their peers, and their home life. By specifically referring to other conversations and observations, moving between interview phases also made the project more transparent, as the children noticed the trends I followed, reminding them, too, that I was a researcher, not just a teacher and a friend.

One of my strategies for the first interview with children, which I incorporated from my previous teaching experience in Chicago and at the Fundación, was to begin interviews by having students write answers to questions that I had previously printed; after starting off by

talking to them about the interview and the project, I handed them this worksheet. This method served several purposes: 1) it was a way for children to take time to think through answers before talking about them; working with kids, I have learned that they tend to answer automatically, overlooking other more representative answers; I also asked “why” quite often, forcing children to give answers beyond “yes” or “no,” which also made them think more critically about their ideas and opinions; 2) it allowed children to get a sense of what we might talk about, which was especially important if certain topics, for them, were sensitive. Some of these topics could include: the relationships with their families and their work on the streets. Because this was their first interview, it also gave children an opportunity to tell me which questions they found most interesting, most relevant, and most difficult. They could tell me, from the beginning, which topics they did not wish to discuss, though the kids, even in the first interviews, were open to discuss anything. This did not mean that some of them did not cry through stories and it did not mean that some of them gave answers that did not appear truthful to me.

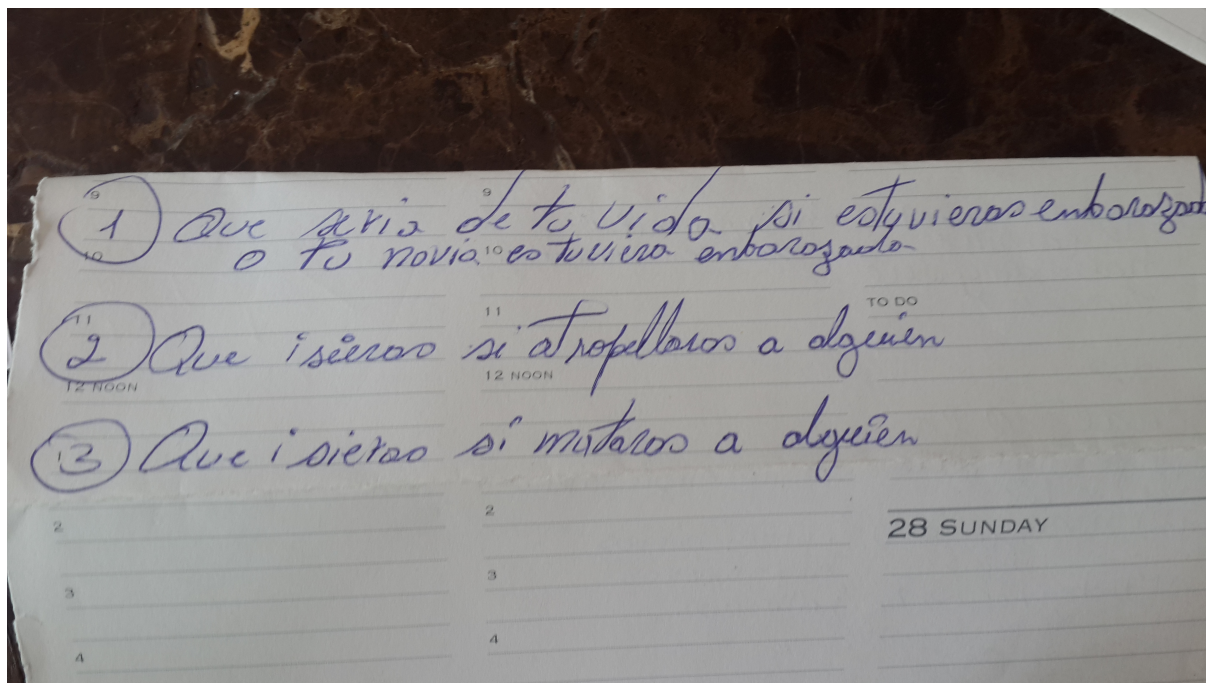
Even with the questionnaire as an opportunity for the children to relax, to think critically, and even to decide what they did and did not want to talk about, in our first interview, the children did not always choose to fully share their experiences or give their ideas. Tito, for example, did not admit that he had worked on the streets until he had participated in several interview phases. Because I was his English teacher, in the very beginning, he still saw me as an authority figure associated with the Fundación, which was an organization that discouraged children from working. As months went by, I became a teacher who was separate from the Fundación, and he felt safe being honest. And, as more time went by, his mother and I became *comadres*, and I became a part of his family.

In three specific instances, the children chose to reveal a secret to me and asked if they could record it privately. This choice to record privately became a method introduced by the children. Hólger was one of the ones who chose to record on his own; this was nearly a year into the project. This option had never occurred to me, and he initiated it, telling me he was going to borrow the recorder and walk around while he told me something. He wanted me to know, he said, but he did not want to tell me face-to-face. His ability to determine how he wanted to approach the research project is a product of our collaborative approach. He felt comfortable improvising and adjusting our course.

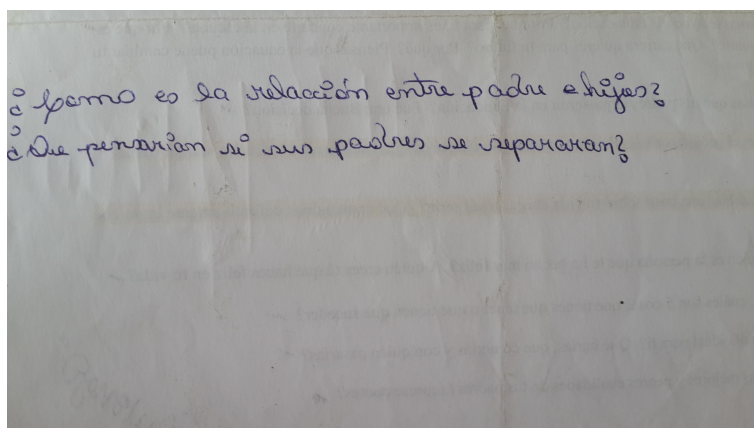
I listened to his whispered recording on my computer later that day; he had chosen to share clips of his experiences from when he first moved to Guayaquil from Esmeraldas. He hinted at the anxiety he felt at that time, as he whispered that he wet his bed every night and his grandmother would scold him. I had already heard her refer to him harshly as “meón” [pee-er / bed-wetter]. In Esmeraldas, he mentioned rat poison and his stepfather. From the Fundación and his grandmother, I was told that he had tried to poison his stepfather just before his mom kicked him out and sent him to Guayaquil. His bed-wetting and the fact that Manuela would find her grandson fast asleep under bridges or on street corners, led the psychologists to conclude that his stepfather abused him. This is not, however, something Hólger has ever told me. The day after this particular interview, he asked if I had heard the message he left me. I had, I told him, and before I could finish, he ran off, embarrassed. We never talked about his whispered recording until weeks later, when he made reference to what he had been through during another interview. I learned, too, that he told other children about this research method, encouraging them to use it, if they needed to. His friend, Jota, was one of the kids who followed his lead.

Certainly, working with children over several years has allowed me to learn so much more about their lives and about their personalities; even when you know someone well, there are still moments and memories that are difficult to share. And, of course, there are things we choose never to share. Starting off our interview relationship with questionnaires was a strategic scaffolding decision on my part, and it was effective for this group, making them feel comfortable about our conversation. Just as Hólger felt safer recording his story in private, this questionnaire method, I believed, would make the children feel safer, as it gave them the opportunity to write about particular opinions or experiences before (or instead of) talking about them; this seemed especially important at the beginning, since these interviews were new to them. Questions about their favorite colors, favorite music, and favorite TV shows relaxed them and encouraged them to share stories in a way that was natural. A few of the kids admitted during our first interview that they had been nervous, because they were not sure what to expect; they concluded that the interviews were fun and eagerly signed up for the next one. Some kids, like Nini, were so excited answering the questionnaire, that they talked through it, choosing to tell me what they had written or were going to write before they had finished.

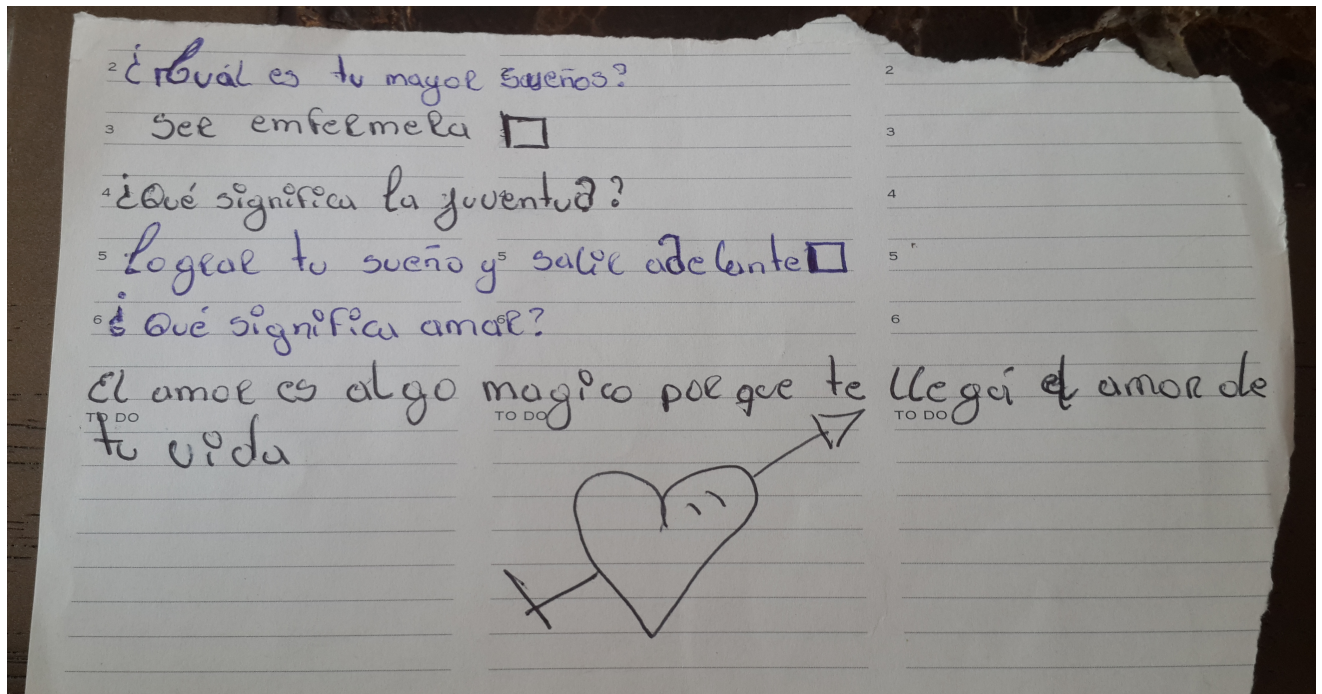
As the interviews progressed, we no longer started with these questionnaires, and kids asked why they were no longer writing answers, too. This was part of the feedback that prompted me to ask the children to write the questions that could start off our conversations. At times, as the pictures below demonstrate (Figures 5-14), we improvised, pulling out pages from my planner for them to write. Although effective research involves planning and analyzing one's methods beforehand, it also requires flexibility and improvisation, echoing Hecht's (1998) ethnographic commonsense as guiding the improvisation inherent in fieldwork.



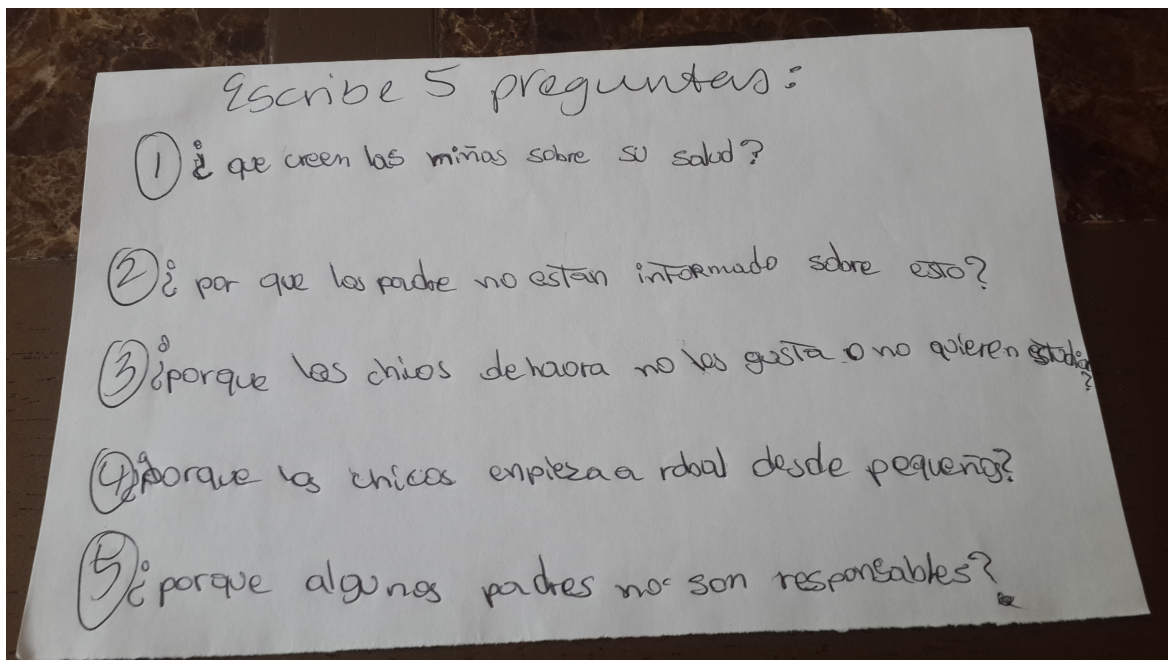
**Figure 5:** 1) What would your life be like if you were pregnant or if your girlfriend were pregnant? 2) What would you do if you ran someone over? 3) What would you do if you killed someone?



**Figure 6:** 1) What is the relationship like between parents and kids? 2) What would you think if your parents separated?

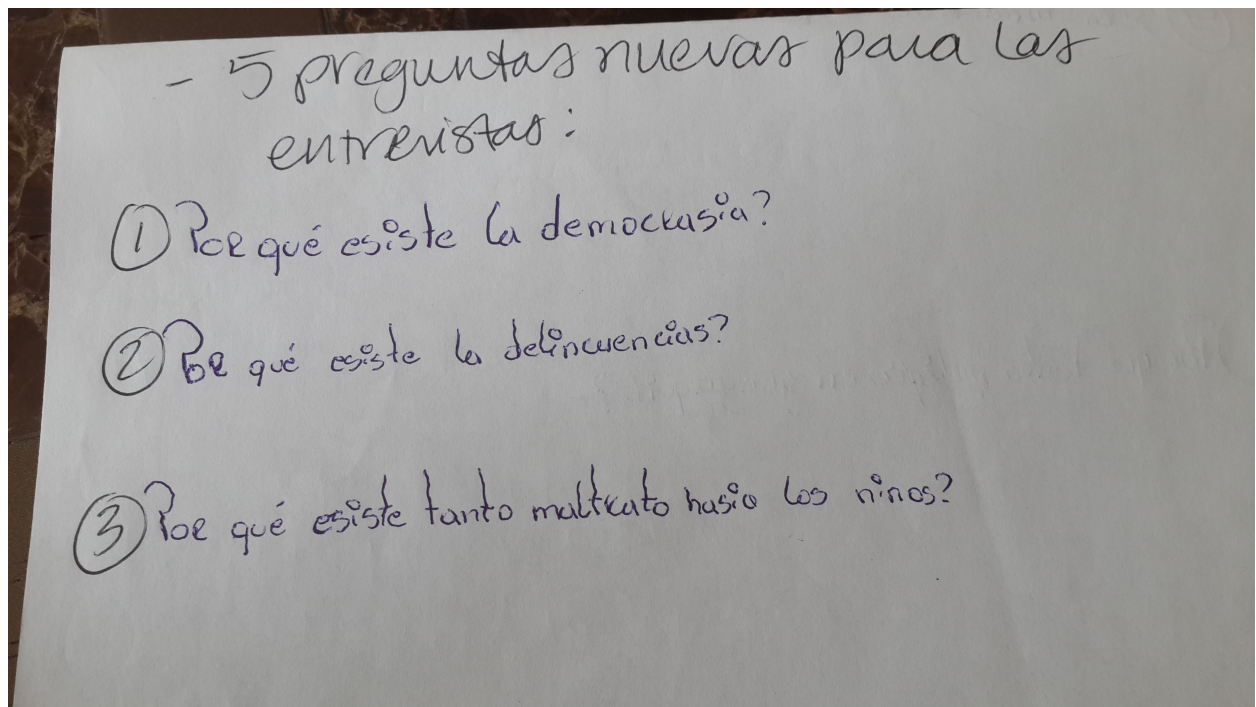


**Figure 7:** In this set of questions, she provided her own answers, too. 1) What is your biggest dream? [To be a nurse] 2) What does “la juventud” [youth] mean? [To reach your dream and move forward] 3) What does it mean to love? [Love is something magical because the love of your life arrives].

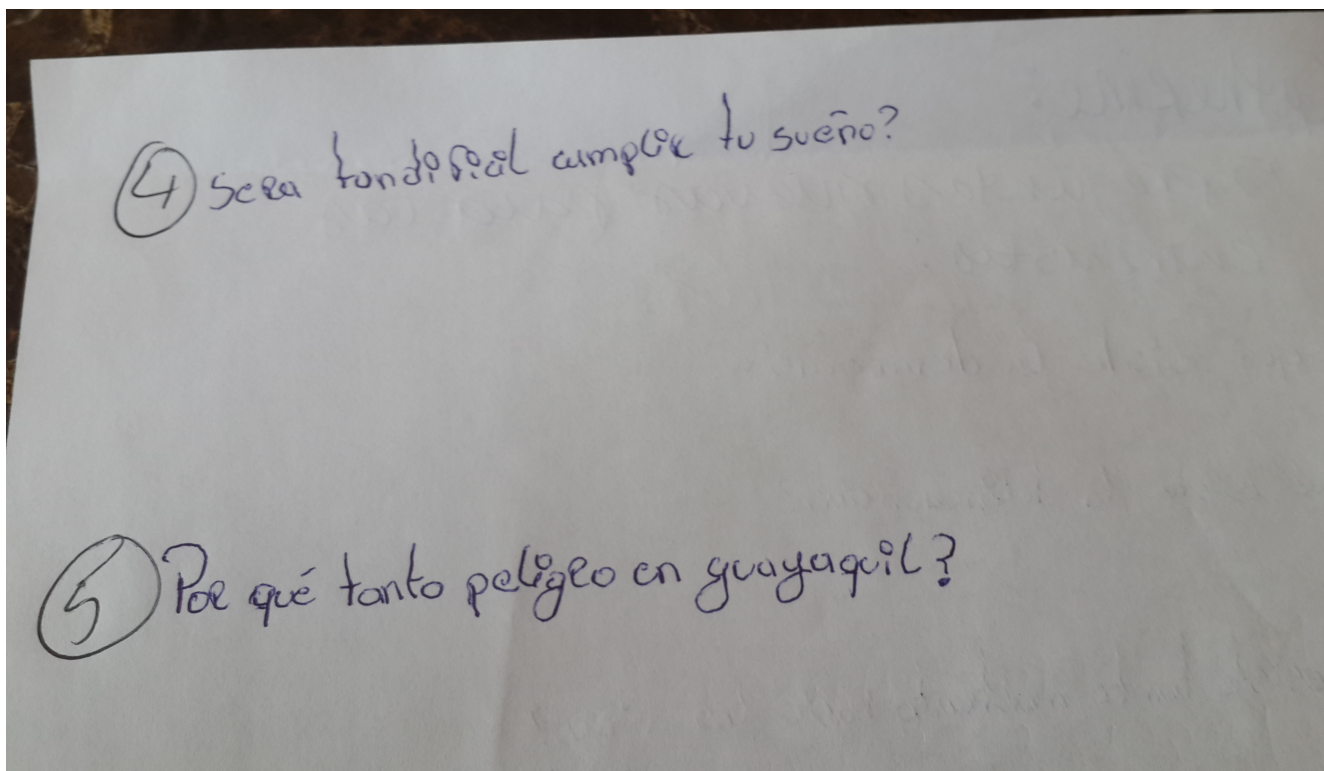


**Figure 8:** My handwriting at the top says “Write 5 questions.” 1) What do girls think about their health? 2) Why are parents not informed about this? 3) Why do today’s kids not like to or not want to study? 4) Why do kids start stealing from a young age? 5) Why are some parents not responsible?

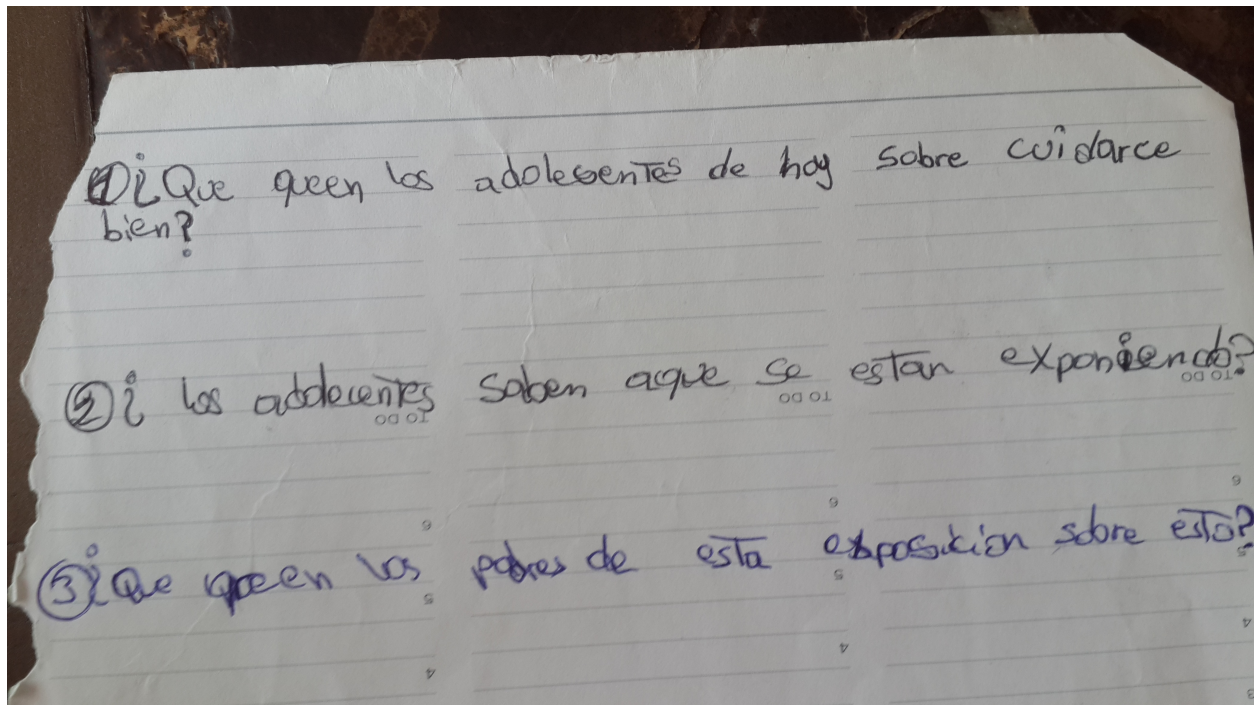




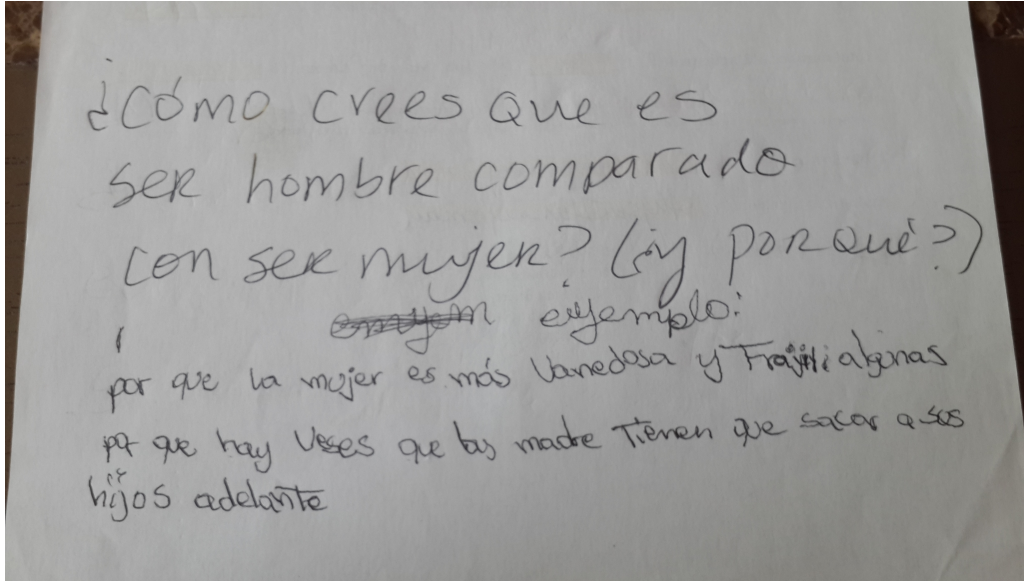
**Figure 9:** My handwriting at the top says "5 new questions for the Interviews" - 1) Why does democracy exist? 2) Why does delinquency exist? 3) Why does so much mistreatment of children exist?



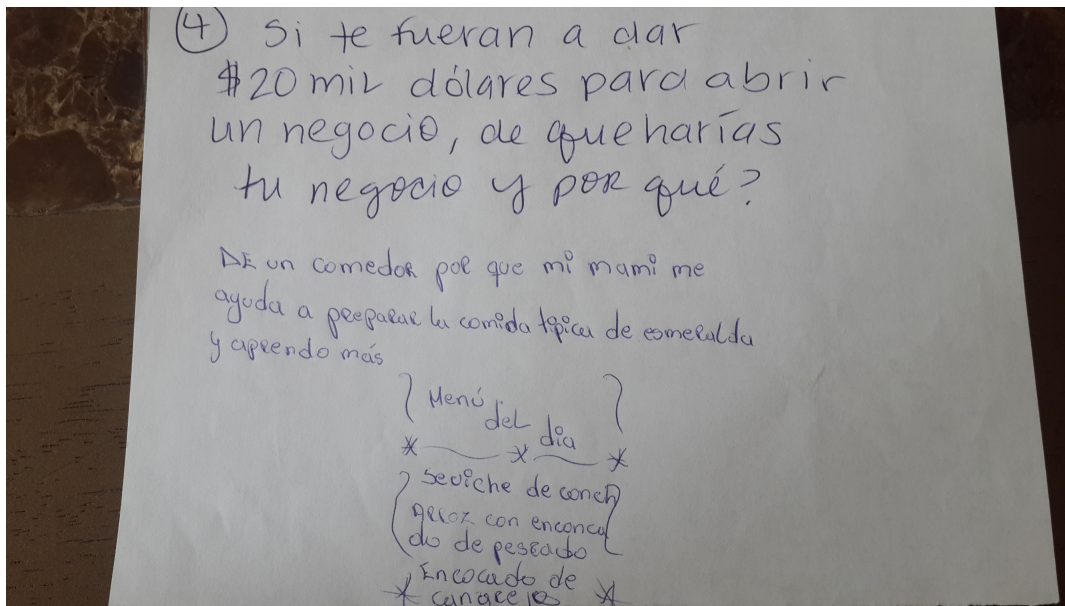
**Figure 10:** 4) Is it so difficult to accomplish your dream? 5) Why is there so much danger in Guayaquil?



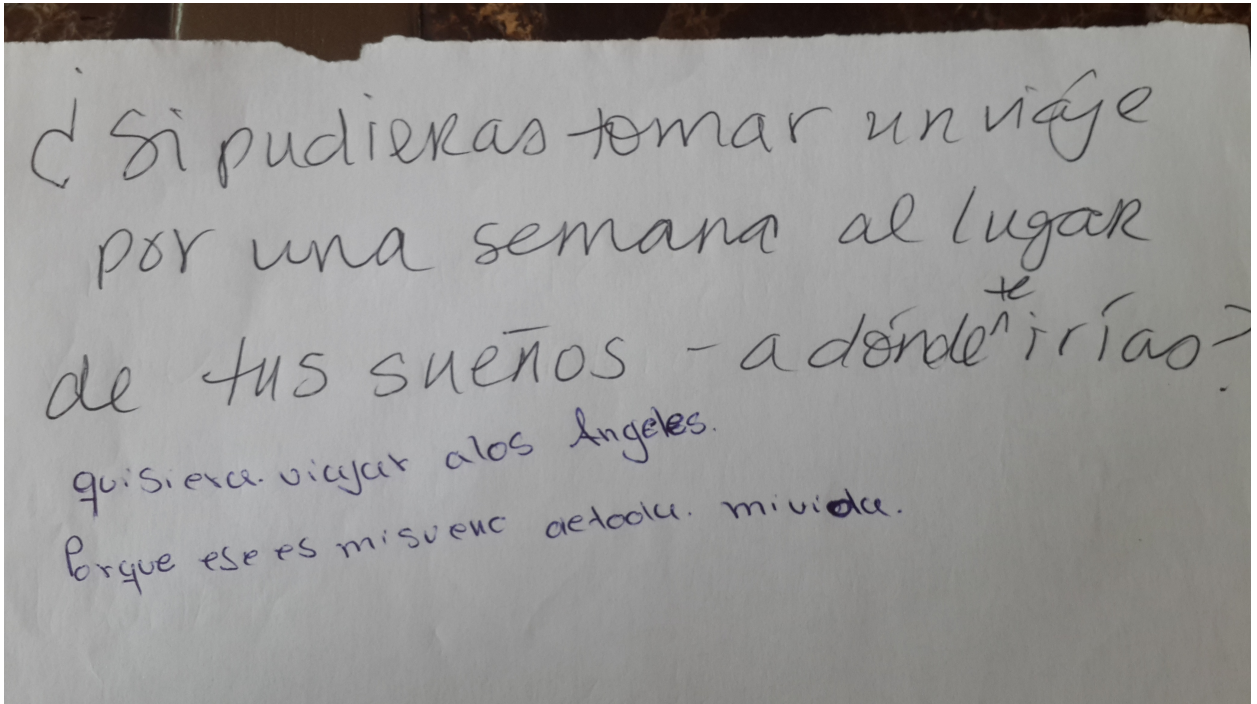
**Figure 11:** 1) What do today's adolescents think about protecting themselves well? (sexual protection) 2) Do adolescents know what they are exposing themselves to? 3) What do the parents think about what they (their kids / adolescents) are exposing themselves to?



**Figure 12:** When we met in groups and the kids wrote down their questions, some finished before others. I never wanted them to have “free time,” as that could cause distractions; as they wrote questions, I wrote some, too, and handed them off when the kids were done. We answered each other’s questions while we waited for everyone to finish. This question asks: “How would you compare being a man to being a woman and why?” The response: “Example: because the woman is more vain and fragile, some, because there are times when the mother has to move her kids forward. (See Chapter 5 on the phrase “sacar adelante”).



**Figure 13:** Another question-based strategy that I employed and that the children enjoyed was picking questions at random, reading them out loud, providing their own answer, and then asking their peers’ opinions. Sometimes, as in the example above, the children had a chance to think of their answers; other times, as the interviews progressed and as they felt comfortable sharing their ideas in front of their peers, we made this into a “lightning round” game, and kids would read and give their responses at once. These strategies were important to the children’s development as more critical thinkers, leaders, and researchers. This question asks: “If you were to receive twenty thousand dollars to open a business, what business would you open and why?” She responded: “A restaurant, because my mommy helps me prepare traditional food from Esmeraldas and I learn more.” She included a “Menu of the Day,” featuring traditional Esmeraldeño dishes: ceviche de cocha, arroz con encocado de pescado, and encocado de cangrejo.



**Figure 14:** The question asks: “If you could take a trip for a week to the place of your dreams, where would you go?” He replied: “I would like to travel to Los Angeles because that has been my dream my whole life.” Months earlier, he studied geography as part of the English classes I taught, and because he was obsessed with U.S. geography, memorizing all of the states in alphabetical order from the “Fifty Nifty United States” song. At the Christmas party we held in the Flor de Bastión shantytown in December 2015, I stood with a group of kids gathered around a table, entertaining them while their parents’ picked up their Christmas gifts. Hólger, Kaín, and Tito were next to me, amused by the trivia questions I was asking the younger kids. These were questions I had asked them several years before. When I was called over to help distribute the gifts, Hólger told me to go, that they would take over. From a distance, I heard them teaching the group “Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas...” And, Hólger scolded them for not knowing that the United States had 50 states.

The children’s questions were a turning point in this research project. They highlighted some of the major issues they thought about, showing me not only the depth of their own critical thinking and awareness, but also the directions our conversations should take. This form of collaboration greatly shaped the focus and the themes across this dissertation. And, through the experience of drafting the questions – and later asking them to others – the kids began engaging with research on a new level. Some kids copied some of the questions I had already asked them, which, to me, demonstrated their transition from guided questions to independently drafted ones. It showed that they were learning from our past interviews and those were stepping stones for them to take charge.

In Latin American Studies, research agendas have been framed quite successfully around

collaboration; I have been especially impressed by the work of anthropologists like Charles Hale and Shannon Speed. Hale, in particular, has been a leader in advocating for activist anthropology, finding ways, for example, through his research on race and racism in Guatemala to be relevant and important for indigenous groups fighting against discrimination. Through his call for collaborative ethnographic research, Hale sees collaboration as a methodology, “devolv(ing) power and control from the academy to civil society protagonists” (Hale and Stephen 2013:19). The “Otros Saberes” [‘Other Knowledges’ or other forms of knowing] initiative, taken up by the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) in 2004, has had as its central objective since its inception:

to promote collaborative research between civil society --- and academy-based intellectuals focused on research topics of interest to both, giving priority to topics to which the civil society organizations in question assign special importance; and to increase the presence of civil society-based intellectuals at the LASA Congress and in LASA networks, so that they may benefit from the flow of scholarly exchange in these activities, as well as enrich LASA with their presence [Hale and Stephen 2013:3].

One of their central questions asks how collaboration can strengthen research: “Do collaborative methods bring to the fore new and different ways of validating our research findings? If so, what implications follow?” (2013:5). “Otros Saberes” sees new knowledge and new theoretical insights as their primary anthropological contributions, framing their new knowledge based on the ways in which indigenous and Afro-descendant populations conceptualize their worlds:

All of the Otros Saberes projects have taken steps in the decolonization of knowledge through recentering indigenous and Afro-descendant systems of knowledge, epistemologies, models of leadership, and understandings of the world...As pointed out by the Afro-descendant research team from Ecuador, part of the object of decolonizing knowledge is to ‘contaminate closed forms of hegemonic knowledge production so that they can be in dialogue with other knowledge forms and systems.’ Situated knowledges that document the specifics and variations of knowledge found at the local level, even from family to family, are important initiatives for departing from a universal, overly rational position. [2013:17-18]

Hale and Stephen’s question about critical methodologies along with the collaborative research projects in their edited volume demonstrate how methodologies are capable of challenging discourses of difference and exclusion, which is one of the main reasons for my own engagement in this style of project. My form of collaboration is different from Latin Americanist projects that are deemed “engaged” and “collaborative” in that I have not partnered with a specific organization. My collaboration, in that sense, is less structured; my research collaborators did not enter, like an organization, with a set agenda for change.

Nevertheless, the groups of children and families with whom I do work have traditionally been excluded and rendered irrelevant via municipal policies and decisions and social and spatial exclusions across Guayaquil (see Chapters 3 and 6 for further discussion). The open-ended and unstructured formatting of our research relationship allowed children and families’ everyday lives to guide us – guide the questions, the answers, and our analysis of these. In this way, while they did not enter as an organized group with a set agenda, their questions and research interests had many points of intersection, demonstrating common concerns, challenges, and experiences, which have framed this dissertation. Furthermore, by employing collaborative methods and methodologies, my own work demonstrates the power of these research methods and methodologies in changing the dialogue by engaging those traditionally excluded as partners and leaders of a research project about them and their worlds.<sup>29</sup>

### ***--Children as Researchers***

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<sup>29</sup> While, in this section, I focus primarily on collaborative methods and methodologies in Latin American Studies and Childhood Studies, schools of Public Health, Social Work, and Education and Social Policy are also committed to collaborative approaches to research. As an undergraduate, the “Asset-Based Community Development” (ABCD) paradigm (McKnight and Kretzman 1993) allowed me, for the first time, to work collaboratively, combining service learning and ethnography in my research. Participatory Action Research (PAR), largely attributed to Paulo Freire and often applied by Childhood Studies scholars as Y(outh)PAR, has also given way to other methodologies, like Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) (Israel 1999; Israel et al. 1998, 2012). These models revolve around collaboration between researchers and communities during the research process and beyond, focusing, too, on how information is presented and utilized.

Beginning in March of 2014, 12 children chose to serve as research assistants and conducted surveys in their neighborhoods during their school vacation. In several small groups, the children and I designed the surveys, carefully selecting and thinking through the types of questions they would ask, deciding why they were important, how they should be worded, and in what order they should be asked. The questions ranged from general household demographics to questions about the history of their neighborhoods, their experiences living there, and their hopes for changes in their *barrio* with the recent mayoral elections (February 2014).<sup>30</sup> I intentionally employed this decolonizing approach, inviting the children to collaborate as researchers.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) decolonizing proposal emphasizes the importance of collaboration; she does not advocate a rejection of research and knowledge of the West, but insists decolonization can occur when people "know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (39). She describes the detrimental impacts of having one's history retold (33) and having one's spaces renamed and restructured through maps (51). She explains that research traditionally privileges the observations of the outsider and, in the process, strips authority and even authenticity from the very people being described or being "studied." In small groups, the children and I talked about research projects and generated together pertinent research questions to address the issues that were most relevant from our points of view. In this way, the children gained exposure to the formulation of projects and then applied their own perspectives and priorities.

For the neighborhood surveys, as we drafted one question about basic household services, like indoor plumbing and electricity, Charo said to the group: "I'm going to ask more than that...I am going to ask them how many times per week their water gets cut if they have it. The

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<sup>30</sup> Refer to Appendix C for a copy of the interview questions, the children's drawings of the interviewees' homes, and the children's own questions they added on extemporaneously.

water company never gets it right for us.” This was one of several moments from our meetings together in which the children demonstrated the depth they add to the research process by drawing from their personal experiences. Speed (2006) describes her project in which “The community had a direct role in defining, in dialogue with the anthropologist and the activists, what it would be useful to know, and how we should go about gaining that knowledge” (71). These have been guiding principles in my own work. I believe that for projects to be truly participatory, the role of the researcher should change from being the initiator to being the facilitator (Connolly and Ennew 1996); and, as my work also demonstrates, these children are, indeed, the experts.

Lawrence Taylor (2001) discusses kids leading and collaborating in the research process.

He includes the list of questions drafted by one teen and reflects:

I was not prepared for the complexity of thought revealed by Boston’s questions. They were a guide to the kids’ view of their own lives and culture; they revealed as well a degree of self-consciousness, of awareness that they were caught in a kind of performance [12-13]

Taylor’s ethnography is an important contribution to anthropology, as he allows children to be leaders in the project, demonstrating the depth they add to the research process by writing, for example, questions grounded in their first-hand experience. My own collaborative ethnography also taught me the power of children’s leadership and guidance in formulating questions and making research-based decisions.

In our debriefing sessions after the children conducted the neighborhood surveys, I found that listening to them describe their research experiences and the ways they presented themselves and the project were profoundly revealing. Although they had a presentation script that we practiced together, some of the children were more “creative” than others when they introduced the project to their neighbors. At home, Tito and Kaín devised their own strategy before they



began their research; they told their neighbors that they were there for a school project and that the findings would be shared with the Municipality. When I reacted and reminded them of our discussion of research ethics and the importance of transparency, Tito contradicted what we had discussed, explaining that the neighbors were extremely excited to participate in the surveys, because they wanted the local government to know about their experiences and concerns.

Hólger supported their approach, and agreed that journalists worked that way; the boys explained that journalists are never honest when they ask questions, because they are like detectives. The important thing is to have good intentions, Kaín concluded, and he described the purpose of these surveys as “para bien, no para mal” [for good, not for bad].

The children I work with are accustomed to television crews around their homes as the crime and everyday drama that takes place in their neighborhoods often draws cameras and reporters to their sector. As we discussed Kaín and Tito’s methods and methodologies, the group said that reporters do not really care about the people, they just want to get a good story; in this particular instance, they differentiated between this intervention within their community and the intervention of the neighborhood surveys, which are truly framed for a deeper understanding about the people in their neighborhoods. Through these approaches to their ethnographic research and their theory behind it, the kids demonstrated the matter of ethics as researchers in their own right and, in the process, taught me how they understood these roles and the power of research. They distinguished intentionality between ethnography and journalism, and concluded that our project was for good [*para bien*] and not for bad [*para mal*].

The other children did not read the script verbatim, but they stated their purpose with the relevant details in a way that was accessible to those they interviewed. I anticipated each survey would last approximately 30-45 minutes, but several children – especially the girls – took at least

two hours per survey. The girls, like Carmen and Mayra, said that some of the interviews were very powerful and that they cried alongside many of their neighbors as they heard their life stories. When I asked the boys if they had similar experiences, they said their interviews were lined with laughter, not tears, which they saw as something that made them superior researchers. The boys shared that their neighbors would make jokes and would give such direct responses, that they would all start laughing. Sometimes a one-on-one interview became an interview with the entire family, which was an experience that both the boys and the girls shared. After a while, some children told me their neighbors would offer them something to drink and even give them a snack since the conversation was interesting and lasted longer than expected.

Children described their reactions when some of their neighbors became concerned by specific questions about household income, and worried that this survey was government-sponsored and would lead to their monthly bonus being taken away. These were learning moments for the children and for me as well. I used this as an opportunity to explore with the children about why this sort of distrust might have come about and what could and should be done differently in the future. We discussed the importance of rapport and of transparency in conducting research. Some children, like Kaín and his brother, suggested never asking such personal questions about income, because they could cause people to feel embarrassed, especially if they are poor. Other children, like Carmen, said that even though their neighbors know them well, they do not necessarily want their fellow neighbors to have such income-specific details about their lives. Although they are “like a family” (see Chapters 3 and 6), there are still levels of distrust and jealousy, and certain conversations, especially when they are transposed onto written surveys, are sources of discomfort. In many ways, this process taught me how children assume their voice as researchers and how they construct and embrace criteria

and ethics of their own. While their approaches are not always in line with IRB-protocol, their actions are not capricious, and they are truly immersed in the research and in creating ways to engage their community in the learning process.

Based on projects like these neighborhood surveys, our hope is that we can prepare a presentation for the city centered on our research findings in order to inform city officials of the major issues concerning people from the shantytowns, emphasizing, too, the centrality and capabilities of children to conduct research projects on their own. The Municipality of Guayaquil would receive information not only from barrio residents, but from young barrio residents, providing a new perspective for the city's officials. I was always interested in this possibility, and after Kaín and Tito told their neighbors that we would report the findings to the local government, and after so many of the children's neighbors asked for the information to be passed along to people with authority and power to make changes, the above-mentioned presentation seems like an important next step. This next step for our project recalls Smith's (1999) "research...for our own purposes" (39); that is, research that matters to the communities and that can work for them by achieving positive changes that they seek, not just academic pursuits of researchers, like me.

In the eyes of my collaborators, anthropologists need to ensure that their work is not only beneficial for them personally and academically, but also for the study participants. In their own explanation of falsely presenting the project as feedback for the Municipality, Kaín and Tito recognized the importance of designing a project that was "for good" in that it served to record ideas and struggles from the neighborhood in hopes of achieving corresponding changes. A collaborative research agenda allows fellow collaborators to also define the direction and the purpose of the project. I thought that their strategic – though dishonest – decision to say that the

project would be presented to the Municipality and result in changes was in fact an impulse for us to make our research matter to their neighbors more directly.

After working together in different capacities for nearly four years, we have reached a point in which the children are very clearly my research assistants and collaborators. At the beginning, they had a vague understanding of my interest in learning from children and learning about their lives in their neighborhoods; but now, they have seen how I analyze interview responses, draft questions, and attempt to use statistics to better understand and describe the realities in their neighborhoods with them.<sup>31</sup> They see the ways in which they have shaped and continue to shape this project, recognizing their roles as subjects of the project as opposed to mere objects. Kaín and his brother, for example, proudly introduced themselves to my nieces as my “asistentes” [assistants], telling them “hacemos investigaciones” [we investigate / research].

As the “Otro Saberes” project reminds us:

The operative principles of collaboration are not symmetry, but rather transparency, horizontal dialogue, and differential division of labor, in recognition of the distinctive strengths and potential contributions of each. As in the initial determination of the research topic, the expectation is not that work in these subsequent phases would ever be tension-free, but rather that the tensions, once identified and engaged, would be constructive. [Hale and Stephen 2013:20]

Working in Latin America and deeply attached to the principles of activist and collaborative ethnographic approaches, my work reflects many of the principles that Hale, Stephen, and Speed demonstrate and advocate through their own engaged scholarship. My work is collaborative, especially with the children. Our collaboration has incorporated them into the research process as assistants, rendering the research process transparent and also stronger in that the children –

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<sup>31</sup> Although our debriefing sessions focused on the research process and detailed each of the interviews, highlighting major themes, commonalities, and discrepancies between responses and between neighborhoods, we have yet to meet to organize our data quantitatively. We have, however, practiced calculating percentages. Certainly, this has been a learning process for the children and for myself as we moved through this research phase together, embracing the improvisation inherent in ethnography.

the experts in “their field” (in their everyday lives) – are actively collaborating by offering suggestions and ideas for improvement and change, as Charo did in drafting the neighborhood interview questions. In the following section, I further discuss these collaborative methodologies, focusing especially on the pedagogical components involved in transforming children’s participation from interviewees to interviewers.

## **II. Pedagogy and/as Methodology**

During my first months of fieldwork at Fundación Crecer, I became very close with the students from the Módulo 2 classroom, as this was the classroom where I spent my mornings. I also developed close relationships with the Módulo 4 students, as I started teaching them English before the end of my first full month of fieldwork. Because the students had fun learning and participating in these classes, Hólger, Carmen, Tito, and Kaín often found me when I first arrived in the mornings to tell me that their teacher had approved an extra class for the day; or, to tell me that she had not approved it and that I could try to convince her. Their teacher took advantage of our rapport, at times, and left the kids behind to spend time with her friends: one of the psychologists and the principal. One morning, she asked me to sit with her students while they worked on a handwriting assignment, because she had something urgent to attend to. I later found out that this “urgent matter” was giving the principal a manicure.

The kids enjoyed being “left behind” with me, and, in this way, we began building our rapport. Learning English was something they looked forward to, and the kids from the other módulos became jealous that they were not allowed to have English classes, too. In the cafeteria, kids would approach me while producing nonsense words and sounds, telling me that they could also speak English. Milton did this the most. The principal decided that the younger grades were too busy with other activities to add an English class. I identified these “other activities” as

busy work that was not motivating the students or making them excited about learning: copying words from the chalkboard and writing the numbers from 1-100 were the major activities of the Módulo 2 students, for example.

Because I worked with JJ every morning, he would look through the photocopies I carried with me for my English classes and ask me about them. He asked me several questions one day about the maps and was fascinated as I showed him where Ecuador was in relation to other places; he studied my finger as I traced the directions of North, South, East and West. He told me that Las Malvinas, where he lived, was South. Several days later, JJ told me about a commercial he had seen on Direct TV. He was trying to be discrete about his excitement, as he told me that he saw a device that showed direction. I quickly realized he was describing a compass.

Because the yellow auditorium was always empty, I asked the principal if I could use that space for our English classes so that I could set up the desks and the activities before the students came in. With a big, rowdy group of 12 to 18 year-olds who I noticed had short attention spans, a tendency to fight and argue amongst themselves, and a tendency to challenge the rules, classroom management was crucial. My personal strategy for establishing classroom management was having everything set up and ready so that students knew exactly what to do and where to go as they entered the room; just like in our group interviews and workshops, I avoided “free time,” and was always prepared for those who might finish earlier than others. Having our own classroom brought us closer together as a group. This was our space. Carmen’s group – Australia – was seated next to the door, and she smacked her cousin, Milton, one day when he tried to sneak into our class. Módulo 4 was conscious that this was a privileged space – they acknowledged that learning English was an important opportunity, as the following year

they would start high school where their classmates had already been studying English for several years; their first year of high school, in the U.S., is equivalent to the eighth grade. Additionally, they knew that the other students at the Fundación also wanted to have an English class in the Yellow Auditorium. Milton was not the only one who would take strategic bathroom breaks during our classes.

Marita, Módulo 4's teacher, became annoyed when the students asked her what time it was and if it was time for English. I was just as disappointed as the students one day when she cancelled our class. She said they were too busy with their own curriculum for an extra-curricular activity. The English classes were solely for enrichment purposes, and while I gave them grades, these were symbolic and not part of their transcript. That day, Hólger told me that she was angry because Tito kept asking her what time it was and if they could leave early for English. Marita observed parts of our classes, surprised that students with behavior problems, like Carmen and Jota, were engaged and responsive. One afternoon, she told me that I was lucky Carmen liked me, but that it might not last long.<sup>32</sup>

Because my relationship with the children began in the classroom as their teacher, and because I was a high school teacher in urban Chicago before training as an anthropologist, I am heavily invested in innovative pedagogies, which I have employed throughout the research process with the children. Pedagogy, then, in this project has taken the form of the more

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<sup>32</sup> In Chicago, I was the Foreign Language Department Chair at a charter school and also trained and evaluated new teachers, beginning at the end of my first year. I was, thus, very observant of the teacher behavior at the Fundación and disappointed by the commonalities with Chicago Public Schools. Often, teachers "led" their classrooms by assigning busy work and sitting behind a desk with a cell phone or a computer, shouting at the kids if there was any type of disruption. These were the models I aimed to work against when Victoria and I led the Fundación's new project, starting in April of 2013. Certainly, the Fundación was an amazing space for the kids and their families because it was a space where they received support: food, counseling, medical referrals, and a community of friends; but, the children were not receiving a quality education. They were inundated with busy work that tested the same skill sets, without moving them forward. By the time I arrived, however, the teachers were fairly certain that the Fundación was going to close and that they needed to find new jobs. They were indifferent.

traditional teacher-student relationship in our English classroom at the Fundación; it has also been present through out interviews, as the children have been my teachers, sharing their experiences, ideas, and opinions with me. And, as part of the workshops, in particular, I have directly taught the children about the research process, especially research methods and methodologies. From there, we collaborated, designing part of a project the children led in their own neighborhoods. Through all of these instances, I specifically draw upon those pedagogies

that build on the knowledge, strengths, expertise, and realities that students bring with them, pedagogies that push students and educators to see the surrounding world with a more critical eye, and to take actions that will somehow make this world more equal, just, and democratic. [Walsh 1996:228]

As the reflections of the children demonstrate in this chapter and throughout this dissertation, our conversations and interactions as research collaborators pushed us all to think more critically about our ideas, opinions, and experiences in relation to the rest of Guayaquil, especially underscoring the segregation facing poor and black people from the barrios (see Chapter 6). We asked and answered questions about next steps, focusing not only on what the challenges might be, but on how they could be addressed. Through teacher's eyes, I saw how the children's participation in the interviews and workshops further developed their conversation and listening skills, reading and writing skills, and critical-thinking skills. In the process, they have also developed a better understanding of my role as an anthropologist. Because I have been their English teacher, their tutor, and their student, it is easy for them to forget that I am also an anthropologist who is writing about this research. The collaborative nature of the project and the methods and methodologies workshops, in particular, have encouraged the children to remain attentive to my role as an anthropologist in their lives; by incorporating them, too, into the writing process, this has further emphasized how what we have learned becomes transposed into a dissertation. Transparency lends itself to deeper understanding and open dialogue, leading



toward the decolonization of the research process for all participants, including the researcher.

*Cultivating Research Pedagogies with Adolescents: Created Spaces, Engaged Participation, and Embodied Inquiry* (2015), has been the first published research project in anthropology that I have come across that similarly explores the importance of combining research and pedagogy with kids, calling for “the development of research spaces that are also teaching spaces... We argue for the importance of bringing a pedagogical lens to research methodologies” (Wissman, Staples, Vasudevan, and Nichols 2015:186). These educational anthropologists are teacher-researchers, and their projects are classroom-centered, with a focus on children’s literacy. They are interested in “litscapes,” which are literary projects through which the kids “construct their own narratives while making sense of those that surround them” (194). Just as they describe their own roles as teachers and researchers as “hybridized” (192), they also emphasize their students’ multiple roles:

In our roles as literacy researchers, we often find ourselves ‘working the hyphens’ (Fine 1994) between our fluid roles as teachers and researchers, as participants and observers...the youth with whom we work also inhabit multiple roles. [189]

I think this is a critical observation about the ways in which we are situated in the research project, as we are all inhabiting various positions across our interactions and collaboration. Additionally, I find strength in these changing relationships, as they allow us to see the research project – and to see each other – from many angles; these become critical vantage points that allow us all to think and consider more holistically.

Wissman *et al.* describe “the intentional creation of a research space in which participants entered through modes including, but also other than, writing and speaking, such as through photography, video making, drawing, drama, and more” (194). While their research with their students took place in the classroom as a means of experimenting with various modes of self-

expression, their reflections are pertinent to my own work in that my research collaborators also participated and contributed to the project in a variety of ways. This multi-modal paradigm has allowed my own collaborators to express themselves and to think critically about their ideas and opinions, as they answered, asked, and drafted questions and considerations. In their research, Wissman *et al.* reflect on students' evaluation and interpretation of their peers' work, describing the leadership skills that they developed as well as

establishing their own pedagogy through which varying views of reading and writing were affirmed, questioned, challenged, and established...they also broadened their understandings of relationships between images and ideas while developing ways of representing thinking in innovative ways. [2015:192]

In my own research, I have enjoyed seeing the varying planes in which pedagogy functions in a teacher-student-collaborator triad. After learning about the research process by participating as interviewees, as collaborators by writing and asking questions, and as designers and leaders by drafting and crafting interviews as part of a larger project, the kids learn, while also reaching a point where they can teach. Kids developed their own pedagogy, as they led interviews, crafted questions, and taught neighbors about the research process, in their own words, before engaging in hours of interviews.

The spaces in which children developed and applied their own pedagogy ranged from food courts to their neighborhoods. I appreciate Wissman *et al.*'s emphasis on space and their commitment to conducting ethnography "in spaces of our own making, in collaboration with adolescents, and with fine-grained attention to the in-the-moment cultural productions and learning within those spaces" (187). While educational anthropologists generally reflect on teaching and learning practices by researching within school settings, my interest in education is different. Although I am also a teacher, my research in the non-profit school setting was not centered around teaching and learning practices. The school was more of a space through which

to meet the children. It was when we left the Fundación that the educational component became more central, as we began learning from each other and collaborating with each other on this research project. In *Immigrant Students and Literacy: Reading, Writing, and Remembering*, teacher-researcher Gerald Campano (2007) focuses on improving the educational experiences of Filipino American students through a collaborative learning environment in which the teacher also actively engages in his students' communities and incorporates students' cultural history to structure curriculum and teaching methods; he refers to the "second classroom" as a space that is created through the collaboration of the teacher and the student. Our "second classroom" was largely in the city's food courts, which is where our interviews began and where we started collaborating intentionally on this research project.

Through her own research, Wissman

documented and analyzed the students' persistent efforts to use literacy and artistic practices to pursue self-definition, to seek social justice, and to re-imagine an in-school space as one welcoming of their out of school experiences (Wissman 2007, 2011). In this way, the created space in this research has resonance with bell hooks's notion of 'radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world' (1990:153). [Wissman, Staples, Vasudevan, Nichols 2015:191]

Our created space has been important in moving this research project forward, but has also proven to be an important space in which the children have new roles as intelligent and capable thinkers and leaders. Through these interview and conversation spaces and the relationships the kids developed with me and their peer group, we were all able to both articulate our ideas, questions, life stories, and opinions in relation to pertinent issues of everyday life, poverty, and injustice. The children referred to these spaces in which we were together in the name of research, as "las entrevistas" [the interviews]; the mothers referred to them the same way, though some, like Jaqui and Norma, also categorized them as "las clases de inglés" [the English classes].

Women would call me when they felt too much time had passed to ask when I was going to offer my classes to their children. I told them that they were conversations and that I was the main one learning from their kids, reminding them always of the official presentation in which I explained the research project that they signed off on. I asked Tito and Kaín one day why their mother kept asking about the English classes. Tito said that he told them some of the things we discussed and that we were learning about race and racism (see Chapter 6). Since I was the English teacher at the Fundación, they combined all of this information into “the English classes.”

Through these “English classes,” the children and I embarked upon topics and discussions whose content reflected their own critical thinking about their communities and their city and the need for change. Their questions (Figures 5-14) demonstrate some of their analytical reflections. Abraham P. DeLeon and E. Wayne Ross’s edited volume, *Critical Theories, Radical Pedagogies, and Social Education: New Perspectives for Social Studies Education*, focuses on using critical pedagogies in Social Studies education to empower students to think beyond textbooks and, instead, to think of how they can apply what they learn to improve their society (see also Walsh 1996). These lessons, in particular, form part of the “anarchist theory” that DeLeon introduces, which positions “our research and classroom practices as acts of resistance to the current status quo” (2010:1). DeLeon emphasizes that critical pedagogy is not enough, as it “needs to be infused with anarchist notions of direct action and critiques of the State” (2010:1-2). The editors refer to educational philosophers, like John Dewey and Paulo Freire, emphasizing that through their work, “educators...are similarly charged with facilitating a critically engaged public and providing empowering educational experiences for their students” (2010:xi). I reflect on our interactions in our “second classroom” as manifestations of critical pedagogies in which the children asked and answered questions related

to everyday life in the shantytowns and in Guayaquil; certainly, their interventions were cognizant and critical of State actions, primarily of State inaction.

In an interview with Alex and Milton, for example, I asked: ¿Si ustedes fueran el alcalde de Guayaquil, qué harían?” [If you were the mayor of Guayaquil, what would you do?]. Milton responded: “Primero, arreglar las calles – poner a los niños que están en la calle en la escuela, hacerlos estudiar” [First, fix the streets – put the kids that are on the street in school, make them study]. But you liked it when you worked, I replied, to which he said: “No, pero ya no” [No, but not anymore]. Alex said, “Yo acabaría con la violencia – acabaría con los pobres” [I would put an end to the violence – put an end to the poor]. How? I asked him: “darle más trabajo” [give them more work], he concluded. Milton added on to his friend’s idea: “Primeramente, que le den trabajo, que lo aseguren – porque a mi mamá antes de morir la jefa le dijo que la iba a asegurar, que la iba a asegurar, y nunca la aseguró. Nunca más violencia” [First of all, give them work, give them (health) insurance – because my mom before she died, her boss told her she was going to give her insurance, she was going to give her insurance, and she never insured her. No more violence ever]. The “social studies education” these boys spoke from was grounded in their own lives. Based on their experiences and through our research spaces, they articulated their ideas of how things could change. Milton said that everything was good about Guayaquil, except for the violence: “A mí me gusta todo, pero no me gusta la violencia” [I like everything, but I don’t like the violence]. He made an interesting observation, acknowledging that “hay personas que son malas” [there are people who are bad]; but, he went on, saying that they could become good: “si ponen el 50 por ciento y le piden a Diosito que ponga el otro 50” [if they give fifty percent and ask God to put in the other 50].

In this research project, “pedagogy” moves beyond the art of teaching and emerges as a collaborative practice that works against oppression and toward positive social change (e.g., Freire 1970). Pedagogy has emerged as a critical building block of this research project and has allowed us to engage one another, to ask questions, and to (re)consider our social positioning in relation to Guayaquil’s socio-spatial exclusions. By reflecting on our social positions, we have moved beyond lamentations of the many challenges facing those growing up in the city, emphasizing, in particular, how children, through the knowledge and strength they draw from their social positions, can find ways to channel this power and work toward positive changes. In her edited volume *Pedagogías decoloniales: Prácticas insurgentes de resistir, (re) existir, y (re) vivir*, Catherine Walsh (2013) draws on the work of Freire and Fanon, insisting that pedagogies function as “prácticas insurgentes” [insurgent practices] that challenge the traditional status quo, as DeLeon (2010) explains, and our rooted within the communities seeking change. For Walsh, pedagogies as insurgent practices “agrietan la modernidad/colonialidad y hacen posible maneras muy otras de ser, estar, pensar, saber, sentir, existir, y vivir-con” (2013:19) [crack open modernity/coloniality and make possible other ways of being, thinking, knowing, feeling, existing, and living-with]. Walsh emphasizes the importance of projects that arise *from* and *with* the communities, not solely from enclosed academic spaces. This research project is an important contribution to this critical shift in research in which pedagogy emerges as a methodology of collaboration, resistance, and strength that privileges other ways of experiencing and considering life. Through this chapter, I provide examples of the ways in which the children collaborated as researchers within their own neighborhoods, drawing on our workshops, the knowledge I shared about conducting research, and on their own instincts as critical thinkers and members of the communities where they conducted research. Their own level of “insurgency”

also emerges in some of their actions, as they resist pre-established research guidelines, finding what makes the most sense in their opinions.

### ***Ethics, Pedagogy, and Child Participation***

In 2014, I presented a conference paper at The 10<sup>th</sup> Joint Area Centers Symposium: Children and Globalization--Issues, Policies and Initiatives at The University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. I discussed my research methods and methodologies, and as part of the discussion following my panel, an anthropologist questioned the validity of a research project that combines research and pedagogy. Instead of decolonizing the research process, she saw a teaching relationship as creating a hierarchy, fomenting the idea of the colonizer “civilizing” or “teaching” the colonized. Part of my attempt to decolonize the research process does not involve erasing or denying my own role as the researcher (and, at times, the teacher); that is why I emphasize the collaboration. As an adult and a scholar, I do have tools and skills that I can teach children to support and propel them as they continue to mature and develop their own critical thinking and research skills. By engaging in this way, pedagogy allows the children to acquire a skill set, bolstered by their own experiences, opinions, and ideas, and participate in the research project as protagonists. Additionally, the teaching is not one-sided, and this is something we have all come to understand and that I hope to relay through this dissertation by presenting the importance of children’s participation:

Through foregrounding pedagogy, we see the importance of decentering the researcher’s gaze, of embracing uncertainty and humility, and of taking seriously adolescents as thoughtful, creative, knowledgeable people, seeking community and seeking meaning. [Wissman, Staples, Vasudevan, Nichols 2015:195]

I believe that the research process is a learning process and that making the research process as transparent as possible for children – which is an essential ethical matter, too – necessarily involves creating a kind of workshop dynamic for all participants. Particularly at the beginning

of my interactions with the children, the interviews constituted a pedagogical moment as the children were especially curious about the types of questions I was asking and why I wanted to know their stories. When our interviews focused on issues of race, for example, children often had history questions for me and used the opportunity – one they rarely have in their classes of 50-plus students or in their homes – to gain knowledge and information on topics they were also interested in, but knew little about.<sup>33</sup>

Research ethics have long been a concern of ethnographers; the American Anthropological Association promotes a “Do no harm” philosophy and institutions, like the IRB, approve projects based on protecting those involved, especially the research participants.<sup>34</sup> In Childhood Studies, “Calls for Papers” and conferences emphasize that the connection between ethics and Childhood Studies is largely under-studied; these “Calls” question what ethics and girlhood, boyhood, or childhood look like and what ethical frameworks should be created when studying children. The UNCRC (1989) emphasized the centrality of children in determining their own rights and responsibilities, which led to a scholarly trend for research with children to be “collaborative” by exploring how policy influenced children’s wellbeing. Czymoniewicz-Klippel (2009) offers a comprehensive review of the changing focus of childhood-based research, starting with Hardman’s (1973) *Can There Be an Anthropology of Children?* (see also Skelton (2008) who provides an overview of the changes brought about by the “‘new’ social studies of childhood” (26)). This focus on rights, extended to the research process itself by encouraging child-based projects to promote the same UNCRC philosophies on “children’s right

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<sup>33</sup> In Chapter 6, I describe the children’s findings from the interviews they led in their neighborhoods about their neighbors’ ideas on race and racism.

<sup>34</sup> Part of this protection involves measuring the benefits versus the risks for study participants. The University of Michigan’s IRB, for example, assesses benefit versus risk by asking if children will gain more from the experience than what they could lose. I believe that the collaborative spirit of my own research has provided children with enormous benefits, polishing their own critical thinking and leadership skills and, in the process, giving them more confidence in school and in their everyday lives.



to express their views about matters affecting their everyday lives” (Bell 2008:9); in effect, “researchers acquire an ethical duty to ensure that children have the right to express their views about the research process itself” (Bell 2008:10). Certainly, this marked an important shift in research with children by allowing kids not only to present their opinions on their everyday lives, but also to react to the research process.

Reminding me of my own research experiences working with kids, Skelton (2008) emphasizes that in her work, her young participants felt like they were finally able to share their ideas with an interested listener: “For many young people these interviews were the longest period of time they had had the chance to talk with an interested listener about themselves, their identity and their socio-spatial experiences” (32). Skelton critiques the UK ethics board through which she receives approval, stating that “ethics” are adult-centered, which goes against the push of scholars of childhood to make their work child-centered. She submits:

It is therefore important to consider ethics in a holistic way so that ethical research practice is expanded beyond the notion only of the appropriate place for research or the centrality of adult consent but to ask bigger questions about social justice and changing young people’s and children’s lives for the better. [Skelton 2008:32]

In this way, then, Skelton views the power of the research as a major driving force of ethical considerations, as research can work toward positive changes in children’s lives. While this mentality remains adult-centric in that the adult researcher is the one who can visualize the impact of the research, I think, again, that a collaborative frame in which the children are participating in guiding the project by determining the questions and the interview structures, does allow for an ethical framework in which the children themselves conclude what the parameters should be. Pedagogical elements, then, should be infused into the methodology so that children can learn how to devise a project and how powerful a project can be before they determine which questions they want to ask and how they want to introduce these.

Before becoming an anthropologist, I was a high-school teacher, and my collaborative and pedagogical approaches to research are certainly rooted in my teaching experience. I believe these horizontal approaches applied to fieldwork enhance the research relationship and, in the process, enhance what we are all able to learn from each other. By combining collaboration and pedagogy, this methodology has made possible a project whose questions are relevant and interesting to all of us, making it meaningful and valuable to the communities we work with. Additionally, the transparency of the research process that is offered through collaboration and through workshops makes this project one that we can all trust and become invested in as we think toward future possibilities for community-building projects and initiatives.

### **Part III: Love and Anthropology in Guayaquil's Barrios**

Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995) who comes to realize she can be both an ethnographer and a *companheira* in Brazil, emphasizes a central question the women from the community asked her: "What is anthropology to us anyway?" (411). By deciding to describe their project as having an impact on municipal decision-making, Kaín and Tito considered the same question, asking themselves how they could present the project so that it would matter to their neighbors. If anthropologists seek to work toward decolonizing the discipline, the main question that should drive any research proposal and any fieldwork decision is how and why anthropology is going to be relevant to the people with whom one chooses to work. As part of the decolonizing project, research agendas should be created *with* "informants" whose role shifts into one of *companheiro*, as research becomes a collaborative process.

A decolonization project of research methods and methodologies involves being critical not only of what and how we write, but of how we do research. Why we shape projects and incorporate people into the project in different ways is part of an essential critical thinking

component of the research design. Because methods and methodologies are often under-analyzed and clumped together as one, anthropologists lose sight of the theoretical potential inherent in creating research methods and methodologies; and, they lose sight of the strength of theoretical and engaged possibilities of collaborative ethnography.

In this world in which there was literally not a word for who I was and what I was doing there (“antropólogo” was not a word in Spanish, as Jefferson and JJ assured me), I came to learn first-hand the importance and power of collaboration. Our collaboration allowed for transparency and the development of skills so that kids, too, could participate as researchers. While the other chapters reflect more specifically on what I learned as a product of the methods and methodologies that guided this project, this chapter has aimed at analyzing the research process. As a project framed around a methodology of collaboration, parts of the project progressed naturally and as determined by the participants: ripping pieces of paper from my planner to write questions, holding interviews with mothers and grandmothers, and deciding children would work to create and lead interviews with their neighbors. Through the children’s participation as interviewers, for example, I learned how they assume their voice as researchers, constructing and embracing their own content and ethics-based criteria. A methodology, then, that fuses collaboration and pedagogy, has allowed us to work together to decolonize ethnographic research by creating a project whose flexibility, sensitivity, and responsiveness to various needs and interventions has been able to gather data – to learn – from a vantage point of deeply knowing and caring.

Anthropologist Virginia Dominguez (2000) in her article, *For a Politics of Love and Rescue*, encourages evaluating ethnographic projects differently by employing the following criteria: “genuine love, respect and affection...Love, yes, love – the thing most of us are not

open about in our scholarly writing, the kind most of us have been professionally socialized into excising from our scholarly writing” (365). She argues that readers can uncover the validity and superficiality of ethnographic pursuits, including identifying those projects aligned with goals of “salvage ethnography” and those that boast “giving voice” to the voiceless, among others (366-367). Dominguez challenges ethnographers to notice and to think critically about “love” across the research process and to explore the ways it influences our work:

It is important that we all pay attention to the presence or absence of love and affection in our scholarship – at all stages of the production of our scholarship. If it is not there, it is important to ask ourselves why and what we should do about it. If it is there, we owe it to our readers to show it, to enable them to evaluate its role in the nature of our work [388]

In my own research, love has shaped the nature of the project. While our collaboration cemented the strength of our relationships, the growing bonds and affection between my collaborators and myself have made me more critical of the ways I write about them and our time together. Additionally, the children and women with whom I have worked have been the biggest sources of feedback on this text, playing an active role in resisting generics and determining whether their stories and the ways I choose to frame them are effective, in their opinions. They are excited and baffled by the fact that I have been interested enough in their lives and their communities to write about them. And, they strive to make sure that I get it right so that others who read it can know the way things really are for them; they are convinced that those from other social classes in Guayaquil are completely unaware of (and indifferent to) their lived experiences. They are most invested in having these groups as our readers, in addition to their excitement that people from the United States will contemplate their stories and their worlds.

Through this ethnography of collaboration, this dissertation shows how relationships to places and to people shape childhood, and ultimately argues that in coming to understand how children grow up in the shantytowns and how they perceive childhood, we are learning about everyday life in Guayaquil. What we are learning about everyday racism and classism calls into question what it means, too, for the future of a city whose socio-spatial segregation is so deeply ingrained in the minds and bodies of all children such that their imaginations are either limited or limitless. Through pedagogy, the level of collaboration the children and I engaged in has promoted their confidence and encouraged them to imagine and to consider their futures from a more hopeful and more ambitious standpoint.

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*Milton says goodbye to the recorder and assumes the role of a radio DJ.*

*“Bueno, ya aquí me despido. Gracias, Señora Alysya – estaba la comida para chuparse los dedos. Me llamo Milton Gerardo Pavón Quiñonez.”*

*He continues saying his name several times, as he gives a farewell address, rapper-style.*

*“Si necesitan una música, me llaman a la casa de mi tío nada más.”*

*He continues saying his goodbyes into the voice recorder.*

*“Aquí me despido. Ya me voy a mi casa a dormir. Bueno, a dormir no, a jugar Bingo, a ganarle a esa gente. Bueno chao chao, bye bye, besos y saludos para toda la gente por allá.”*

*[Well, now I will say goodbye – thank you Mrs. Alysya – the food was finger-licking good. My name is Milton Gerardo Pavón Quiñonez (repeats his name several times and begins talking into the voice recorder as a rapper). If you need any music, just call me at my uncle’s house. (Again, he keeps saying goodbye and mentioning his full name, so people will know who to ask for).*

*Well, now I will say goodbye – I am going to my house to sleep – well, actually not to sleep, but to play Bingo and beat all those people. Well goodbye, bye bye (he says “bye bye” in English), kisses and greetings for all the people over there (he means the U.S.A., where I’m from; this is the audience he directly addresses as he concludes his interview)].*

**Chapter 3**  
**“No es un barrio, es un mundo” [It is not a neighborhood, it’s a world of its own]:**  
**The Barrios as Guayaquil’s Historical Narrative**

On a Friday afternoon at Fundación Crecer, after an hour-long soccer match, I sat in the Yellow Auditorium with a group of four teenaged boys to play Monopoly. It was August and the weather was transitioning, leaving behind the cooler days of summer. As I organized the money and properties into piles, I told the group about the weekend-long Monopoly games I used to play with my childhood best friend. They laughed at how excited I was to see Marvin Gardens and Park Place again after so many years. They imitated my pronunciation and made fun of each other as they fumbled through these English words. “*Par - play*,” Lucho said slowly and loudly in Jairo’s face, attempting to correct his brother’s pronunciation. He felt confident instructing them, since he was the only one there from my English class.

Our set-up was prolonged, as they pointed to properties on the board – “¡jeste, este!” [this one, this one] – prompting me to say that name in English so they could repeat it. The person who donated this Monopoly game had combined property cards from two different versions, and I was sorting out the duplicates. Deciding to test another language acquisition skill as part of the set-up, I said the names of the duplicate cards and the boys looked across the board and pointed to the one they thought they heard. Darío was the main one helping me organize, and he brought me playing pieces from other games that were on the black plastic shelves across the room. We had to improvise since several things were missing from ours.

It was after three o’clock, and the Fundación was going to close in about an hour. I told them we could keep practicing the names as we bought properties. It was rare to have the

Yellow Auditorium to ourselves, and I wanted to take advantage of the opportunity for this group of kids to engage in something different from the larger group activities and homework assignments that regularly structured our time together at the non-profit. Accordingly, I began explaining the rules and handing out the money. I hoped no one would need too much change, since we were low on ones, fives, and tens. The donated game didn't come with directions, but I sorted based on what I remembered and how much money we had to work with.

As I sorted and explained, I noticed that the boys, somewhat surreptitiously, were taking houses and hotels and hiding them. I stopped and made them empty their pockets, explaining that they didn't even have properties on which to put their houses or hotels. "They're for later," Lucho explained, laughing at my incredulous expression when Jairo dumped a handful of green and red pieces back into the box. I emphasized that we were a small group and would notice if they suddenly had a hotel on their property without having paid for it. But, they were planning ahead, apparently, and had confidence in their stealth. Houses and hotels continued to disappear before we even started playing.

They argued over who was going to go first, second, third, and so on. I insisted on going clockwise in our turn-taking, which was a difficult concept for them to grasp. Lucho, who was going to go fifth, tried to negotiate the order. I couldn't help but laugh as he attempted to justify why he should go second; he recognized that he did not merit the first turn, as Cristián rolled the highest number. I didn't change my mind, though I was highly amused and sufficiently distracted that I likely gave some boys more money than others. I never was a very good banker.

Since this day marked approximately 20 years since my last Monopoly game, I was struck by how inexpensive everything seemed. I wanted to think aloud about how the newer versions of Monopoly likely have steeper prices, but I kept the thought to myself when I realized

these boys were hesitant to spend their money. We had gone around the board once, and I was the only property owner. Their own mentalities from their everyday lives influenced their performance in this game; they told me they were waiting and saving when I encouraged them to buy. “What are you saving for? It’s just Monopoly!” I exclaimed. Cristián noticed that the prices got more expensive as they went around, and Lucho made jokes about the “millonarios” [millionaires] who lived on the blue and green side, looking at me and announcing he was going to be my neighbor. He poked fun at Cristián, telling him that Baltic Ave. was on the North Side of the board, where la Flor de Bastión – Cristián’s neighborhood – was located. Cristián was quick to respond that Lucho and Jairo were only a couple of spaces over, since they, too, lived North.

As they began buying, each turn consisted of one of the boys trying to negotiate the price: “Indiana Avenue costs \$180, but I’ll give you \$150.” At one point, when I didn’t accept Lucho’s offer, he told his friends that if I wasn’t going to accept the deal, they would simply take the route of the “invasores,” the squatters. Lucho kept us laughing throughout the game. When they landed on each other’s properties, they always tried to pay less and made deals, giving \$14 instead of \$16 for the rent and returning the favor of the reduced rate on their own rentals. They kept their money on their laps and in their pockets, not on the table. Nevertheless, their friends were still somehow able to steal their Monopoly bills. As they bought, sold, and traded, they folded the bills and concealed them in a handshake with their “business partner.”

They called each other “socio” – a term used for a business associate or a partner – and referred to me as “socia” as they negotiated new deals with each roll of the dice. Since I was the banker, they often asked me for loans – they are used to working with *chulqueros* [loan sharks] afterall. “You don’t need a loan!” I told them. “You have plenty of money.” “No,” Cristián



insisted at one point, promising to pay me back after two more rounds. Three rounds max. He would even pay \$1 interest per round, he added, to help promote his deal.

We had a great time playing Monopoly. They never hesitated to make jokes about who they were “just visiting” when they landed on the jail spot. They enjoyed the idea of buying and owning properties and then building their houses. They joked about whether their house was made of wood or of cement and whether the tarp roof would let in the rainwater. And when I asked Darío what he was saving for, he said he wanted to purchase tile for the floors of the houses he was going to buy. “There’s no tile to purchase in this game,” I told him; he responded with a wink and told me it didn’t matter. An element of imagination, influenced by these boys’ own life experiences, added an interesting twist to the Monopoly of my childhood.

In this chapter, I present the histories of Guayaquil’s barrios, drawing on some of the same themes the boys began exposing me to when we played Monopoly: squatting, taking out loans, building houses of caña versus cement, and being situated on the city’s perimeter. I focus these histories on the experiences of the women who built and who lead these neighborhood communities; throughout these discussions and to conclude this chapter, I also describe children’s everyday experiences in their barrios – sometimes at play and sometimes reflecting on their opportunities for play, as these instances are revealing of everyday social relations and expectations. This group of boys and the other kids I work with rarely play board games, especially ones that require so many steps and so much coordination. These are not games they have in their homes. In their neighborhoods, they play Bingo and have raffles to raise money for various causes.<sup>35</sup> While Bingo and raffles are activities that bring together the whole block, when they are with their friends, aside from playing soccer, the kids play card and dice games or

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<sup>35</sup> These causes are primarily medical treatments for neighbors. I often buy raffle tickets for one family from la Flor de Bastión, a northern barrio; their daughter has a rare blood condition that requires transfusions.

marble and coin-based betting games. When they do play their own games, like *Bolicha*, they have fun, but they take them quite seriously since real money is involved. Their actual bets are framed differently from the playful jokes and strategies surrounding the Monopoly money. Still, their approach to Monopoly, albeit playful, reflects their notion of how things work in their real world: conducting discrete monetary transactions, negotiating prices, obtaining loans, and even appropriating properties informally. Children in the barrios are all-too-familiar with the “invasores,” just as Lucho reminded his friends during a plot to claim the orange properties by squatting.

By describing the settlement of the southern, northern, and eastern poles of the city, I share excerpts of Guayaquilean history as constructed by those who physically built their homes in the city’s “no man’s land.” These discussions involve analyses of Guayaquil’s spatial distribution and organization of homes, buildings, businesses, and people, and of Guayaquil’s history of migration and of social exclusions and discrimination. These discussions are necessary to properly frame the everyday lives of children and families in the shantytowns, as it is the stories and experiences from this community of people that guide this dissertation.

The histories presented in this chapter are centered upon the perspectives of the women who founded their shantytown neighborhoods, drawing connections between these accounts and newspaper accounts that reflect on when and how these neighborhoods were created. These histories alongside children’s understandings of and experiences living in the barrios demonstrate how these spaces are always being constructed and learned by those growing up there. Histories of Guayaquil from the second half of the twentieth century focus on urban renewal projects [“la regeneración urbana”] leading into the new millennium (e.g., Andrade 2005; Garcés 2004). Understanding barrios as worlds of their own allows the histories of

Guayaquil's shantytowns to serve as a historical narrative of the entire city – a history that draws from the city's poorest sectors versus from the official histories advertised by the Municipality.

This chapter moves us from the South Side, to the North, to the East, and ends with some of the children's reflections on their experiences growing up in their barrios. Cristi's voice – from the southern barrio, la Isla Trinitaria – closes this chapter, underscoring how, from a young age, children are aware of the magnitude of the barrios: at 10-years-old, Cristi already identified her neighborhood as a world of its own. Indeed, through women's stories of founding and leading their barrios over decades, I show how these neighborhood communities stand-alone. Their beginnings are founded upon exclusions, as the poorest Guayaquileños and migrants were pushed out of the city toward the periphery to build their homes above swamps. Still today, barrio residents fight so that their homes and communities are recognized and granted Municipal services and support accordingly. The world of the barrios, thus, represents the social and spatial exclusions that categorize Guayaquil. They highlight the power discrepancies and how power is exercised against poor people from the barrios through local crime bosses and police. They also, however, represent the power of the people from the barrios as they have protagonized the construction and forward progress of their neighborhoods, establishing spaces of strength where they raise their children and support their families.

Didier Fassin (2013) contemplates the relationship between ethnography and contemporary society and the responsibilities and possibilities of ethnographers to influence what and how information reaches the public sphere. In one of the examples he draws from his own ethnographic writing, he says, "It is far from the dramatic events that are the only facts of the life of these neighborhoods coming to the surface of the public sphere. What I described was the banal routine of policing" (633). He makes this statement when describing a scene from his

book that, compared to the others, is “quite benign: no brutality, no insults, no racist comments, no unjust arrests” (633). In this chapter and throughout this dissertation, I also aim to select not only banal moments that are reflective of everyday life, but also of happy moments, as the kids compete in Bolicha, play Monopoly at the Fundación, ride bikes along their street, and swim in “el salado.” These are not the “dramatic events” that characterize how the shantytowns are perceived in Guayaquil. Alongside shantytown histories told by shantytown residents, which are not always benign or polite, I intend for the humanity and happiness that also characterize life in these sectors to shine. And, of course, I hope to portray the courageous efforts of women who are leaders for their families and households and for their communities, and whose courage is banal in that, for them, it is not courage, it is the manner in which they live their everyday lives. These are the ways they must proceed for their wellbeing and for their families’ survival and success.

### **Part I: “Invasión” as Expansion, “Invasión” as Exclusion: Understanding Guayaquil through the Formation of the City’s Barrios**

Guayaquil is a city founded upon “invasiones,” whose literal meaning, “invasions,” refers to squatting or informal land appropriation [“asentamientos informales”]. In his 2005 article in Guayaquil’s premier newspaper, *El Universo*, José Olmos refers to “invasiones” as part of the “desarrollo poblacional de Guayaquil. La historia de la urbe está ligada a esta actividad” [populational development of Guayaquil. The history of the city is connected with this activity]. Lands were appropriated illegally as the city expanded, first toward the South (especially in the 1950s and 60s) and then toward the North (1980s). “Invasiones” and land trafficking mark the stories of those families who live in Guayaquil’s barrios. The traffickers and the dreamers, as Olmos identifies them, have worked to co-create these informal settlements: “...quienes viven de negociar terrenos marginales y de aquellos que los compran, concretando su deseo de tener un

techo” [those who live from negotiating these marginal lands and those who buy them, realizing their dream of having a roof (over their heads)]. These groups rely on each other, in a symbiotic relationship, because of the city’s failure to create public housing options, especially in light of growing migration to Guayaquil.<sup>36</sup> As Guayaquil’s Director of Urban Development, Architect Guillermo Argüello Santos spoke about the continued invasions at a forum at the Universidad de Guayaquil titled “Guayaquil frente al futuro – La ciudad que queremos” [Guayaquil facing the future – The city that we want]. Focusing on the informal appropriations between 1980 and 2014, Argüello Santos concluded that the problem of the invasions lies in the fact that there are no other adequate housing options available to “los sectores populares” [the popular sectors / the public / poor sectors]. He is quoted in *El Expreso*: “No es que no haya suelo, lo que pasa es que para que este sirva para ser habitado, debe estar urbanizado” [It’s not that there isn’t space, it’s that for these spaces to be inhabited, they have to be urbanized].<sup>37</sup>

During a small group interview with Hólger, Kaín, and Tito in 2014, I asked the boys to define “invasiones” for me. The consensus, as I wrote in my notes, was that these “invasiones” were: “when no one was there, but the land had an owner and people went there and built their houses there and had their lives there. The land then belonged to them,” they explained, reminding me of the famous Ecuadorian saying that “las cosas no son del dueño si no del que las

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<sup>36</sup> Across interviews and publications, Sociologist Gaitán Villavicencio calls for “un banco de tierra” to regulate the public housing market. Guayaquil, he argues, has never achieved effective policies to address housing shortages, leaving the “invasores,” the most vulnerable sector of the population, easily accessible for the exploitation of land traffickers and the regimes of crime bosses (2011). More specifically, he states: “Entre los años 1950 y 2010 ninguna política de vivienda ha sido eficaz y eficiente, ni ha disminuido el déficit habitacional de Guayaquil, pues existe una lógica superviviente que junta y funcionaliza a traficantes y mafiosos de la tierra, invasores y caudillos, además de los poderes políticos en apogeo en el momento” [Between 1950 and 2010 no housing policy has been effective and efficient, nor has it decreased the housing shortage in Guayaquil; there exists a logic of survival that unifies and functionalizes traffickers and the land trafficking mafia, invaders and political strongmen, in addition to the political powers in control at the moment] (2011:112). He emphasizes the critical need for such policies, particularly on account of Guayaquil’s growing population, which grew 6.6 times between 1950 and 2001, from 258,966 to 1,985,000 (2011:110).

<sup>37</sup> *Diario El Expreso*, 11-June-2014: *Aún no se ‘inventa’ el mecanismo que detenga las invasiones* [Article translation: *They have yet to “invent” the mechanism through which to stop the invasions*].

necesita” [things aren’t of the owner, but of the one who needs them]. I repeated this refrain to them, and Tito’s response was: “Así” [like that].

Alongside the “squatters” are the land traffickers. Elisa – Darío’s mother – called me a couple of nights after my conversation with Hólger and his friends. Like Kaín and Tito, she lives in Durán, a shantytown and a township of Guayaquil on its East Side. She told me that the new mayor of Durán who had recently been elected in February 2014, was going to help her and the others in her sector attain their land titles. She voted for her precisely to receive help with this issue. Elisa and a group of neighbors were pressing charges against the land trafficker who sold them land that did not actually belong to him. Although she lost the \$650 from the down payment, she told me that she didn’t have to pay anything else at that point. She didn’t want to dwell on her loss of that money; she was just going to think of it as though she had been paying rent. She was instructed, in the meantime, to clearly delimit her property as part of the legalization process.

Property in the shantytowns and the ways in which squatting and land trafficking characterize and complicate “ownership” and “rights” demonstrate the choices and precarious positionality offered to the poorest community members of the city: access to the “marginal lands.” As many of the poorest people migrated to Guayaquil from Esmeraldas in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, the label of “invasores” takes on a racial connotation applied to the new Afro-descendants in Guayaquil and also to the others who migrated from rural and highland communities in search of more job opportunities, like Elisa. These groups of people were left with the option to “invade” the least desirable parts of the city’s landscape – the ones that had not yet been “urbanized,” starting with the southern swamplands.

Because squatting and land trafficking in Guayaquil's barrios impact understandings of "ownership" and "rights," the work of political theorists, like John Locke, serve as a starting point through which to understand people's relationships to their land and how labor, consent, and possession inform claims of ownership and rights (e.g., Macpherson 1962; Rose 1994; Tully 1993), particularly in vulnerable contexts created by illegal settlements and land transactions. Locke, for example, emphasizes that man owns his labor, complicating what such ownership represents when it is conducted on lands that one does not legally own. He states:

Every man has property in his own person; this nobody has any right to but himself. The labour of his body and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property...For this labour being the unquestionable property of the labourer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough and as good left in common for others. [1947:134]<sup>38</sup>

While women built bridges and homes on southern swamplands that were not legally theirs, they were owners of their labor – their bridges and homes. Feeling this ownership over the homes and neighborhoods they built, they appropriated the lands as their own as well. But, the presence of traffickers and the Municipality complicated this appropriation. Traffickers took advantage of their vulnerability, knowing the efforts they had put in to creating their homes; they forced them to pay and to put up with the mafia forces that imposed (violent) rules and regulations upon these barrios and their residents. The Municipality largely turned a blind eye to the expansion of these

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<sup>38</sup> Locke's ideals surrounding ownership and appropriation, Macpherson (1962) emphasizes, change when money becomes involved: "What Locke has done, then, is to show that money has made it possible, and just, for a man to accumulate more land than he can use the product of before it spoils" (208). He goes on to conclude that Locke's argument for man's natural right to alienate his own property coincides with a theory of property as "a justification of the natural right not only to unequal property but to unlimited individual appropriation" (221). Tully (1993), in contrast, argues against Macpherson, stating that Locke was aware of the danger presented by money, especially the challenge it presented to equality. Instead of aligning Locke with capitalism, Tully says that "the non-absolutist tradition in which Locke wrote is incompatible with wage labour under capitalism, since the labourer could not alienate his sovereignty over his abilities" (89). Thus, Tully sees Locke's analysis of a pre-capitalist society as one that seeks "to combat – rather than to justify – the degradation of labour in the capitalist division of labour" (89). Amidst varying interpretations of Locke's thesis on property, elements from all of these scholars take their shape in Guayaquil's barrios.

communities, at times asking for proof of ownership (Villavicencio 2011).<sup>39</sup> My research in the barrios coincided with the very public 2013 “desalojamiento” [eviction] from Guayaquil’s northwestern Monte Sinaí neighborhood. Military and police forcibly removed hundreds of families from their homes, which were built upon illegally appropriated lands. The histories of the barrios from this chapter demonstrate the challenges and triumphs of shantytown residents, like Elisa and like the hundreds from Monte Sinaí, who struggle with their dilemma of investing and building their homes and families on land that is not legally theirs.

Michel de Certeau’s “The Practice of Everyday Life” sheds light on the relationship between built environments and the ways in which residents are informed by these landscapes and how, in their everyday actions, they contribute to their formation and to their reinterpretation as they make (metaphorical and physical) spaces for their own existence and their own relevance (and value) within these communities. By physically building their own homes illegally across landscapes that line Guayaquil’s periphery, the invaders – the poor, the black, the Indian, the campesino – have attempted to appropriate spaces for themselves and their families to have a life in Guayaquil. They work as informal vendors, domestic workers, construction workers, security guards, and these jobs are especially relevant to the day-to-day lives of Guayaquileños. Nevertheless, their original steps as invaders always make their belonging illegal and, in the process, make them susceptible to the demands and promises of neighborhood crime bosses who profit from their illegality.

### ***Guayaquil’s Expansion and the Merchants of Urban Poverty***

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<sup>39</sup> Local and national government, however, has invested more attention and resources to prohibit the invasiones over the last ten years. They have created projects, like “Mucho Lote” and “Socio Vivienda,” which are organized neighborhoods intended for the city’s lowest income citizens. These neighborhoods are urbanized in that they have basic services of water and electricity; they even have parks and pools. And, these properties are sold at subsidized prices and residents receive legal property titles.



Guayaquil began expanding toward its swamplands in the 1960s. This southern sector was founded and constructed by migrants from rural communities, primarily Afro-Ecuadorian women from Esmeraldas. The northern shantytowns were founded in the 1980s, and although their history of migration and settlement is different, squatting and land trafficking have largely defined the trajectory of life and community in the South and the North. In the 1960s and 70s, as Guayaquil began expanding, there was an influx of migration, as people moved to the city from rural communities in search of job opportunities, especially with the banana and petroleum boom. During these decades, many of the migrants came from the northern province of Esmeraldas and most of them were of Afro-Ecuadorian descent. Their living conditions on Guayaquil's South-Side were not unlike the homes they left in Esmeraldas, which were also propped up on "caña" [bamboo] above the water. These neighborhoods, still today, have the names that the founders of these shantytown communities gave them years ago, such as "Esmeraldas Libre" [Free Esmeraldas] and "Esmeraldas Chiquita" [Little Esmeraldas].

Over the years, the neighborhoods grew and changed. After decades of injury – and even death – caused by loose pieces of "caña," dilapidated bridges, and falling houses, Guayaquil's Municipality "rellenó" [filled in] the swamp water with "relleno" [filling]; in some sectors, this "relleno" was made of rock and, in others, of sand. During a focus group, one block from "Esmeraldas Libre," the women laughed when Manuela pointed out the window and toward the street corner, exclaiming: "My dishes are buried under there!" Although possessions were lost and houses toppled over as uneven rocky streets replaced bamboo bridges and swamp water, the community welcomed this change. With these changes, came changes to people's houses, too, as they replaced their houses of "caña" with cement ones. Running water replaced "tanqueros" and the electric company entered the sectors to install meters and prohibit people from stealing

power. In many ways, Guayaquil's South Side – and, in the 80s, its North Side – were a “no man's land.” One of the ways in which people refer to these spaces – this “no-man's-land” – is with the phrase: “Sin Dios y sin ley” [without God and without law]; in other words, a space that is simultaneously chaotic, sinful, and ungovernable.

Through their own unlawful practice of governance, neighborhood “dirigentes” [mafia / crime bosses] attempted to create order and justice and to make men pay for their sins. Several people have told me how Jaime Toral, also known as “El Abogado” [The Lawyer], for example, beat any man whose wife complained of abuse; he would ask her how he abused her and have his men inflict the exact same punishment upon him. In this sense, many women have expressed their gratitude for him during interviews and focus groups. Others, however, describe the ways he abused his power, particularly when he ordered his men to kill people who, in several cases, were innocent. With an overcrowded downtown [centro] with prices that exceeded migrants' uncertain income, the South Side provided space that allowed people to make their homes, often surrounded by family and friends who arrived from the same Esmeraldeño communities.

Squatting and land trafficking structured the trajectory of life and community on the South Side. While “officially” overlooked, migrants took advantage and squatted [inviadieron] while others took advantage and sold land that was not actually theirs to sell, as was the case with Elisa. Often, these invasions were layered as families invaded by claiming spaces for their homes, only to be forced out at gunpoint by traffickers who sought to invade and sell the lands themselves. Future groups of invaders, then, had to purchase these lands, often in installments, from the self-proclaimed owners. These shantytowns from their inception in the second half of the twentieth century were founded upon “invasiones” and exploitation, as land traffickers threatened and conned those who sought to build their homes. Buying and selling took on the

form of payment plans, too, and went hand-in-hand with the crime bosses who governed the “no man’s land” in what some describe as a reign of terror. Residents paid for their “right” to the land and to belong to the neighborhood with money, favors, and loyalty.

Although the mafias that governed the sectors were pushed out over the last decade by a special police force (GOE, Grupo de Operaciones Especiales<sup>40</sup>), certain sectors and streets carry on their infamous legacy through the names of “los dirigentes,” such as the streets in Las Malvinas called “el Comandante Duro” and “Toral.” Carmen, who was 13 at the time and living in the southern shantytown of “el Guasmo,” told me that the GOE agents “han matado a casi toditas las personas que hacían mal. Los mataban y decían que ellos se murieron solitos” [have killed almost all of the people who did bad things. They killed them and would then say that they died by themselves]. Nevertheless, she doesn’t like the GOE:

Hay ladrones, entonces ellos tumban las puertas y se meten a las casas para revisar. Son muy abusivos – le rompen la casa a uno y ni siquiera se lo pagan. Ellos mismos dicen “allá se metió, allá se metió,” y no hay nadie. A la policía le gusta pegar a la gente; le pegaron a Graciela, le pegaron un pedrazo porque no querían ver a nadie en la esquina y ella se sentaba ahí. Son malos los policías.

[There are thieves, so they (GOE) knock down the doors and get into the houses to check. They are very abusive – they destroy your house and they don’t even pay for it. They’re the ones who say “there they go, there they go,” but there’s no one there. The police like to hit people. They hit Graciela (cousin), they hit her with a big rock because they didn’t want to see anyone on the corner, and she would sit there. Police are bad].

Over the last decade years, in particular, numerous legislative interventions on local and national levels have worked to define ownership and property in such a way that protects those who created their homes and communities, albeit unlawfully. It is interesting that Guayaquil’s most powerful and notorious *dirigentes* – Carlos Castro and Jaime Toral, for instance – were both lawyers, and their hitmen and bodyguards were fellow lawyers from their firms. These men

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<sup>40</sup> <http://www.ppelverdadero.com.ec/pp-policial/item/el-grupo-de-operaciones-especiales-goe-tactica-policial-al-servicio-del-pais.html>

and other traffickers, like Paco Oñate and Balerio Estacio, have also had political affiliations and even appointments. Olmos (2005) describes these men as leaders who are at once considered saviors by their beneficiaries and as conmen of urban poverty from those who oppose them: “*Los líderes son considerados salvadores por los beneficiarios y negociantes de la pobreza urbana por sus detractores.*”

Dirigentes	Son cientos de dirigentes de invasiones que operaron y operan en Guayaquil, pero algunos alcanzaron notoriedad. Carlos Castro y Paco Oñate son dos de los primeros líderes. Ellos actuaron en los Guasmos. Castro promovió además Bastión Popular y Flor de Bastión. Este fue asesinado, presuntamente por orden de invasores rivales. [There are hundreds of land traffickers who operated and operate in Guayaquil, but some achieved notoriety. Carlos Castro and Paco Oñate are two of the first leaders. The acted in the Guasmos. Castro also promoted the invasions in Bastión Popular and the Flor de Bastión. He was assassinated, supposedly under the order of rival traffickers].
Malvinas	Jaime Toral Zalamea, hoy abogado y directivo de una fundación, lideró los asentamientos en Las Malvinas, Esmeraldas Chiquito, Esmeraldas Libre, Santiaguito Roldós. [Jaime Toral Zalamea, who today is a lawyer and director of a foundation, led the settlements of Las Malvinas, Esmeraldas Chiquito, Esmeraldas Libre, Santiaguito Roldós].
Trinitaria	Jorge Quiñónez (asesinado) y Andrés Quiñónez promovieron la isla Trinitaria. Hoy sigue Maritza Loor. Sergio Toral, ex gerente de Electroguayas en el gobierno de Lucio Gutiérrez, creó la cooperativa que hoy lleva su nombre, al oeste de la Perimetral, así como Nueva Prosperina y Jeaneth Toral. [Jorge Quiñónez (assassinated) and Andrés Quiñónez led the settlement of the Isla Trinitaria. Today Maritza Loor is in charge. Sergio Toral, the ex manager of Electroguayas during Lucio Gutiérrez’s presidency, created the housing cooperative that now holds his name, West of the Perimetral, like the Nueva Prosperina and Jeaneth Toral].
Estacio	Balerio Estacio, en sociedad con otros líderes, fundó Valle de la Flor y Flor de Bastión. Siguió con Guerreros del Fortín, Horizontes del Guerrero, Tiwintza de la Flor, Balerio Estacio, entre otras. Mientras Zinaida Castro dirigió Paraíso de la Flor, Fortín de la Flor y Colinas de la Florida. [Balerio Estacio, in collaboration with other leaders, founded Valle de la Flor and Flor de Bastión. He continued with Guerreros del Fortín, Horizontes del Guerrero, Tiwintza de la Flor, Balerio Estacio, among others. Meanwhile, Zinaida Castro led Paraíso de la Flor, Fortín de la Flor and Colinas de la Florida].

**Figure 15** This table is based on José Olmos’s 10-July-2005 article in *El Universo* titled ‘Invasiones’ resurgen con frecuencia en Guayaquil [‘Invasions’ resurface with frequency in Guayaquil]. Olmos outlines a brief historical trajectory of the shantytown neighborhoods and, at the end, provides a list of the mafia bosses [dirigentes] and the shantytown communities they are associated with. His data has been transposed into the table above.

Olmos's article calls these crime bosses "mercaderes de la pobreza urbana," or "merchants of urban poverty," as they profited from poor people's desperation. This desperation guaranteed the "dirigentes" would receive cooperation, loyalty, and absolute power. The city's invasions have been layered with the exploitation people endured as informal settlers with ambition and desire to start a new life on new land in Guayaquil; and, the fact that they sought out lands in undesirable geographical spaces – above swamps on the South Side and mountainous terrain on the North – demonstrates how these settlements that expanded the city were a product of the city's exclusion. That is, those who created the shantytowns, largely Afro-Ecuadorian migrants and "campesinos" [people from rural areas, associated with limited education and agricultural labor], were excluded from the neighborhoods that already existed. And, those who were poor and who already lived in Guayaquil were also pushed out of their neighborhoods and into the shantytowns so that more desirable Guayaquileños and city development projects could physically fill the more central spaces; the others were sent to the periphery.<sup>41</sup> *El Diario Extra* in a 2011 historical piece reflected on the first shantytown neighborhoods on the South Side and recalled they were referred to as "la Isla de los Condenados" [The Island of the Condemned], because no one could reach them without a canoe.<sup>42</sup> Certainly, this metaphor extends beyond the canoe and reflects an imposed exclusion, further enforced through geographical barriers, in which people built their homes and raised their families in peripheral spaces devoid of basic resources, like running water and electricity. In the

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<sup>41</sup> Jorge Velasco Mackenzie's novel *El rincón de los justos* focuses on a fictional neighborhood "Matavilela" in Guayaquil's downtown; during the novel, the people from Matavilela are kicked out by Municipal orders and are sent to live on the South Side in the Guasmo neighborhood, which is one of Guayaquil's first shantytowns. The symbolism from this text is interesting to consider alongside the history of Guayaquil's South Side and "official" mandates for the city's socio-spatial segregation.

<sup>42</sup> As stated in Chapter 1, in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Guayaquil, the Cerro Santa Ana was referred to as the "ciudad vieja" [old city], and the governor opposed the building of new houses in this sector as a means of encouraging the people to move to the "ciudad nueva" [new city]. In the 1700s, between the old and the new cities, shantytown communities first came about, alongside the bridges that united the homes, neighborhoods, and cities built above five tributaries (Nuñez 1997).

following sections, I provide stories of experiences and memories of women, men, and children from the South, North, and East Sides of the city who have lived in the barrios, some since their neighborhood first started growing and some, like the children, more recently.



**Figures 16, 17, & 18** These three pictures were provided by Mateo, one of Diana’s neighbors in las Malvinas. His father aimed to compile a history of their neighborhood and had several pictures on his son’s computer that they graciously passed along to me for this dissertation. They obtained these pictures from the Centro Afro Archive on Guayaquil’s South Side. **Figure 16** is an image of las Malvinas from 1982, and they labeled it on their computer “como vivíamos” [how we lived]. **Figure 17** is an image from the “Nigeria” neighborhood in la Isla Trinitaria shantytown, where Charo’s father lives. **Figure 18**, also from 1982 and also labeled “como vivíamos,” shows a couple working to rebuild their home; as families have recalled during interviews and conversations, it was not uncommon for houses made from “caña,” like those shown in the three pictures, to fall over. Rosario told me that when she was eight months pregnant with her twins – Cristi and Charlie – her house fell over during a rainstorm. She was lucky that she and her children survived.



Figure 17



Figure 18

### *La Isla Trinitaria, the South Side – Levels of Invasion*

Although the families I work with from the South Side live in neighborhoods called “las Malvinas,” “Esmeraldas Chiquita,” “la Isla Trinitaria,” and “el Guasmo,” as Alfredo explained to me, soon after his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday: “Antes todo desde el Hospital del Seguro hasta el fondo era Guasmo” [Before, everything from the Social Security Hospital until the end was Guasmo].<sup>43</sup> Now, of course, he explained, there are all of these separate names for streets and different areas, but it was all Guasmo.

He said that Carlos Castro was the owner of the Guasmo, then. Castro was a lawyer, too, and Alfredo described him as a mean and hated man: “Era un desgraciado” [He was a son of a bitch]. Alfredo’s version of Castro’s murder is that he was shot for defending an abused woman. The man Castro was trying to kick out of her house became enraged at Castro’s intrusion and shot him. He died at 35. Alfredo told me that he attended Carlos Castro’s funeral when he was murdered and that that funeral, along with the funeral of President Jaime Roldós (1981) and singer Julio Jaramillo (1978), were the largest he has ever seen. He attended all three: the crime boss, the nation’s president, and the national icon.

Alfredo explained that the invasiones worked differently from what I was envisioning. While the invasores were squatters who moved onto visually unclaimed properties to make their homes, there was another layer at play. The “dirigentes,” like Carlos Castro, who wanted to “apoderarse del sector” [claim the sector, take power over the sector] added a twist to the traditional understanding of squatters and informal land appropriation, as they, too, wanted to claim ownership over an entire sector. Alfredo described what Carlos Castro and his associates did, for example: “entraban y te sacaban con bala – si no te querías ir, te mataban” [they went in

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<sup>43</sup> The estate of Juan X. Marcos was called “El Guasmo” and, in the 1960s with the construction of the “25 de Julio,” a major road that would run from downtown to the southern port of Guayaquil, the state took over these lands and distributed them across various state agencies, like the Social Security Department (Villavicencio 2011).



with bullets – if you didn't want to leave, they killed you]. These traffickers, then, kicked the squatters out of their homes and squatted themselves, parceling off land for sale to unsuspecting buyers.

At times, some “dirigentes” allowed people to remain in their homes if they paid them for it. If you didn't pay, Alfredo told me, the “dirigentes” would kick you out of your house. They would show up with their shotguns, and you had no other choice. Alfredo said that Sergio Toral always drove around “en una Blazer roja con ocho hombres” [in a red Blazer with eight men]; he said he was always armed, though as I wrote my notes later that day, I could not remember the exact word he used, only that it made his weapon sound like it was a really large, extra appendage attached to Toral's right arm. Alfredo, mirroring the descriptions of many neighbors from “Las Malvinas,” said Toral had a “humane” side: he would beat abusive husbands. Women would run and tell him what was happening, and he would get his men, his Blazer, and beat that man with sticks. He would then ask him how it felt. They would never bother their wives again, Alfredo concluded.

Like Castro, Toral's associates were also fellow lawyers. When I asked Alfredo how these lawyers learned how to fight, he responded that they didn't. Carrying a gun and knowing how to shoot isn't the same thing as knowing how to fight like a real man, he explained to me. Back then, Alfredo continued, there were no laws against bearing arms like there are today; now there is more control and the police have kicked the “dirigentes” out – “officially,” at least.

I asked Alfredo why he thought all of these “dirigentes” were lawyers. He agreed with my assessment that in knowing the law, they were better able to manipulate the legal system and, in turn, manipulate the people. But, he added that it was because of “agendas políticas” [political agendas] and “contactos políticos” [political contacts], too. Now, Castro's sons are in charge of

several properties, and they are all really rich. He compared them and their illegal rise to wealth with Guayaquil's current mayor, Jaime Nebot, who built a huge house in Mocolí, one of the most expensive parts of Samborondón. In addition to this mansion, Nebot has had a house in the famous traditional neighborhood downtown called "El Barrio Centenario," in which there is an entire block of security protecting Nebot and his family. Alfredo suggested that they are all politicians who manipulate laws and people for their personal gain.

Nevertheless, he has always voted for Nebot. His land titles ["títulos de la propiedad"] in "la Isla Trinitaria" were free. Nebot went to his community and signed everything so that all they had to do was go deposit them to make it official – but, it was free, he emphasized. And, all of the projects in "La Isla Trinitaria" have been because of Nebot. Alfredo said he has always tried to cultivate connections that could be helpful. Sometimes, he even works with Toral's law group as a messenger. He owns a small apartment building that he rents out, near Toral's law offices.

Alfredo gave me a personal example of how his connections with the lawyers have helped him in his current situation with his granddaughter who attends a special needs school. One of his lawyer friends filed all of the paperwork for free and followed up with the lawsuit ["la denuncia"] so that the courts could not allow it to get lost amidst the hundreds they have yet to address. He showed me the "denuncia" they made when his granddaughter's classmate kidnapped her: "de la escuela para liciados, secuestró a mi nieta que es especial igual q esa niña" [from the school for the handicapped, she kidnapped my granddaughter who is special, just like that girl]. They held her in a house for almost an entire day; there were men there getting drunk and her classmate wouldn't let her leave. She escaped, somehow, and her classmate began threatening her over the Internet, sending her images of skeletons and telling her that since she

escaped, she was going to die. Since his granddaughter cannot speak, they did not have all the details. But, she made it clear that she was not physically or sexually assaulted. They still took her and did a test “de sus partes íntimas” [of her private parts]. He continued, “disculpe la palabra, per no le hicieron la maldad” [excuse the word, but they didn’t do the evil (rape)].

Alfredo was one of the few men I interviewed formally during this research project. We spoke in December, toward the end of 2014. He was close to his sixtieth birthday; his wife was 49, and he has been with her since she was ten-years-old. They always had an “unión libre” [civil union], because that was enough for them. But, when we spoke, they had recently gotten married. His lawyer friends recommended it for insurance reasons and for the additional benefits he would receive upon his upcoming retirement. Again, he concluded that it was helpful to have well-connected friends.

### ***Las Malvinas, the South Side – Stories of Migration and Settlement***

Settled in Las Malvinas for more than thirty years, Anaís said she would only go back to Esmeraldas to visit: “Yo no quiero regresar -- a visitar no más; peor ahora que ya no tengo a mi mamá. No tengo nada (en Esmeraldas)” [I don’t want to go back – just to visit; even less now that I don’t have my mom. I don’t have anything (in Esmeraldas)]. What her family left behind, other family took or sold, so what’s the point? What would she be going back to? “Irme para allá es como quien dice comenzar de nuevo, y yo ya no tengo fuerza para estar comenzando. Yo ya no. Yo aquí ya tengo mi vida; yo ya de aquí me voy a descansar hasta el día que ya me toque de irme” [Going there now would be, as one says, starting over, and I don’t have the strength to be starting over. I don’t anymore. Here I have my life; here I’m going to rest until the day it’s time to go]. Anaís migrated to Guayaquil from Esmeraldas several times. The first time, she was around eight: “Vine pequeña a Guayaquil” [I came (as a) little (girl) to Guayaquil].

“La primera vez que yo vine aquí a Guayaquil” [The first time I came here to Guayaquil], she started to name “una prima” [a cousin], and then stopped to think of who it was exactly who brought her. “Sí, un familiar me trajo aquí a Guayaquil porque yo era pequeña, porque mi papá con mi mami se había separado” [Yes, a family member brought me here to Guayaquil because I was little, because my father and my mom had separated]:

Ahora es diferente. Antes la gente – llegaba el que llegaba y lléveselo, llévelo; regalaban a los muchachos como eran un objeto, cualquier cosa. Entonces ya pues, mi mami me dio con esa chica que era familia mía. Me dio a ella. Pero no era para ella tenerme, si no que ella me llevó a una casa para jugar con una niñita. Ella me llevó a una casa para que yo juegue con una niña de rico – un trabajo para que yo vaya a jugar con una niña más pequeña. Le dijo a mi mamá que me iba a poner a estudiar. Y me llevó a esa casa y se perdió. Sólo venía a ver los tres reales que me pagaban. Ahí me daban de comer y me daban la ropa nada más. No me dieron estudio. Hasta que yo crecí, como a los 12 años. Ahí yo ya no quería estar en esa casa a veces a uno le pegaban, le pegaban ellos, le pegaban los niños. Entonces yo ya no quería estar en esa casa. No me querían dejar ir. En ese tiempo, no es como ahora. Me mandaban a comprar – “vente a trabajar conmigo.” Hasta que me conquistó una señora y me fui escondida. Sólo me fui con lo que cargaba en el cuerpo. Esa señora para llevar a un niño al jardín – la señora como que se dio cuenta que yo no quería estar, como que yo me quería ir con mi familia. Me cogió y me preguntó si yo me quería ir a mi casa, donde mi familia. Me compró ropa, me compró mi pasaje y me mandó a mi casa a Esmeraldas. Llegué donde mis hermanas – de ahí al mes, vino una tía mía del campo y me fui al campo, como nosotros éramos del campo, no del propio Esmeraldas.

[Now it’s different. Before, regardless of who the person was who arrived – take him, take her; they gave away kids like an object, like an unimportant thing. So then, well, my mommy gave me to a girl who was family. She gave me to her. But not so that she could have me; she took me to a house to play with a little girl. She took me to a house so that I would play with a daughter of rich people – a job so that I would play with a girl younger than me. She told my mom that she was going to put me in school. But she took me to that house and got lost. She only came to pick up the “tres reales” that they paid me. There they gave me food and gave me clothes and nothing more. They didn’t give me my studies. Until I grew up, like at 12 years old. Then I didn’t want to be in that house; sometimes they hit you, they did or the kids did. So I didn’t want to be in that house. But they didn’t want to let me go. In that time, it wasn’t like it is now. They sent me to go buy – and “come work with me” (the people at the store would offer her jobs). Until a woman charmed me and I left, hidden. I went only with what I had on my body. That woman was going to take me to the park – the woman sort of started to realize that I didn’t want to be there, that I wanted to go with my family. She took me and asked me if I wanted to go home, where my family was. She bought me clothes, she bought me a ticket, and she sent me to my house in Esmeraldas. I arrived at my sisters’ – from there,

after a month, an aunt from the country came and I went back with her, because we are from the country, not from Esmeraldas proper (the city)].

From there, Anaís, went happily with her father to Colombia. But, she described that move as being worse than Guayaquil. He had a wife, and that made the experience terrible for her:

“Después fue lo duro para mí – era malísima, era perversa; esa mujer no quería que mi papi me diera ni para comprar una cola” [Afterward came the hard part for me – she was evil, she was perverse; that woman didn’t even want my daddy to give me enough to buy a coke]. Then, “gente conocida” [people they knew] from Ecuador took her out of Colombia. She told her father she desperately wanted to go: “Papi, me quiero ir y me voy y me voy y me voy, Papá” [Daddy, I want to go and I’m going and I’m going and I’m going, Dad]. He had already lost his eyesight at that point, and he didn’t want her to stay there either, realizing he could die. He did die, within the year she left. “Nadie sabe cómo fue la muerte de él” [No one knows how he died]. I asked her how she reacted, to which she replied: “Sí, uno se queda mal pero igual hay que resignarse” [Yes, one is left in bad shape, but you have to resign yourself anyway].

Again, Anaís moved from Colombia to Esmeraldas with her sisters. One of her sisters was raised in Quito: “Ella se fue pequeña y se crió con unos serranos en Quito – también se la dieron a unos serranos” [She left young and was raised by highlanders in Quito – they also gave her away to the highlanders]. With that sister, she traveled from Esmeraldas de Guayaquil for a final time. She was around 14 at that point. She moved to “el Guasmo” and her sister to “las Malvinas.” She said they arrived with no plans, really: “Llegamos sin rumbo, sin destino, porque no teníamos nada. Pero, oiga, siempre Dios es tan grande porque llegamos a una casa y llegamos derechita a una familia de nosotros – prima hermana de nosotros” [We arrived without plans, without a final destination, because we didn’t have anything. But, listen, God is always great because we arrived right at the door of our family – a cousin of ours]. She got a job

downtown in “un almacén grande en el centro – ahí trabajaba el marido del primo que le consiguió un trabajo” [a huge shopping center downtown – that is where my cousin’s husband got me the job]. She worked as a maid. “Yo no sabía cómo – me enseñó a cocinar ahí, solamente era cocina, nada más” [I didn’t even know how – (s/he) taught me how to cook there, it was only cooking, nothing more]. Since then, Anaís made her life on the South Side with three daughters and three grandchildren; she has been raising her nine nieces and nephews – including JJ – from Esmeraldas since their mother died five years earlier. During her years in Guayaquil, she has shifted jobs between a maid, a caretaker, a babysitter, and an employee at a big shrimp packaging company. She blames the years working in that “congelador” [freezer] for all of her aches and pains. She lifted her skirt one day, talking in her neighborhood, to show me how her muscles in her knees and thighs were atrophied. She said it was from having to stand with no bathroom breaks and no jacket for 12 consecutive hours.



**Figure 19** Anaís's nieces and nephew (JJ) in their living room after giving me a tour of their house in 2013; Anaís describes building her house in Ch. 5. Having a cement house, tile floor, and tile for kitchen counters and back-splash, is a goal of many families in the shantytown neighborhoods.

Manuela, who lives two blocks over from Anaís, worked at several shrimp packaging companies herself. She showed me the scars from where she cut her hands and arms peeling the

shrimp and the prawns. With her grandson, Hólger, sitting with us at the Mall del Sol food court, she told us how her entire nail flew off peeling “langostinos” [prawns]: “*Truc,*” she made the sound of her nail coming off. They checked her purse, her pockets, everything, before she left each day to make sure she wasn’t stealing anything. After two hours of walking around while I interviewed his grandmother, Hólger joined us. He eagerly joined this part of the conversation, telling us that in Esmeraldas, you could make six or seven dollars per pound of peeled shrimp. Manuela nodded, and explained that his mother had worked in that, and Hólger lived in Esmeraldas with his mother until he was 12. He said that in Guayaquil, the “empacadoras” [shrimp packaging companies] have “transportes” [shuttles] that pick you up in the mornings and drop you off at night. But, the days are long; they pick you up around five or six in the morning and, by the time it’s your turn to get dropped off, it could be after midnight.

Now, however, Manuela no longer works; she has a large rectangular cooler in her bedroom that has a lock on it; she showed it to me one day when I was at her house, and inside were the cokes and beer that she sells on her block to make money. The monthly “bono” [bonus] poor people receive each month allows her to pay her debts, which are her light and electric bills. She was upset when we started talking at the food court that afternoon because her water bill was \$40. She said she didn’t use that much water: “Tuve que con el bono coger y pagar y quedé chira” [I had to use the money from the “bono” to pay, and I was left broke]. She had to borrow money from one of the local “chulqueros” [loan sharks]. The electric company installed meters, but her electric wiring cable is intertwined with her neighbor’s, and she blamed them and their mixed up cables for her bill being so high: \$22!

Tuve que prestar a los chulqueros veinticino...ellos prestan así a las personas, cobran semanal. Todos los días, un dólar por día hasta que termine la semana – un préstamo de cincuenta, son dos dólares. Yo cuando tengo, les doy. Cuando no tengo, les digo que no



tengo....cuando vendo dos colitas, les pago a los chulqueros....Yani cobra y no me da ni un sucre

[I had to borrow \$25 from the loan sharks...they lend money like that to people, charge weekly. Every day, it's a dollar a day until the week is over – if the loan is for \$50, it's two dollars. Me, when I have it, I give it to them. When I don't, I tell them I don't have it...when I sell a couple of cokes, I pay the loan sharks...Yani (her daughter) gets paid and she doesn't even give me one sucre (old currency in Ecuador until 2000)].

After complaining about her selfish daughters, except for the Mormon one who lived upstairs, as she described her, I learned that half of her seven children moved to Guayaquil from Esmeraldas before her. Not unlike Anaís's discussion of parents giving their kids away, Manuela gave Yani to an aunt (see also Leinaweaver 2008 and her discussion of the circulation of children between Peruvian rural communities and cities). Her Aunt Fiona, who also gives Hólger work during his vacation from school, took Yani in to teach her how to make cakes, which was her specialty. She needed help, too. “Me la pidió a mi hija, y yo se la di” [She asked for my daughter, and I gave her to her]. Manuela's family had a small piece of land in Guayaquil, and two of her sons sold it to help make a payment on new land. They worked with their Aunt Fiona to make money for the payment: “con esa platita completaron” [with that money, they completed the payment]. Meanwhile, Manuela stayed in Esmeraldas with her girls. This was before she sent Yani to Guayaquil and before her husband became ill: “con ese que todavía no era enfermo, ¡MAL AGRADECIDO!” [with that one who still wasn't sick, INGRATE! (she raised her voice unexpectedly)].

I'd already heard her speak of her husband at the Fundación one morning when I sat alongside a small group of mothers and grandmothers in the cafeteria after an assembly. Manuela spoke the most that day, answering my questions of migrating from Esmeraldas to Guayaquil. She made us all laugh, especially Diana, her neighbor. She told us that the day her husband's other woman threw him out of the house in Esmeraldas, he decided to move to

Guayaquil. Right away, Manuela told her daughter Yaneth that she would have to take him in. She said that the day he arrived, she shut the door and didn't leave any trace so that he wouldn't go knocking on it – she said she wouldn't have opened it anyway. “Viejito tembloro” [shaky old man], she called him, making the group laugh. When I met him the following year, I realized that he likely has an illness, like Parkinsons, that doesn't allow him to be still.

At the Mall del Sol, she told me: “Algún día lo va a conocer, un viejito – yo ya lo he perdonado, porque ya no ve, le han sacado el ojo todo” [One day you'll meet him, an old man – I've already forgiven him, because he no longer sees, they've taken out his whole eye]. Manuela told me that she and Sergio had been together since she was just a girl. She wasn't even 15, she said, when she had her first child. She described herself as “una niña que nadie había tocado mi cuerpo” [a girl who hadn't had anyone touch her body]. Her relationship with Sergio, more than ten years older than her, changed that:

Yo estaba muchacha, de unos 10 años, 11 años – le digo la verdad, yo no lo quería; él me perseguía. Yo era una muchacha que no sabía responderle a un hombre...era una hombre que ya salía a la calle...cuando él me llamaba, yo corría, él me chiflaba, yo corría...salía a comprar, me salían algunos enamoraditos, pero yo no quería nada...ya tenía cenitos...ya me había enfermado dos veces...me metieron a un monte, a una finca...allá vivía ese señor...yo no sabía, “compadre compadre, cuñado cuñado”...no me cae bien, no lo quería...cuando nació el primer hijo pues ¿qué es lo que tenía que hacer? Ese hombre no salía conmigo, él salía a buscar mujer...me hizo trampa (her cousin who raised her). Para que se fije, Niña, esta era mi cama (shows me with her hands)...y cuando yo estaba metida en mi cama y cuando veo ese hombre metido en mi cama. Pero él no me tocó...fragantísimo...hay un hombre metido en mi cama. Ahí cogió él y se salió...así fue que ese hombre me conquistó, Señora...yo no sé que preparó ese hombre en ese perfume que me conquistó...

[I was a girl of 10 or 11 years old – I'll tell you the truth, I didn't love him; he chased me. I was a girl that didn't know how to respond to a man...he was a man that already went out onto the street...when he called me, I ran, he whistled at me, I ran...I would go to the store to buy, and a few little boyfriends would pop up, but I didn't want anything...I already had little breasts...I had already gotten sick twice...they took me to a mountain to a farm there...that's where this man lived...I didn't know, “*compadre, compadre*, brother-in-law, brother-in-law,” they said to each other...I don't like him, I didn't want him...when my first son was born, well what was I supposed to do? That man didn't go

out with me, he went out to look for women...she tricked me (her cousin who lived with her). Just so you can realize what happened, Girl (referring to me), this was my bed (shows me with her hands), and when I was in the bed and I saw that man in my bed. But he didn't touch me...he was so fragrant...there is a man in my bed...then he got up and he left...that's how this man won me, Ma'am...I don't know what he prepared with that perfume that won me...]

Manuela never met her mother; her aunt raised her. First her mother died followed by her father and her sister. Her aunt and her cousin were involved in tricking her and letting her future husband in her room, exposing her to his perfume. She said that her aunt did not have the money for her to study: “La viejita no tenía cómo darme estudio” [The little old lady didn't have a way to give me my studies]. Currently, however, she intended to take classes from the educational brigade that was going through their neighborhood: “Voy a aprender bastante. Porque no sé nada, tengo que aprender todo” [I am going to learn a lot. Because I don't know anything, I have to learn everything]. I told her that she knew how to write her name, and she replied, “Sí, pero más feoooo” [Yes, but so uglyyyy]. “Le digo a Hólger, enséñame – en el periódico se aprende rápido, enséñame...tal palabra: mamá, mamá – ¿con qué se escribe?, para ver” [I tell Hólger, teach me – in the newspaper one can learn fast, teach me...this word: mom, mom – how is it spelled? To see (to learn)].

When Manuela arrived in Guayaquil, she practiced with the alphabet. She really wanted to learn, but she couldn't, she told me: “no cojo un libro como leen ustedes ahí” [I don't grab a book and read it like you all do]. She took pride in that she was able to give her seven children an education, with no help, of course, from her husband: “la bruta soy yo” [the stupid one is me]. Manuela is one of the women who physically built her home: “si esta era mi casa, tenía que hacer mi puente así hasta llegar a mi calle” [If this was my house, I would have to build a bridge until I reached the street]. Because the houses were above the swamp, part of building one's house involved building the bridge that connected the neighborhood and brought everyone

together. She told us the story of how she put a stick of bamboo across her shoulders and hung buckets of water on the ends; they had to take the bridges to reach the watering hole to wash clothes and to collect water to bathe in their homes. She showed us her herniated belly button from the strain and the scars from all the times she fell off the bridge from the weight of the buckets. The church changed her life and even took away her aches and pains from all of her years of hard work: “Ahí en esa iglesia, ahí me curaron todo lo que yo tenía, todo todo. Esa agua, que rico bautizarse” [There in that church, there they cured me of everything, everything everything. That water, how nice (how refreshing) to be baptized].

Our conversation, then, shifted to Toral’s reign in her neighborhood. Out of all of her neighbors, Manuela spoke the most positively about “el dirigente.”<sup>44</sup> During a focus group, weeks later, just blocks from Manuela’s house, her neighbors who had also lived in Las Malvinas for thirty and forty years, shared stories of this crime boss. Their reflections on Jaime Toral were complex; he was described as a criminal, as immoral, but also as someone who took justice into his own hands in situations that, at times, were justified. He was generous and gave out food and gifts for children at Christmas; there is a video on YouTube in which he is giving out food to kids and families, and he is aggressively reprimanding those who try to grab without waiting their turn. Manuela shared some of her interactions with him: “Yo sí iba a conversar con él, le iba a pedir ayuda...pedirle plata...le daba a uno, para que. Si quería ayuda para sus hijos, le daba ayuda” [I would go and speak with him, I would ask him for help...ask him for money...he gave it to you, no problem. If you wanted help for your kids, he gave you help]. Manuela described Toral as the owner of their neighborhood and how his violence addressed others’ violence; he was their leader:

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<sup>44</sup> This video from October 2015 captures Toral’s visit to las Malvinas. Neighbors welcome him with tears and open arms: <http://www.rts.com.ec/entretenimiento/jaime-toral-zalamea-nos-lleva-por-estas-calles-4556>

Toral era pues el dueño de las Malvinas – el dueño de mi tierra. Vaya a matarme a estas tal personas y las mataba – esos perros – mataba a personas malas, eran ladrones que la mataban a usted, después le mataban un hijo. Lo mataban y lo botaban al salado; tenía bastante perro, bastante hombre que mataban. Una camioneta oscura – de la banda de Toral – uno que se llama Enrique, ese mató no sé a quién; está en silla de ruedas, no puede matar ahora.

[Toral was the owner of las Malvinas – the owner of my land. Go kill these people for me, and he killed them – those dogs – killed bad people; they were thieves that killed you, then killed your son. They killed you and threw you in the river; he had a lot of dogs, a lot of men who killed. A dark pick-up truck – from Toral’s clan – one was called Enrique, he killed someone, I don’t know who; he is in a wheel chair, now he can’t kill].

Manuela explained, then, that these “dogs” – Toral’s clan of men – killed people who committed crimes. But, she described Toral’s men, too, as thieves. They were all criminals and their neighborhood was run on vigilante justice. Manuela continued:

Prohibido entrar ahí a las Malvinas...No era más peligroso cuando él estaba; cuando no estaba, ahí es que los ladrones se levantaban. Pero cuando él llegaba, salía a matar a toditos los matones...la madre de sus hijos a recoger su muerto...era jodido Toral... No sé cuántos años estuvo en la cárcel. Usted puede ir a su oficina a conversar con él, para que, ya no puede hacer nada...ahora sí, ya compuso, ha cambiado de tono y todo.

[It was prohibited to enter Las Malvinas...It wasn’t more dangerous when he was there; when he wasn’t, then the thieves would wake up. But when he would return, he would go out to kill all the killers...the mother of her sons would have to go pick up her dead one...he was a difficult man, Toral...I don’t know how many years he was in prison. You can go to his office and speak with him, don’t worry, he can’t do anything anymore...now yes, it’s improved, everything has changed in tone and everything].

She said that the only time they stole from her, Toral found the thief. Toral got her daughter’s tape recorder back from him and gave it to Manuela right away. He locked criminals up in his office; sometimes he would kill them, and sometimes he would inflict another form of punishment. She has always lived in Las Malvinas without a lock and now that Toral is gone, she entrusts God to keep her house safe: “mi salita vive sin candado” [my little living room lives without a lock]. She has a television that doesn’t work in the front room, but it looks really nice; so, she hopes that if they break in, they’ll take the broken television and stop looking for more!

During the focus group that afternoon in Diana's cousin's home, the neighbors agreed that things were better without Toral. Nevertheless, Las Malvinas still has its problems, though now, instead of sending Toral and his men after the criminals, Diana believes it is up to the neighbors to take care of their neighborhood. The police installed an alarm on their street for increased safety: "We thought it was a good idea when we invested in it," Diana said in front of the group, "but now *los delincuentes* press it all day long and when they decide to steal, the police won't believe us. The alarm won't protect us." Diana has chased after robbers countless times. Her neighbors agreed as Diana explained that people usually steal smaller things because they usually steal on foot and sometimes on a motorcycle; but, small things can be expensive, she said, like a gas tank ["tanque de gas"] can cost \$50 to replace. She sleeps with "un fierro" [an iron rod], though she said that now the thieves go by during the day when no one is around and push on doors to see if they open. Since she works from home as a seamstress, she is always paying attention to her block from her window. Her cousin told us that the last boy Diana ran down was armed, and they all told her to be more careful. Diana responded that she'd like to be armed.

Later, she told me that her daughter Sarita cried when a neighbor told her that her mother needed to be more careful because a thief was going to come and get all of them for the "bulla" [noise] Diana was raising against them in the neighborhood. She said that her children's safety holds her back from being more aggressive. She knows they would be the first victims. But if it were just for her, she wouldn't be scared.



**Figure 20** Jota's guardian (further discussed in Chs. 5 & 6), took this photo on her block in las Malvinas during Carnaval 2014.

She described “un negro feísimo” [a very ugly black guy] who she caught who was trying to get into her neighbor's house. She said that something comes over her that gives her that courage: “no aguanto las injusticias” [I can't stand injustice]. One time, she said they caught a man who had stolen from a neighbor, and they ran him down. She told her neighbor not to kill him because then they would all go to jail; she told him just to give them their stuff back. This story paralleled the one from the focus group in which they described how Diana ran in front of Toral's “perros” when they were going to kill a young boy. They pointed out the window to the corner where they were going to execute him. She was lucky. Diana criticized the boy's mother who was too much of a coward to do that for her own son.

Manuela was only there at the beginning of the focus group; she asked me to go by her house before leaving. She didn't like to voice her opinions in front of groups, as she told us on the way to Diana's cousin's house. She said speaking your mind and trying to lead just brings you problems because people get mad and start blaming you for your decisions and for everything. Diana laughed and alluded to past problems Manuela had encountered for speaking her truth.

Overall, Diana and her neighbors spoke positively about the ways in which their neighborhood has changed over the last 5 years; almost all of their streets were now paved, and the state has a project to build a boardwalk along the river. Writing this more than two years later, the boardwalk has been completed with exercise equipment and playgrounds. Diana blames the "delincuentes" for damaging a lot of the equipment; and bad kids gather in the park, which makes her cautious about sending Sarita. When Diana first told me about the plan to build the boardwalk, she said that President Correa had created a clean-up campaign, since people always throw trash in the river. Apparently, Correa said that the river was going to be so clean, that he was going to go swimming there. She laughed at this image.

Like Manuela, Diana also borrows money from "chulqueros" whom she calls "los colombianos" [the Colombians], because most of the ones who work as loan sharks are Colombian. Now they pretend to sell "edredones" [comforters], she said, to justify their transactions; they ride around on motorcycles with comforters, she laughed. She and Sarita always laugh a lot. Diana borrows \$75 per month from them and pays back \$90. There's also a foundation called D-Miro – "por el segundo puente" [by the second bridge] – that has given her loans for years.<sup>45</sup> She says she started out with a group of four or five women and they all made

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<sup>45</sup> Banco D-Miro is a bank designed to assist people in Guayaquil's poorest communities. It began as a microfinance program to help support entrepreneurs and encourage people to create businesses; because of the



loans as a group; now, they can each do it on their own. At the time, they gave her \$500 per year and she paid \$53 per month.



**Figure 21** Diana and her two kids, posing in their house, just before Christmas 2013

As a seamstress, there are times of year where she has more work: if her neighbors don't have money, she doesn't make money. The loans, then, are important for her and her two kids. She had running water in her house and didn't pay for it until "una picada" [a bitter] neighbor reported her to the water company; they went to Diana's house and cut the pipe that provided the free connection. Now, she said, she had to pay the \$30 base pay for the installation and meter and then another \$10 per month. She was still paying the electric company for their installations.

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success with that initiative, it became a bank in 2011: <http://www.d-miro.com/>. Misión Alianza is a missionary organization where I volunteered and conducted participant observation in the summers of 2010 and 2011; it is located in the Flor de Bastión shantytown, on the city's North Side. This organization created D-Miro as part of its community development project within the shantytown neighborhoods: <http://www.misionalianza.org/>.

We walked along the soon-to-be remodeled boardwalk as Diana shared her stories and opinions, and we continued toward Manuela's house to say goodbye. Anaís insisted that we hurry, because she wanted us to drive her to a part-time job she had on Saturdays taking care of an older lady in Urdesa. Hólger had apparently told Manuela that I had strange eating habits. She said that she was going to make me "pollo frito y maduros" [fried chicken and plantains], but he said I didn't eat much fried food. I laughed, and told her not to worry, and that I was a picky eater. She showed me, proudly, what she had made: cookies. She packaged up the cookies in a pink plastic bag. She wanted to put that bag inside a popcorn container, but I told her the bag was perfect. She told me: "Soy pobre y le quiero dar algo; pero no tengo mucho para dar" [I am poor and I want to give you something; but I don't have a lot to give].

After eating several of the cookies, I assured her that they were a great gift. And, I reminded her of all of the hours we had spent talking on so many occasions – all of the times she had shared her own story with me, and her time with me. She had given me so much already.



**Figure 22** (From Left to Right: Manuela, Alys, Diana, and Anaís in Manuela's living room) The popcorn container held the pink plastic bag with the cookies. Manuela thought this container looked better than the bag for the picture.



**Figure 23** This is the space (2013) where they would build the boardwalk for las Malvinas. Further South, several kilometers beyond the bridge, is la Isla Trinitaria. Diana’s house is located two houses to the East of the one with the black tarp. The river to the West is referred to as “el salado” [salado = salty]. This is where Toral and his “perros” threw the bodies of their victims. In 2014, a popular television commercial sponsored by el Ministerio del Medio Ambiente [the Department of the Environment] offered the rhyming slogan: “El estero no es un basurero” [The ‘estero’ is not a trash can].

### ***North Side: Notes on La Flor de Bastión and Women’s Local Organizing***

In the Fall of 2013, I began visiting families’ homes in the shantytowns. I knew the children and their families for at least a year by then, and we knew each other well after months together at the school and outside of school for interviews. Families began to insist that I visit them. They trusted me at that point and, although they often apologized for their accommodations when I arrived, they were excited by my interest to learn more about their lives by seeing where and how they lived. Many years earlier, psychologists from the Fundación visited their homes, but those visits stopped after funding cuts. For most of the families, I was the first “outsider” who had ever visited them. The kids and their parents could barely believe it

when I actually showed up at their homes. The word spread quickly at the school, and I received more invitations than I was able to accept.

Petra and her daughter Mayra told me that to learn about Guayaquil's barrios, I just needed to spend one day at their house: "You'll hear everything that's going on around here – drug deals, beating of children, rape, insults!" When they moved to "la Flor de Bastión" in the year 2000, "sembrábamos arroz" [they cultivated rice], mirroring their life in the rural community of Balzar where they had always lived prior to Guayaquil. They first arrived to "el Guasmo" and lived in a chicken factory where Petra's husband worked. Now, on the North Side, there are more families and more homes, and they are surrounded by drug dealers and are sick from the drugs they cook next door. "La Flor de Bastión is completely different now," Petra said; "It's packed with houses and families." My first time working in la Flor de Bastión in 2010, I felt like I was in a separate city. If I had been separated from the organization I worked with at the time, I would not have known how to leave. Looking at it from the outside and looking around from the inside, you feel like it never ends.



**Figure 24** This image seeks to capture the vastness of the Flor de Bastión. I took this picture in the Karolina sector of the Flor de Bastión in the summer of 2010 when I conducted preliminary fieldwork at schools in this area and accompanied employees from Misión Alianza to collaborate on their neighborhood leadership initiatives in which they worked with neighborhood blocks to help them create a governing council and, from there, create important projects for their neighborhoods by conducting needs assessment surveys.



Figure 25 Images from the Flor de Bastión



**Figure 26** Mayra took this picture of her mother in their home. Although they use plastic in the winters to avoid water seeping into the holes between the pieces of caña, their house frequently floods. They live near the top of the hill, but they are not at the very top, and they struggle to combat the winter rains. They live in their home with Mayra's older brother, younger sister, and father. Her father works as a street cleaner, sweeping the streets downtown. While working in 2015, he was run over by a motorcycle and has been unable to work ever since. Petra tries to make extra money by selling empanadas, but she says the "campo" drained her energy – all of her years working in the fields in the countryside have made her too sore to work. Mayra works, at times, cleaning people's homes; her brother, at times, works, too. They have neighbors who sometimes give them food, especially for the two girls.

La Flor de Bastión is divided by "bloques" [blocks]. I've asked people from there, how many there are, but no one has given me a definitive answer. The usual answers are along the lines of "demasiados" [too many]. I have personally heard up to Bloque 22. Among the more dangerous "bloques" are Bloque 2 where Elsitá and her family live, and Bloque 12 where Mayra's family lives. One of the mothers from el Bloque 6 insisted on being my guide between the blocks my first time visiting houses on the North Side. She laughed as I read aloud one of the hand-made signs: "No sean cochinos, no boten la basura a la calle, esperen hasta que vengan



a recoger la basura” [Don’t be pigs, don’t throw trash on the street, wait until the trash collectors come]. Lulita told me that she has a short temper, and she yelled at a guy on her block who was throwing trash on the ground. She told him – and warned him – that if he didn’t pick it up to dispose of it at the proper time and place, she was going to take those bags and bathe him in his own garbage. Lulita is the leader of her block, and I have gotten to know her strength and power over the years.

After spending one morning in la Flor de Bastión with several kids and their families, I drove Alex home. He was the only one from Fundación Crecer who lived in the neighboring shantytown, “la Nueva Prosperina.” I pointed out the sign that read “Traficantes de tierras -- ¡deúncialos!” [Land Traffickers – sue them!]. A plethora of signs lined the major road that connects Guayaquil’s outliers – La Perimetral –, announcing Mayor Nebot’s regeneration efforts. The signs read “Obra de Nebot” [Construction project of Nebot’s]; certainly, he has created important projects in the shantytown communities, and not just during election years, which is the typical strategy of politicians.<sup>46</sup> As we approached his neighborhood, I asked Alex if he liked Nebot: “¿Te gusta Nebot?” He quickly answered “No.” When I asked why not, he replied, “Porque no soy mujer. Pero sí me cae bien” [Because I’m not a woman. But I like him].<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Nebot’s projects range from paving roads to providing trash pick-up to building parks to providing mobile medical centers.

<sup>47</sup> Alex’s change in word choice from “gusta” to “cae bien” allows him to say he likes the mayor in a way that would not be interpreted as romantic.



**Figure 27** Alex poses in his uncle’s house in la Karolina (2014). Like his neighborhood, la Nueva Prosperina, la Carolina is a small shantytown on the North Side. Alex goes to school in la Carolina and often stays at his uncle’s house; his school day starts at one o’clock, and it is too late and dangerous to go from there to la Nueva Prosperina after dark. The green fabric on the far right is the “toldo” [mosquito netting] that they use to cover their beds when they sleep at night.

During a conversation with a group of women from the Flor de Bastión neighborhood, Petra said that she voted “nulo” [blank] “porque igual cualquier candidato uno igual tiene que trabajar” [because even with whichever candidate one still has to work]. So, she didn’t see the difference. Nilda interjected, saying that she would like to stuff Nebot with a bomb and watch him explode into a million pieces. She voted “nulo,” too, and she only voted in the first place, because you need “el comprobante para cualquier cosa que uno quiera hacer” [the piece of paper as proof for anything you may want to do]. As an informal worker who sells “mote” [a dish of grains associated with the highlands, where she is from] from a cart along one of the major roads

of the Flor de Bastión, she opposes Nebot's efforts to do away with "vendedores ambulantes" [traveling salespeople / vendors].<sup>48</sup>

The northern side of Guayaquil is lined with shantytown neighborhoods. La Flor de Bastión and Bastión Popular are the largest ones in the area. In *El Telégrafo's* historical Sunday segment from an article published in 2014, they cite the first-hand experiences of residents from Guayaquil's northern shantytowns. Entitled "Bastión Popular y su amalgama de habitantes afuereños" [Bastión Popular and its amalgam of outsiders], this article focuses on migration within Guayaquil to the northern shantytowns; one of the women, for example, who protagonizes the article moved from the southern Guasmo neighborhood to Bastión Popular in the 1980s when she heard they were giving away free plots of land. The article explains the origin of the name "Bastión Popular:"

'Bastión Popular,' el nombre escogido del asentamiento, alude a un baluarte y Fortaleza en que se convertiría, tiempo después, cuando ocurrieron los intentos de desalojo. Así lo recuerda Juan Quimí: 'se denominó Bastión Popular porque el nombre quiere decir muralla (bastión) y humana (popular), pues, cuando hubo los dos desalojos resistimos a la policía y de ahí se denominó Bastión Popular porque fue por la defensa que tuvimos nosotros.

['Bastión Popular,' the name selected for this informal plot of lands, connotes the bulwark and the fortress that it would become, some time later, when the attempts of eviction took place. This is how Juan Quimí remembers it: 'it was called Bastión Popular because the name means wall (bastión) and human (popular), so, when the two massive evictions took place we resisted the police and that's when it was named Bastión Popular because it was because of the way we defended it].

Although I have worked in the northern shantytowns for nearly six years, I always hear new names of shantytown neighborhoods; the number of them and of people living there seems

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<sup>48</sup> Jaqui defended Nebot. She said that it was important for Guayaquil to change, describing it as "puerco, sucio" [filthy, dirty]. She said: "no hay tachos de basura" [there aren't trash cans], and that's what Nebot needs to put out so that it can be more clean. She blamed the "vendedores ambulantes" for making the city dirty, and said that she went to Quito once and was shocked by how clean it was; although it is not the case, she told the group that Quito was more advanced and less dirty because they didn't have any "vendedores ambulantes." Nilda reacted, angrily, saying that the customers threw the trash on the ground, not her.

endless. Monte Sinaí, another massive shantytown community in northwestern Guayaquil, was the site of mass evictions in 2013 and 2014. Other neighborhood names on the North Side include: “Voluntad de Dios” [God’s Will] and “Regalo de Dios” [God’s gift].

Even though many of the experiences mirror each other on the South and North Sides, their histories are different. Land trafficking and exploitation of the *invasores* are more characteristic of the histories of the northern shantytowns than the southern ones. While the South Side was being built and settled, land traffickers saw the North as the next point of settlement and, accordingly, took advantage of people’s vulnerability as they sought out land for their families. The North Side was not built above the *manglar*. The northern lands are mountainous, and its earliest residents and founders describe the wildcats, poisonous snakes, and coyotes that governed their sectors. Even today, when the winter rains hit the North Side, it is not uncommon on the news to hear of children’s deaths by drowning as the steep and unpaved roads lead to extreme flooding. There is a point bordering the Northern shantytown, “la Flor de Bastión,” called “el canal de la muerte,” which is exceedingly dangerous during the rainy season. Watching the nightly news during the Winter of 2014, I wrote down the words from the woman who was interviewed after her two children drowned from the floods: “la impotencia de nosotros...no es justo que vivimos así” [our impotence...it is not fair that we live this way] (9 May 2014). Her house collapsed because of the heavy rains and she escaped with her two sons, but, in the process, lost them both to the strong current of the floods.



**Figure 28** These are the steep and unpaved roads of el Bloque 6. In the Winter of 2014, Johnson, who took this picture, saved a child from his neighborhood from drowning, just under that small bridge in front of his house.

“During the winter, the water comes up to here,” Marelene showed me, holding her hand near her waist. Surrounded by her children and other neighbors, she described the skin conditions that the younger children developed as they walked (or floated) their way through the mixture of rain water and human waste. As we walked back up the hill, they pointed out a spot where a toddler almost drowned last year during a major rainstorm (See Figure 28). With the upcoming mayoral elections that February of 2014, the residents of Block 6 were hopeful that the incumbent candidate would pave their street. At Fundación Crecer, I asked Mayra and the Cáceres sisters who also lived in the Flor de Bastión what happened to their houses when the storms hit; winter was just weeks away. Mayra said that her bed gets soaked; the plastic they put on the roof to cover the holes isn’t always strong enough to keep the water out. They all agreed that they dreaded the winter. From February through April, children on Ecuador’s coast have vacation from school, which is another aspect that shantytown children dread. “Free time” in the shantytowns is often a source of anxiety. Mothers fear leaving their children home alone and, often, become even more distressed if their children *are* accompanied by step-fathers or other male relatives. Drug and alcohol use and the strong presence of gangs in many of the children’s neighborhoods eliminate many opportunities for outdoor play and recreation. Kids, then, become bored because they are sometimes forced to remain indoors watching TV. Certainly, while the North is more susceptible to flooding than the South, across Guayaquil’s shantytowns, children and mothers cautiously approach kids’ school vacation as the dangers in their neighborhoods can negatively impact children’s wellbeing.

Although the paved roads from the South Side have not fully reached the North, many on the North have also managed to build cement homes. When I asked Marlene from the North Side where she lived as her cement house was being built, she explained that they simply

transferred the *casa de caña* to an empty lot across the street: “invadimos ese lote hasta terminar” [we invaded that lot until we finished]. After her cement house was built, she gave the *caña* home to her daughter as a gift. Hogar de Cristo is one of the non-profits that has helped families on the North Side obtain a *casa de caña* by selling them the necessary pieces for \$500. The families then build the homes themselves. In Marlene’s case, they took the house apart and rebuilt it twice: first, when they moved it across the street; and second, when Marlene’s daughter took the pieces to build her family home in her husband’s neighborhood. Marlene explained that the “dirigente” in her sector was a decent man; he recognized that she was struggling financially, especially after paying \$500 to Hogar de Cristo. He was patient and allowed her to pay \$50 per month until fulfilling her debt. After his wife died, he became depressed and moved away. Marlene laughed mischievously and triumphantly as she admitted that she never finished paying the \$1,200.

The differences in the settlement and development of the northern and southern sectors form part of a larger historical narrative of Guayaquil, particularly from the second half of the twentieth century through the present. Pedro Juna Loy (2015) indicates that informal land settlements were interconnected with the formation of various political parties, as politicians offered “free land” in exchange for votes. Of course, since these were not actually politicians’ lands to “give,” the vulnerable “owners” experienced eviction and false fines, though some, eventually, were able to obtain land titles, like Alfredo. In “Bastión Popular y su amalgama de habitantes afuereños,” they describe the legalization of lands:

Luego de la muerte de Carlos Castro, el 6 de septiembre de 1991, vinieron mejores días para Bastión Popular, pues sus 40.000 moradores lograron ‘independizarse’ de ese caciquismo al que los había sometido, según cuenta Gleny Viteri: ‘A los ocho días de muerto Carlos Castro, los dirigentes empezaron a matarse entre ellos porque creían que Bastión Popular era la gallina de los huevos de oro y se iban a seguir enriqueciendo.’ En Marzo de 1992, Bastión Popular logró del Congreso Nacional la legalización de sus

tierras, estableciéndose el pago de 100 sucres por metro cuadrado. A partir de entonces, el barrio ha crecido en número de ‘bloques’ y se han pavimentado muchas calles. Sin embargo, falta más infraestructura, como lo expresan sus moradores: ‘nos preocupamos de conseguir los servicios básicos, comenzando con FODUR, que nos dio agua; la siguiente lucha fue porque no podíamos seguir haciendo redes comunitarias, pues estábamos sobre las tuberías matrices de La Toma, entonces, había que hacer las redes domiciliarias y el gobierno de Sixto Durán-Ballén se dio esa obra; luego, la lucha por el alcantarillado, pues había mucha contaminación en Bastión y nos dimos a la tarea de recoger 10.000 firmas, de igual manera como lo habíamos hecho para la legalización, presentamos al Municipio y se nos ofreció terminar la obra de alcantarillado y agua potable para el año 2006, pero esa obra está inconclusa’

After Carlos Castro’s death on September 6, 1991, came the best days for Bastión Popular, because its 40.000 inhabitants were able to become independent of the tyranny of the one who controlled them all; according to Glenny Viteri: ‘Eight days after the death of Carlos Castro, the crime bosses started to kill each other off because they believed Bastión Popular was the hen with the golden eggs, and they were going to keep getting rich from it.’ In March of 1992, Bastión Popular succeeded in legalizing its lands by means of the National Congress, establishing a fee of 100 sucres (local currency at the time) per square meter. From that point, the neighborhood has grown in the number of ‘blocks’ and the streets have been paved. Nevertheless, infrastructural necessities remain, as the inhabitants have expressed: ‘we are concerned with obtaining the basic services, starting with FODUR, which gave us water; the next fight was because we couldn’t maintain our community electric wiring, because we were above the water pipes of La Toma, so then, we had to create house-based networks, and this project was conducted under the government of Sixto Durán-Ballén; afterward, came the fight for sewerage systems, because there was a lot of contamination in Bastión and we took on the task of collecting 10.000 signatures, just as we did for the legalization of our lands; we presented the Municipality with these and they offered to finish the sewerage installations along with running water by 2006, but this project remains undone].

Certainly, in Bloque 6 of la Flor de Bastión where Lulita and Marlene live, they are two of the women who have led their block’s efforts to attain positive changes, like running water in their homes. They are still fighting for their street to be paved, and they are waiting for a better sewerage system to be installed. Their block has become the neighborhood where I spend the most time. We hold flea markets there that I organize alongside Lulita, Marlene, and another neighbor. Lulita’s son and I organized the 2015 “Navi-Flor” Christmas celebration for 300 kids and their families. What I admire most about “Bloque 6” is the leadership of the women, which mirrors the efforts of Manuela on the South Side who physically built her home (and its



accompanying bridge) and of Diana who confronted Toral's "dogs" who were going to kill an innocent boy; and, of course, she continues to run off criminals who present a threat to her block. Lulita and Marelene accompanied me to Diana's house once for a flea market we held on her block in las Malvinas. One of the electric cables started falling over, and Diana ran over to tell her neighbor to get her kids out of the house, just in case. Lulita could not believe her neighbor's reaction, and loudly called her an "ingrata" [ingrate] and an "irresponsable" [irresponsible (one)]. After the flea market, the four of us spoke with Diana inside her home. Lulita admitted that she was afraid to come to las Malvinas because of all the horror stories she'd heard, but that her block was very pretty and it seemed calm. The only problem, she told her, were her neighbors.

Lulita and Marlene told Diana that they needed to be more like "Bloque 6." They were united, and united they had made progress. Diana complained the most about the two young girls who lived in their mother's house across the street and allowed a gang of kids to park their motorcycles there and to leave their stolen merchandise there. Marlene told her that that could only be resolved if all of the neighbors united; Diana couldn't combat them by herself. Across from Lulita and Marlene's homes is an empty field, which the neighbors fixed and made into a soccer field for the kids: la cancha Carioca. That's where we hold the flea markets and where we held the Christmas party. A group of gang bangers started hanging out at the soccer field and would gather there to smoke and drink. The kids, then, couldn't use the soccer field, and the neighbors were worried about the negative influences entering their block. Lulita gathered together all of her neighbors and they agreed that the next day, at six o'clock, they would all go sit on the field. Every afternoon, for a week, they joined together and staged a sit-in on the soccer field they had built. The gang members became frustrated, and Lulita reminded them that they didn't belong there. They were not a part of their block. The actions of Lulita and her

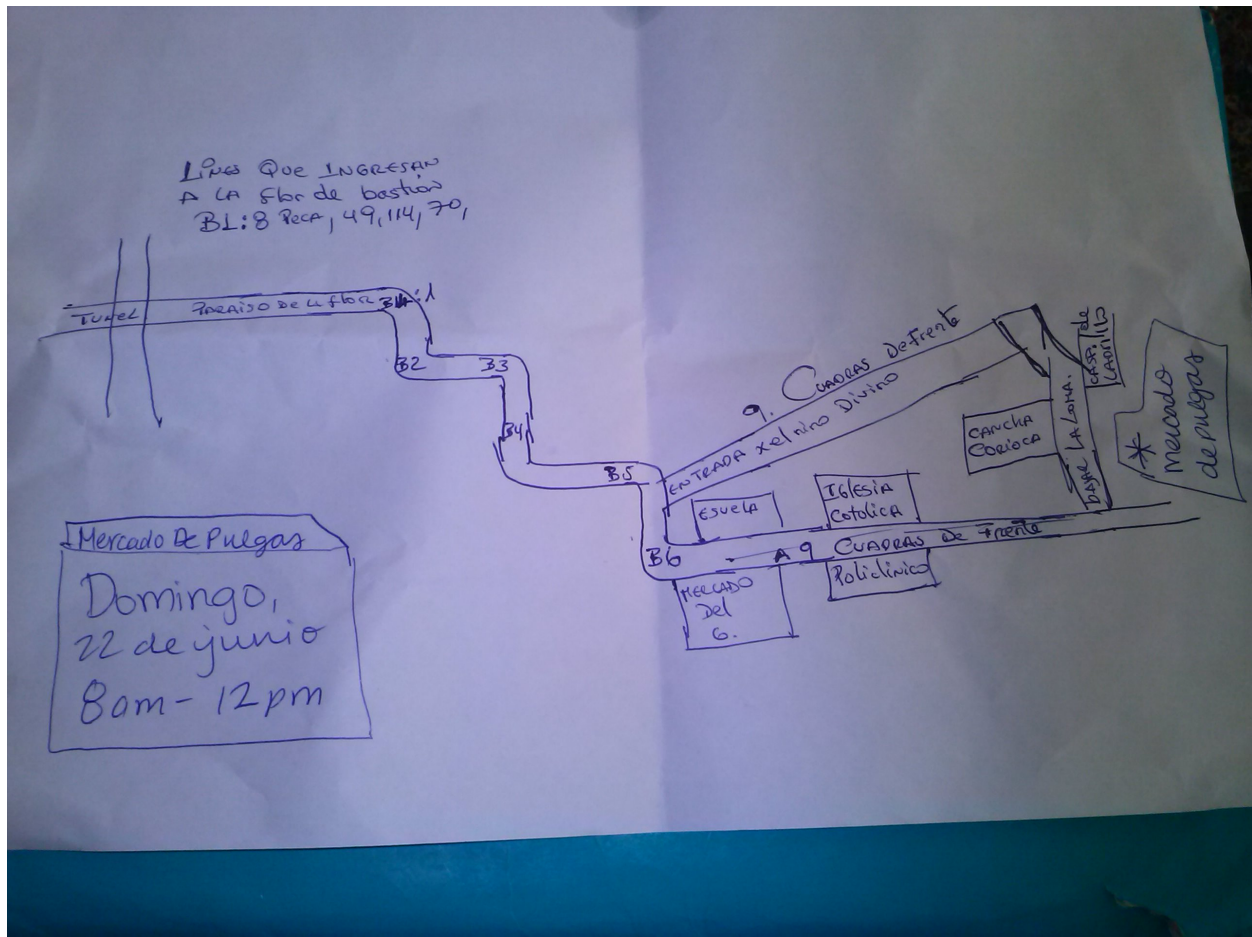
neighbors recall the “human wall” connotation of “Bastión Popular;” these convictions were passed on to their sister shantytown: la Flor de Bastión. This spirit penetrates shantytown homes and blocks, as the history of these neighborhoods demonstrates their foundation upon corruption and exploitation. The “squatters” and those who inhabit these city sectors today have formed a common front to achieve success for their neighborhoods and, in turn, for their families.

Nevertheless, Rosario is disconnected from her neighbors and tries to keep to herself; Diana’s neighbors try to keep to themselves and resist her efforts to organize. As Manuela told us on our walk to the Focus Group, she learned that it was better to keep quiet. Being a leader was a dangerous position: too many expectations and too much criticism.



**Figure 29** This is the soccer field of Bloque 6, which they call “la cancha Carioca,” as labeled on the map in Figure 30. In the winters they play volleyball instead of soccer, because the field floods. (Photo taken by Johnson, 2016)

Over the decades, their challenges have changed. Over twenty years ago when Lulita and Marlene became neighbors, it was all “monte” [mountainous, grassy, wild]. They carried around machetes, ready for snakes and wildcats (bobcats) and wolves that could come out at any time. Although Lulita appears fearless, she and Marlene became friends when Marlene heard her screams next door and ran over to kill the snake that had entered Lulita’s home. Lulita and Marlene always refer to their neighbors as being “como una familia” [like a family]. It is in their neighborhood that I am most often invited to Bingo tournaments or to raffles [rifas] that are always organized for a neighbor’s health, a big event (graduation costs, first communion costs), or for fundraising for a project they are collaboratively organizing in their own neighborhood, such as special food and gifts for the kids on *El día del niño*.



**Figure 30** Marlene’s son drew a map for me to give the families from la Fundación who wanted to shop at the Flea Market [“Mercado de Pulgas”]. Because the Flor de Bastión is so large, I also gave copies of this map to the families from other blocks, not just those from Durán and the South Side. At the top, he included the numbers of buses that people could take to reach their neighborhood. Over the years, giving people directions, I have learned that the best landmarks to give are “el Mercado de la 6,” which is the market of Bloque 6, notated on this map. Also, “el niño divino” [the divine boy] is a small statue of Baby Jesus that people from the area are familiar with. And, “el Childrens” [Children’s International] is a green building, just after “el niño divino,” that he didn’t include on the map, but that is very well known throughout la Flor de Bastión. Mayra, for example, lives in Bloque 12, but she found “la cancha Carioca” because she goes to Children’s several times per week.

### *East Side: El Ejército*

For the conversation groups I held with the mothers and grandmothers from Fundación Crecer, I included the two families I worked with from Durán with the North Side group. Elisa and Jaqui would meet me at my house, and we would ride to the Flor de Bastión together. On one particular morning at the Mall del Fortín, which is the new shopping center located at one of the many entrances to the Flor de Bastión shantytown, Elisa and Jaqui were among the most vocal about “el bono,” which is the state-sponsored monthly bonus of \$50 that is given to

families deemed to be most in need. The women started talking, concerned, because they were taking the “bono” away from many families that year. Jaqui told the story of her neighbor, Anita; the census surveyors – “para hacer la evaluación del bono” [to make their evaluation about eligibility for the “bono”] – arrived at her house and asked for “Anita” – “la sangre se le fue a los pies” [all her blood dropped to her feet]. But, it ended up being another “Anita,” and she pointed them down the street. Jaqui told me that when the first person from the neighborhood spreads the word that the census people have arrived, neighbors start hiding televisions and making their homes less attractive; paradoxically, they hide everything they worked so hard to attain. They continue seeking governmental support, because although they have acquired material things and have managed to make their house from cement or cover their floor with tile, they still have significant financial needs. Elisa complained because she was on her own with her son, and they took it away from her. They told her: “usted es joven y puede trabajar” [you are young and you can work]. She replied: “hay mujeres más jóvenes que yo que lo reciben y encima de eso tienen un marido que las mantiene, y yo estoy totalmente sola” [there are women who are younger than me who get it, and on top of that, they have a husband who maintains them, and I am completely alone].

We met Elisa and Darío at the bus stop along one of the major roads in Durán. They told us it was too complicated to explain how to get to “El Ejército” [The Army], which was the name of their neighborhood. We drove for so long and got to a point where there were no more businesses or people lining the streets; it was all dirt with a scattering of “casas de caña” propped up on sticks of bamboo. There was a sprinkling of brick houses and some homes had black plastic bags as walls. The people who passed through that sector appeared to use the streets as a

dump yard. I noticed the lots were covered in trash. There was a cow eating garbage in an empty lot.

If driving in with a car was difficult, I could only imagine how far they walked to reach the bus stop. And, I imagined how contaminated their feet and legs could get in the winter, walking through the streets filled with trash and flooded with rainwater that inevitably mixed with the fluids from the septic tanks. Elisa told us that, as a girl, she dreamed of a “casa de caña” along a river. Her ex-husband who no longer lived in the house with her would joke during the rainy season, telling her: “Hey, you got your wish!”

We followed their instructions, and we kept turning. From all of my first times going into certain neighborhoods or going to certain houses, I learned that my research collaborators never said “right” or “left.” It was difficult to understand where to turn. They would say “por ahí” [around there] or “siga” [keep going] or “dónde viró ese carro” [where that car just turned]. I always clarified and said the direction while pointing that way. A motorcycle passed us on the way, and Elisa said the two young guys were her neighbors from across the street; they were partners, she explained, because they watched each other’s houses: “nos quedamos de guardianes” [we stay as security guards]. Being so deep inside Durán, it made sense that they had to take care of each other. Brenda Chalfin (2014) who writes about public sanitation facilities and their interconnection with “bare life” in Ghana, reflects on Arendt’s (1958) “‘distinction between things that should be shown and things that should be hidden’ (1958:72)” (101) and recalls Henri Lefebvre’s (1996) discussion of “the right to the city.” Chalfin’s reflections on these concepts of belonging and rights in relation to city spaces underscore the inequalities by which cities are organized and by which resources are distributed; certain citizens are designated as more worthy than others, and their spaces reflect their worth to the city

planners and leaders. In the case of Guayaquil's shantytowns, these neighborhoods are located on the city's periphery: things that should be hidden. The highway, la Perimetral, runs between the northern and southern shantytowns, and its name further highlights that these sectors are the city's perimeter: on the outskirts and separate from the rest.

Elisa's house was deeply hidden within Durán; we would have been unable to get there without Elisa and Darío to guide us. This felt like a forgotten zone and, in many ways, it was. We drove up to their house made of "caña" and propped up on four sticks. Their yard had a large mound of sand and rocks, which they were using to build their brick house. They had already advanced in making the back wall of this new house and the "relleno" to protect the new house against flooding by giving it a higher foundation. Not unlike Marlene in la Flor de Bastión, they would continue living in their "casa de caña" while building their brick house. Their plot of land was large enough for both houses to remain. Her house was the first "casa de caña" I had ever been inside. "Caña" is an Andean bamboo. Before, a majority of barrio homes were made of this type of wood. Making houses from this material was cheaper than making a house from cement; also, it was convenient, as the examples from this chapter have demonstrated, because it was easier to move a "casa de caña" from one place to another in the case of eviction, for example. Because many of the original dwellers of these spaces were "squatters," being able to move their home was always an important consideration. Around her house, Elisa explained as we drove, that almost everything was an "invasión." Elisa thought her house was not an "invasión," and she paid \$100 per month for three years to buy her land legitimately; of course, she later learned that the person who sold her the land was not the true owner. There are too many land traffickers who take over territories unlawfully, section it off, and sell them as individual lots; when the real owners notice and complain, the victims of the

unlawful transactions often lose all of the money they paid the trafficker. Municipal and governmental efforts today aim to rectify past corruption and prevent future efforts of traffickers.



**Figure 31** Bamboo





**Figure 32** This is the caña guadua that is typical of the Andean region and used to make the shantytown homes. As Elisa, Marlene, and others have explained to me, the caña is split open and flattened so that one's walls are flat, and not circular. Around many of these houses, inhabitants put plastic to prevent the cold, the rain, sunlight, and insects from getting in. Elisa and Darío covered the inside of their walls with pages from magazines; this decision was both aesthetic and strategic to cover the holes. Homes that are elevated on poles of caña are designed this way to avoid flooding; the floors of these elevated homes are made from wooden boards, because they are more weight resistant.

Underneath Elisa's house was a dog named Princesa; Darío told us, sadly, that she was Beethoven's sister, but he was stolen. Danilo began a conversation with Darío, intrigued that Darío had seen the movie Beethoven and that it had inspired him to name his dog. Princesa was tied to the bamboo base with a blue leash made of thick string. There was a closed off room by her, which Elisa said used to be a "gallinera." The ladder leading to the front door was located right next to a small garden where Elisa grows herbs, like menta, orégano, and toronjíl. Elisa pointed out the tomato tree underneath the steps, and to the far right, bordering the next house, was a papaya tree. There was also a chicken, Junior, walking next to their dog. Elisa said that

even if they run out of money, they have a few things with which they can sustain themselves for a little while. I didn't go inside the bathroom, but she pointed it out; it was located to the left side of her lot, separate from the house. When they built their brick house, she told me they would keep the bathroom outside, because that is the way it was in Cuenca, the highland town they are from. She and Darío, at different moments, reflected on how cold it is to shower in Cuenca. In Cuenca, however, the houses are made of adobe, keeping the heat in; but, in Durán, Elisa contrasted, these houses let everything in. At night, it was often quite cold. Danilo asked about Cuenca's landscapes and if she missed them. Of course she missed them, she responded, because they are beautiful and make that part of the country so special.

When she first moved to "El Ejército," Elisa said she was scared that her house would fall over from strong winds. Although Darío became embarrassed when she told us this, he enjoyed the folkloric music and dances of the highlands; he danced as a child in Cuenca and continued to do so in the privacy of his house in Durán. He was too shy to show us, but Elisa said she used to get scared that he was going to bring the whole house down.

The ladder was shaky on my way up, encouraging me to climb up quickly. When I walked inside, there was a tiny, skinny grey cat that Elisa referred to as "el gato diabólico" [the diabolical cat]. I remembered that she mentioned him a few weeks earlier at my house; she told me that they found it on the street and decided to give it a home. Darío turned a small fan on, upon his mother's request; it brought instant relief from the oppressive heat, but it seemed to blow in more dust and dirt from the unpaved roads. Their walls were covered with cut outs from magazines – it looked like a huge collage. To the right, there was a kitchen with a fridge and a stovetop. There was a plastic container that they used to store their dishes. She told me later that all of their kitchenware is plastic. There was a big blue bowl that they used as a sink to wash

their dishes. Their house was an open, small room, and the kitchen was separated from the sleeping area by a plastic table with two plastic chairs and two plastic stools. The table was very low, which I became especially conscious of when I sat down to eat the potato soup she had prepared for us. Darío did his homework there, and I imagined it would be quite uncomfortable with such a big distance. There was a double layer of wood with a space between the two panels that served as the floor. As I sat, the sun, the dog, the chicken, the branches, and everything else that was beneath us created shadows that startled me, as it looked like something running between the floor space. Elisa told me that she accepted the diabolical cat precisely so that it would kill the rats that managed to creep into their home.

On the far left corner there was a big green bed, positioned horizontally; a mattress was on the floor on the far right corner, vertically. The bed was Darío's, but he usually ended up sleeping with his mother on the floor. The lime green bed had little drawers on both sides of the headboard. It was covered with a pink woolen blanket that had a lion drawn in white. Next to the green bed was a dresser with a missing panel, and I could see Elisa's clothes sticking out. On top of the dresser was a small television with a DVD player. Their other DVD player was larger, they told us, but it had been stolen. This was where Darío would watch the highland videos of the indigenous dances and songs. He was also a big fan of Jackie Chan and eagerly showed us the pirated DVDs he watched.

There were hangers in the corner of the room above the mattress, like at Diana's house. Darío's clothes hung from there. There were many wires coming from the walls and ceiling; there were light bulbs in random places, too, though it was sunny outside that morning and there was enough natural light to avoid turning on theirs. When Elisa made the "jugo de mora" [blackberry juice], she had to put the blender on the floor where an improvised socket was

located. While we ate they showed us pictures of Darío so that we could see how he used to dance. Elisa pulled these from a set of plastic drawers that were right next to the kitchen, across the room from her dresser. It was cream with yellow handles and looked new. Darío had the same face from the time he was a baby.

Elisa was very critical of Darío. I felt like she tried to humiliate him in front of us and in front of others. He was very shy, and while we sat inside, people approached their house, calling from the street. She criticized her son for being shy about approaching the doorway to see who it was. One time, there was a woman who went by to see if they wanted to buy fruit. Darío responded, “No thank you, maybe next time.” His mother, then, exclaimed, “See? Was that so hard?” She then criticized him for not saying “thank you.” It was uncomfortable to hear how she spoke to him and to see him look down at the ground, embarrassed. I kept looking at the pictures and commenting on them to try to change the conversation. Another woman went by, dressed in indigenous clothing; she must have felt overheated with a green, woolen skirt, a long-sleeve white blouse and a colorful pink shawl. We were speaking with Elisa, and I wasn’t sure what the interaction was between this woman and Darío. The neighbors across the street also called out to him; he communicated with head nods, and I was sure these were questions about us.

Before we finished eating and talking and made our way outside, I told Elisa that I loved how decorative the pictures on their walls were. Though I didn’t tell her this, up to that point, it had been the prettiest house I had visited, even though it was likely the most poor. Elisa told me that they glued the pictures on, and she pointed to the portion of the lower wall on the far right side of the room. She still hadn’t repaired that portion; that was where they broke in and stole her sheets, blankets, and DVD player. Luckily, they didn’t take the rice maker, the blender, or

the iron, she concluded. While walking out of the house, I noticed a toothbrush and a small, travel-size toothpaste on the wall by the front door; they used the caña and the holes creatively for additional storage.

As we started walking off her land, Elisa told us that they didn't have sewerage systems or running water in this part of Durán. They stole light from the street. Jaqui's sector of Durán, "Cooperativa Hector Cobos," had more paved roads, but they didn't have running water either; they had to get water from "tanqueros," and the trucks that transported those tanks were dangerous, almost running over her two-year-old daughter as we walked around Hector Cobos, weeks later. Jaqui told us she was so happy because they dug on her street and water came out. But, they didn't do anything about it. She said that Durán's worthless mayor, Dalton, did not want to make that investment on them.

We walked toward the right off Elisa's property, since we had come in from the left. After less than half a block, Elisa said we were leaving "El Ejército" and entering "la Zona de los Pobres" [the Zone of the Poor]. We started walking, but Elisa said it was better to look from a distance. There were too many weeds and there was no clear pathway. I saw graffiti from the distance and a blue bus parked in front of one of the houses. We went back to the dirt road and remained on the parts that had a clear path. I saw a house painted yellow, purple, and pink; it looked like a doll's house. It stood out from everything else, not unlike the cow I saw when we drove in. Soon, I saw another house that was painted royal blue and had a pool and air conditioning units. There was a metal fence around it. Elisa didn't know when I asked her who lived there.

Signs boasting, "Dalton es un gran alcalde" [Dalton is a great mayor], were scattered along the streets. He was supposedly going to fix their streets that November. As Elisa

reflected, Dalton had clearly overlooked their sector; the only sign of him were those signs. She told us how their light was cut for five days, and she got lost walking home after work. It was pitch black. The owners of their lands accused them of being squatters, and because they were “invasores” [invaders], they cut their light. I saw several abandoned houses and wondered if those encouraged more informal appropriations.

She struggled with her precarious positionality as an “invasora” who thought she was legally buying her property. With the upcoming elections that winter, she hoped a new candidate would help them combat the scam of the traffickers. Currently, she and her neighbors were threatened with eviction if they didn’t pay; but they knew at that point that the person they had to pay was not the lawful owner.

After nearly an hour of walking around and learning more about her neighborhood and her experiences, Elisa asked us to go back into her house. Because I had been ill for several weeks, she asked me to let her do the egg test [“la prueba del huevo”] before I left. She instructed me to lie down on the pink blanket. She moved my legs so that they were propped up on the stool. She took an egg and ran it along my body, starting with my forehead. As she moved it, she moved her hands in the motion of a cross. Then, she cracked it in an empty coffee container, and concluded that I had not been “ojeada” [given the evil eye]. She said the whiteness that came out upon the crack was a sign of infection, but she wasn’t sure which one; if I had been “ojeada,” the yellow part would have formed little circles. She said her mother was more skilled than she was at “leyendo el huevo” [reading the egg]. She could have told me exactly what I had. Elisa gave me a branch of something from her garden, and told me to put it across my face; she gave me a small bottle of an ailment she made that was a combination of

alcohol, cologne, sugar, and some other ingredients that I no longer remembered when I wrote my notes. I put that concoction on my head, too.



**Figure 33** These are the decorations outside Jaqui's house for her son, Kaín's, fifteenth birthday celebration with some friends from Fundación Crecer. I asked her when she had changed her mind about Dalton, since her house had advertisements for him and his political party – #6 (Social-Cristianos) –, which is also Jaime Nebot's party. She said that she put up anyone's sign as long as they gave her something for free. But, she still couldn't stand Dalton. The blue cylinders on the bottom right side of the picture are the "tanqueros," filled with the water they use in their home. To the left is an inflatable pool Jaqui borrowed from a neighbor for the party.



**Figure 34** The friends from our morning group at Fundación Crecer, posing inside Jaqui's living room before the rest of Kain's guests arrive (February 2014). (From left to right: Sarita, Milana, Patricia, Mayra, Layla, Georgina, Fiorella, Tito, Nikolette, and Hólger)



**Figure 35** Kain and his little sister, leading us to their house one afternoon (2013). They waited for us on the major road, before the back roads that become "Cooperativa Hector Cobos."



## **Part II: Poverty, Property, and Playing Monopoly: Understanding History, Childhood, and Everyday Life in the Shantytowns**

Guayaquil's history and the city's trajectory of building neighborhoods and safe spaces represent a history and trajectory of social and spatial inequalities. These inequalities provide a frame through which to evaluate the ways in which children's neighborhoods and their exposure to other city sectors influence and, sometimes, limit or regulate their childhood. Children, then, across the city develop different skills and mentalities and become cognizant of their opportunities and possibilities for their everyday lives and for their futures at a very young age. Early on, children make decisions about their poverty, their race, and their city based on the exclusionary frames that they have already learned and internalized that structure Guayaquileño society.

### ***A World of Its Own***

One morning, working with Jefferson on his alphabet skills, he became distracted by a new wound on his arm. I asked him about it, and he began to show me the cuts and scars on his hands and legs. He categorized them by where he lived when he got them. First, he lived in Voluntad de Dios, which he told was "por la Perimetral" [off the Perimetral, the major highway connecting the northern and southern perimeters of the city]. From the North, he moved to the South, to el Guasmo. There, he acquired his third, fourth, fifth, and sixth scars. They moved after they killed his uncle. The last set of scars was also from the Perimetral in a neighborhood called "la Florida."

Jefferson told me that JJ had the same uncle, the one who was killed. JJ began showing me his scars, too. Both boys, though they could remember where they got the scar, couldn't remember when. Where they lived and what they were playing were how they organized their memories of these events. From there, JJ began telling me about the bird he had killed; killing

birds was his favorite “game” to play after school. With an eraser, paper, and a pencil, he showed me how he killed “una paloma” [a dove]. The day before, he bragged that he gave the “paloma” a piece of food and then smashed it with a rock. Although I suggested a different game, like soccer, he went on to tell me about the yellow bird he had killed with his slingshot: “la desplumé” [I de-feathered it].

A new trend around Fundación Crecer when I arrived in 2012 was making tattoos. Using a marker and glue, kids would tattoo each other’s arms. JJ’s tattoo said “Mafia.” The teachers may have noticed, but they let them do it anyway. A few kids also made money during the school day by selling lollipops. They always had debts and talked about how much they owed each other. Silvia no longer sold to one of her friends who owed her more than a dollar. Her mother bought her big bags for \$3 or \$5, and she sold each lollipop individually for ten cents. It was good business, she assured me. One morning, Richard asked me if I wanted one, and I didn’t. I said they were bad for my teeth. He responded: “pero rico pa’ el estómago” [but good for the stomach]. He was the one who owed Silvia money, but he always tried to negotiate so she would sell him more on credit. He told her that he could help her advertise: “Estos chupetes han sido importados de (pause) – Guayaquil!” [These lollipops have been imported from (pause) – Guayaquil!]. The teachers were not supposed to let them sell these in school, but I saw that they purchased them, too.

The principal was more strict in terms of the children’s appropriate behavior. My second week of fieldwork, everyone was silent during lunch as she announced that she had confiscated several students’ Dragon Ball playing cards. She asked the students why these were bad. They responded that they provoked betting and gambling, which are “vicios” [vices]. Clearly, they had already had a discussion about correct forms of play.

The summer of 2011, during my preliminary fieldwork, one of the teachers talked to me about disciplining the children if they were playing *Bolicha*. Because I was getting to know the children and was interested in their play during recess, I enthusiastically observed them play *Bolicha*. Instead, I should have confiscated their marbles and coins. This game was a “vicio.”

Makanaki was the best player, and when we spoke, years later, during an interview, he told me why he was upset that day. He was angry at his grandfather: “Es que yo me pongo a jugar – como ayer, a un primo mío le gané jugando Bolicha y se puso a llorar porque le gané, pero yo no se lo voy a devolver – que ¿porque no le entrego la bolicha? Y dije porque yo le gané. Y ahí se puso bravo...” [I play – like yesterday, I beat my cousin playing Bolicha, and he started crying because I beat him, but I’m not going to give it back – what, why don’t I give him back the marbles? I said, it’s because I beat him. And then he got mad...]. His grandfather forced him to give it back so his cousin would stop crying.

His other cousin, Carmen, plays Bolicha, too. They live in the same house. She told me: “Tengo buena puntería” [I have good aim]; but, she doesn’t play for money. She said that her cousin “se queda chiro” [is broke] because he loses his money playing at the Fundación. She enjoyed playing Bingo, dominos, and “palito chino” [pick-up sticks]. She also liked going to the park called “De Roba Palo.” It sounded strange, and I asked her why it had that name, thinking, perhaps, it was the name of a game or of a ride; she explained that a man who put it there gave it that name. “La sube y baja” [the see-saw] was her favorite. Like the other kids, she loved going swimming in the river: “Me baño en el salado por mi casa; es chévere, si no que siempre me corto. Allá hay ostiones – unas cosas que se hace a veces ceviche, es como la concha...hay tablas con clavos” [I swim in the “salado” by my house; it’s cool, it’s just that I always get cut. There are oysters – those things that you sometimes use to make “ceviche” (a cold Ecuadorian

seafood dish), it's like the conch shells...there are boards with nails]. We were sitting at the food court while she told me this, and there was a little kids' game near us. She kept looking at it, as she talked to me about "el salado." Then she abruptly asked, "¿Cuánto se pone ahí en esas fichas? ¿Se pone ahí para divertirse?" [How much do you put in there...you put money in there to have fun?] I told her that I thought so, but that it was for very small children.

Because she liked swimming so much, I asked Carmen if she ever went to the pool.

¿Cuál piscina? [Which pool?] she responded.

Una vez yo quería ir, y como enantes, me sacaron por Leonela; después cuándo fueron a esa cosa de la ranchita de allá, siempre me sacaron pica. Ve, me da una rabia...es que los que no son de Ecomundo, no los llevan. Me sacaron porque Leonela dijo que nosotros le cortamos las cejas. ¿Cómo una moneda va a cortar las cejas?

[One time I wanted to go, but just like before, they took me out because of Leonela (earlier in the day, she had gotten in trouble because of this classmate). Later, when they went to that little ranch over there, they always rubbed my nose in it. See, it makes me so angry...those who weren't a part of the Ecomundo group (an extra-curricular activity), couldn't go. They took me out of that group because Leonela said that we cut her eyebrows. How can a coin cut eyebrows?].

In her neighborhood, "Hay veces que mi mami me dice que vaya por ahí" [There are times when my mom tells me to go around there], to play soccer or tennis. Her cousin was teaching her how to play tennis: "me regalaron unas raquetas y dos pelotitas" [they gave me some rackets and two little balls]. She lost one of the balls because she hit it too hard into another house. She spent the majority of the recess period at the Fundación talking to me and our small group. But, she told me that sometimes she liked to go on the swings. She didn't play soccer at the Fundación, but she did around her house:

Más juego pelota sin zapatos...ya estoy acostumbrada a correr sin zapato, corro rapidito sin zapato...de vez en cuando, no le gusta que ande tanto en la calle porque dice que hay mucho peligro. Habían unos payasos que los robaban a los niños. Les scaban los órganos y los vendían. En el bus se acercaron cinco – iban en el bus. Salió un payasito y dijo que si queríamos unos dulces, pero trépanse a un carro blanco...nos fuimos corriendo y casi nos atropelló un carro – nos persiguieron

[I play ball more without shoes...I am used to running without shoes, I run really quickly without shoes...every once in a while, she (her grandmother “mami”) doesn’t like for me to be on the street very much because she says there is too much danger. There were these clowns that kidnapped children. They took their organs and sold them. On the bus, five approached us – they were on the bus. A little clown came out and asked if we wanted sweets, but get in a white car...we left running and almost got hit by a car – they chased us].

In reviewing the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the policies reveal ideas of “appropriate” childhood, equal rights, and freedom, highlighting both “official” expectations for child socialization and development and “official” misperceptions toward children’s possibilities to partake “freely” and “equally” in activities, like education and like play. Although in several shantytowns, particularly in the southern sectors of Guayaquil, there are new parks and new spaces for children to play, “free time” in these neighborhoods represents mixed feelings of excitement and tension for children and their guardians. During school vacation, many of the children in these neighborhoods are locked in their homes. Locking children in their homes is a common practice to protect them by closing off the possibility of having them escape or having someone from the outside enter. There are two stories I have heard of children who have died in fires because of this practice; during one focus group in the South Side Malvinas neighborhood, the women told me that a neighbor tried to get the child out of the house, but it was too late. The presence of drug-dealers and users, drunks, and gang members eliminates many opportunities for outdoor play and recreation. Mothers fear leaving their children home alone and, sometimes, become even more distressed if their children are accompanied by stepfathers or other male relatives. As my own research demonstrates, the extent of a child’s “freedom” to play and to participate in “age-appropriate” activities as defined by the UNCRC overlooks the realities of spaces that face the challenges of poverty and violence.

Hólger and Sarita told the same story of kids' bodies left under bridges with signs that read "Gracias por tus órganos" [Thank you for your organs]. Such environments that are dangerous and impoverished serve as examples of Cindi Katz's (2004) "eroded ecology" and of Jonathan Kozol's (1991) "environmental racism." These are settings marked by unemployment, failing health, poor infrastructure, and limited opportunities for children in terms of education and safe spaces for play and growing up. Geographer Tracey Skelton (2000) uses Katz's "eroded ecology" to describe a case of girls in South Wales in which "the lives of children are impoverished and lacking in opportunities, diversity and activities...However, through community projects...residents of the region are creating positive and welcoming spaces for children" (82), not unlike the cancha Carioca of Bloque 6. Geographer Stuart Aitken (2001) describes "eroded ecology" as "derelict buildings, wastelands of unemployment and trashed resources" (155). Kozol's notion of "environmental racism" captures how growing up in impoverished spaces can cause health challenges brought about, for example, by higher exposure to lead poisoning, which is common for neighborhoods built above landfills. In Guayaquil's shantytowns, empty lots serve as landfills and, depending on how far into the shantytown they are located, the trash collectors overlook these areas. It is not uncommon for people to burn their trash, which is a strong and overwhelming smell that often reaches me when I visit the children and their families. Because these neighborhoods are located on the city's perimeter, they also coincide with the spaces reserved for trash collectors to make their daily deposits.

Additionally, "eroded ecologies" and "environmental racism" highlight the social inequalities that characterize certain city sectors. Poverty is equated with limited opportunities and resources, guiding children's decisions in their everyday lives and the ways in which they envision their futures. While many of the qualities described by Katz and Kozol are relevant to

the city's shantytowns, what I aim to highlight is that alongside the struggles and injustices people have and continue to confront on the southern, northern, and eastern poles of Guayaquil, there is power and pride embedded in their histories and in their day to day actions.

When children describe their futures, they envision themselves living in their same neighborhoods; certainly, this attachment goes beyond the segregation and inequality that maintain those from the shantytowns in the shantytowns. The attachment lies in the personal connection to the history of their neighborhoods and their families' continued struggles and efforts to improve their communities. Lulita and Marlene encouraged Diana to unite her neighbors to work collaboratively to attain positive changes. These are not women who accept living lives plagued by "eroded ecologies" and "environmental racism." They do not sit passively and wait for the negligent city leaders to decide to pay attention to them (see also Holston 1991 who emphasizes that those who live in poverty are not hopeless or inactive). They pressure and when the pressure doesn't work, they make the changes themselves. While their material resources are limited, their human capital and their passion for change and for better lives for their children are limitless. These are some of the elements that make the shantytowns a world of their own. While she did not articulate all of these stories, lined with struggle and triumph, Cristi, at 10 years old, understood the depth of "los barrios." They have a history and they face challenges that lead to different kinds of decision-making, risk-taking, and ways of imagining their world alongside other worlds and other potential worlds.

This chapter showcases the women who led the building and organizing efforts of these shantytowns, which were founded originally as squatter settlements. Subsequent land trafficking left shantytown families vulnerable to exploitation, especially from local crime bosses who, as they have told me, were the "law" in their no-man's-land. At the heart of these communities,

though, are families. Migrants created the shantytowns for their family and for their children to have a future: a safe space to grow up. I became interested, then, in the outside forces that prevented the family household from being a safe space in which children could thrive. These forces are visible in the illegality attributed to squatters and in the limited resources and support provided by local and national governments to the shantytowns. In the following chapter, I reflect on the complex positions of girls and women who, in this chapter, rise as leaders, while simultaneously enduring abuse and certain levels of dependence on husbands. Manuela's story of marriage and mothering in Esmeraldas from this chapter serves as a precursor for understanding the experiences of girls and women still today.

### *No es un barrio, es un mundo*

When I walked into Rosario's house that afternoon, I was relieved to be indoors. Not because of the heat, but because I knew it was one of Guayaquil's most dangerous neighborhoods. This was my first time in La Isla Trinitaria, one of the city's southern-most shantytowns, and driving into the neighborhood in my husband's silver pick-up truck drew more attention than I was comfortable with. Rosario's block was small with nine houses, some cement and some made of wood. Several people ran after our truck as soon as we drove past the neighborhood market. When we parked in front of her house, kids ran out of theirs and started climbing into the bed of the pick-up. Older kids lifted babies who were unable to climb up on their own. Before I entered the house, holding hands with Rosario's 10-year-old and carrying her 2-year-old who looked longingly at the kids in the pick-up, I spoke with those who had started jumping up and down. Temporarily, at least, they stopped jumping and banging on the windows.



Adults who had followed us in by foot stood a house or so away talking amongst themselves, undoubtedly wondering who we were and why we were there. As I have learned over time, particularly in such dangerous sectors, it is always a surprise and a shock to see outsiders enter; and, it's considered quite daring to enter with a car since it draws additional attention to the presence of outsiders and leads people to assume that these outsiders have money and are worthy candidates for thieves and delinquents to take advantage of. I was nervous, but as soon as I walked into her house, I smiled at the image to my right. In the corner of their living room was a tall Christmas tree. A bare, metallic rod – the trunk – ran halfway up the cement wall. At that point, a few branches popped out and formed the tiny tree that was decorated with flashing multi-colored lights. But beneath the tree, at the base of the trunk, was 2-year-old Emilio who had run out of my arms when I started talking to the kids outside. He was crouched on the floor like a Christmas gift, watching an open sandwich maker that held a piece of bread with cheese. He was making himself breakfast, looking down with his face held in his tiny black hands, eagerly waiting for the cheese to melt. I noticed he hadn't shut the lid and that nothing was heating since the tree was plugged in instead of the appliance. His mother noticed this, too, and told her daughter to help him as she took me into the first room on the left where baby Alison was sleeping.

I looked at Alison, almost a year old, who was fast asleep on a large mattress with the *toldo* [mosquito netting] tucked in for protection. Her mom pulled out the *toldo* so that I could sit next to the baby. As I gently rubbed her head and her belly I could feel how sweaty she was, and I admired how peacefully she slept through the winter heat. I placed the bags with Christmas gifts on the floor next to the bed. Rosario and her kids were going to give me a tour of their neighborhood, but first I decided to show her some of the clothes I'd brought for her 2-year-

old and 5-year-old sons. She called Emilio into the room. Rosario took him to the Fundación several times, and I noticed that he smiled occasionally, but never made any sound. She said he was quiet, like his dad. She gave him a Hawaiian button-down shirt and told him to put his bread down and to hold the shirt up in front of him. He followed these instructions slowly but surely, and as he posed, he looked down at the shirt and smiled along with us. We gave him and his brother Edwin several pairs of shoes to try on. The blue crocs were too small, but Rosario assured me they would definitely fit one of her nephews. As she hid the bags between two dressers, she complained about her nosy neighbors who had walked in. She called them “las curiosas” [the curious ones], and told me she had to hide everything from them.

Eager to get “las curiosas” out of her house, Rosario decided to start our neighborhood tour; she instructed her oldest, Charo, to stay with Alison. Cristi was already outside, talking to the kids in the truck. I overheard her reprimanding one boy for jumping, as though the truck were hers. In response to something the boy said, she announced to the group that I was her godmother; although she and her mother had asked, it had yet to become official. She smiled and shrieked when she saw me in the doorway, about to make my way down to the street. It was quite a strategic process to navigate the pieces of wood and stone that formed the hand-made staircase. They didn’t appear especially sturdy, and I was hesitant to step with all of my weight, worried that catching the stone at a wrong angle could lead to a nasty fall. When my feet hit the rocks that made up the unpaved road, Cristi leapt forward and wrapped me in a tight hug. Although she was extremely small and skinny for a 10-year-old, her hugs were bear hugs, and I cringed sometimes at how tightly she squeezed. We started walking forward, my left hand in her right, and my husband, Rosario, and her two boys were a few steps behind us. As we moved

further from the house, the kids from the neighborhood began jumping out of the pick-up and running to catch up with us.

Cristi pointed out the house of the old man she was friends with who she had mentioned several times in conversation. He was sitting in a white plastic chair by his window, looking at us curiously. She shouted “¡Hola Don Esteban!” [Hello, Mr. Esteban!] at him, and he responded with a head nod. “Es mi madrina” [It’s my Godmother], she told him proudly, gripping my left with both of her hands and tugging me forward. Her house was located almost at the end of her block, and we quickly reached the sector of abandoned wooden houses and empty lots, littered with trash. Strands of grass popped up amidst the rocks, bottles, and newspaper that lined these plots of land.

As I looked around taking in my surroundings and mentally categorizing colors and images to include in my fieldnotes later that day, I was brought back by Cristi who dropped my left hand and inspected my right. She picked up my left again, looked at me, squinting her eyes, and shouted for her mother. “Mami, mire – ¡yo le dije!” [Mom, look, I told you!]. Her mother looked over at my hands and nodded knowingly before transitioning back to her conversation with my husband. “What?” I asked Cristi. “I knew you wouldn’t wear your wedding ring here.” Her voice was a combination of excitement and disappointment over being right about her prediction. I responded: “You told me not to wear any jewelry!” Her mother interjected at that point and said it was a very good idea. Later, I realized that Cristi hadn’t been the one to tell me not to wear jewelry; it had been a girl from another neighborhood. I felt sad to have disappointed her. It wasn’t enough to visit her and to be excited to see where she lived and where she played. She wanted me to visit her house as the same person she saw at the Fundación (who always wore her wedding band).

We continued walking toward the river in La Isla Trinitaria. Winter had come early that year – the heat and humidity were already overwhelming. Everything was sticky and sticking that November. I made the mistake of wearing sandals and did my best to step around the trash that was dumped and decaying in the empty lots we were walking through. Cristi tugged urgently at my hand, pulling me forward so that we would reach the river more quickly. Her brothers and the other children from her block had run ahead of us. She was sure they had already jumped in without her. Rosario laughed at her daughter’s excitement, but she also warned her not to pull me so hard: “La vas a hacer caer” [You’re going to make her fall]. Cristi pursed her lips and batted her long eyelashes as she threw her arms around me in what felt like an embarrassed apology; she released me, giggling, and studied me closely from head to toe with her dark, mischievous eyes. We were standing still now in what seemed like endless empty plots of land with remnants of “caña” [bamboo] scattered across the ground from the wooden houses that had collapsed from winds and rainstorms. I wondered how long it had been since those houses were standing. Cristi gripped my hand harder, but slowed her pace. Upon inspection, I had become fragile in her eyes -- a reminder that La Isla is dangerous and that I didn’t belong there. We continued toward the water, and instead of looking down at the piles of trash, I looked up at the trees that were lining our entrance to the river. I began to ask them about the scattered pieces from the houses that once formed part of their “barrio,” their neighborhood. Before I could complete my thought, 10-year-old Cristi stopped me and said: “Hermana Alysa, la Isla Trinitaria no es un barrio – es un mundo” [Sister Alysa, La Isla Trinitaria is not a neighborhood – it’s a world of its own].



**Figure 36** Charo (left) and her sister Cristi (right), waiting to eat lunch at Fundación Crecer, 2013

Cristi, her mother, and their “world of its own” lie at the heart of my research. I’ve learned from and with families across Guayaquil, particularly from the shantytown communities on the north, south, and east sides of the city. While some women share stories of migration and of physically building their homes and neighborhoods above Guayaquil’s swamplands nearly sixty years ago, others describe the crime bosses who governed their streets, threatening them and their precarious status as squatters. Families are created just as they come undone in these communities, and from a young age, children learn to trust and distrust as they measure the stakes of the relationships that frame their world. From a young age, too, influenced by stories and warnings from their mothers and from their own experiences outside of their neighborhoods, children learn exactly why a *barrio es un mundo*; that is, how Guayaquil’s socio-spatial segregation divides people and, in the process, classifies them and the extent to which they are valued as fellow Guayaquileños.

I trace the history of Guayaquil’s barrios, primarily through the stories told by the women who founded these communities and by their children and grandchildren who are growing up there. In this way, this chapter begins to provide a new narrative about migration, poverty, and the distribution of spaces and resources in the city. These stories and perspectives lay the foundation for later chapters that build upon this history and these everyday experiences in the shantytowns. Through the interconnection of property and kinship in Guayaquil’s shantytowns, for example, Chapter 4 shows how poverty and its accompanying levels of violence, exploitation, and uncertainty dictate family formation and the everyday lives of women and children, in particular. Certainly, exploring how and why *barrios* have become *mundos* [worlds of their own] and what this tells us about socio-spatial inequalities (see Chapter 6) and the future

of families and children from these neighborhoods (see Chapter 5) is an overarching theme that extends beyond this chapter.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Cycles of Violence, Girlhood, and Motherhood: Family Formation in Guayaquil's Barrios**

Families in the shantytown communities of Guayaquil, Ecuador represent a kinship model that is in constant motion, bolstered by cycles of bloodshed and fractured blood ties. To demonstrate the strategic ways in which families are both created and dissolved, I frame this chapter with stories from the girls and women I worked with during more than two years of ethnographic fieldwork whose patrilocal tendencies characterize their movement and underscore culturally significant relationships between men and women, men and girls, and girls and their mothers. I describe, particularly, the physical and emotional movement of daughters and mothers; that is, the reasons and the ways in which they cycle from one home to another, from one family to another, and from one experience to another as girls, for example, become mothers. Certainly, these cycles are complex and contradictory, and, overwhelmingly, they are triggered by the decisions of girls and women as they measure the stakes of enduring versus escaping violence and abuse.

By analyzing such violence alongside shantytown cycles of girlhood and motherhood, this chapter both poses and complicates the question that women constantly asked as they shared their personal stories: Why does history repeat itself? Although young girls see their mothers' struggles and hopes for them to have different futures, they often become mothers at a young age as well, move through multiple marriages, endure abuse, and ultimately hope for their children's futures to be different from theirs. In her home in Guayaquil's northern shantytown, La Flor de Bastión, Lola introduced me to three of her young grandchildren who I had never met before.



She told me, “Mire como la historia se repite” [Look at how history repeats itself]: “My mother abandoned my father and my brothers and me; my daughter abandoned her son who I have raised and is now 13; and now my son’s wife has abandoned him and his three children, and I will raise them, too...history always repeats itself,” she concluded. I shared my own reflection with Lola that day. I observed that by being actively invested and present in her children’s upbringing, Lola, like several other mothers I work with, interrupts these cycles of history repeating itself that they all discussed and feared.

Lola thanked me for my reflection, but questioned whether shifting a cycle off course was enough. She questioned the extent of her power over her children and grandchildren’s futures, worrying that her husband’s wrath and the violence all of their kids grew up with could outweigh the love and affection she gave them. Certainly, the experiences of my research collaborators demonstrate the challenges of growing up and raising and protecting one’s family in Guayaquil’s shantytowns. Among these challenges, I focus on the ways in which cycles of girlhood and young motherhood are broken and how they shift off course, especially once girls leave their homes to live with their husbands and his family. In this chapter, I use these stories not to present simplified cyclical experiences of poverty, but to demonstrate the active role girls and women do take in their everyday lives and how their search for safe spaces through new relationships creates families and bonds that are often short-lived, but critical for girls’ socialization and development.

I begin a discussion on girls’ and women’s actions in their search for safe spaces by discussing the structural and domestic violence that influence their decisions to move. Structural violence in Guayaquil, especially in the barrios, is emblematic of who the authorities are: who counts, who matters. This form of violence, which is manifested, for example, through the

limited resources in poor kids' homes, barrios, and schools, influences the extent to which children are motivated to think ahead and aspire. The domestic violence I describe demonstrates how parents execute their authority over their children, attempting to enforce a boundary between the adult and the child. I briefly discuss how legislation protects children and, in the process, goes up against traditional disciplinary measures; there is a conflict between structures of authority in barrio households and new institutional frameworks for the rights of children.

In response to the violence they face in their households – from parents or from the structures that provide mediocre education and inspire short-term thinking –, girls employ specific strategies. I discuss the patrilocal moves of girls who leave with husbands and address how these relationships often result in strong bonds with their mothers-in-law. Although their relationships with their husbands are often short-lived, the influence of their mothers-in-law plays a critical role in girls' development. The possibility of having children and becoming mothers also emerges from girls' decision to leave with husbands, and this overlap between girlhood and motherhood complicates understandings of growing up. I reflect on mothers' decisions to take on husbands, assessing the potential benefits and risks stepfathers present for young girls in Guayaquil's barrios, and finally discuss different ways in which motherhood is experienced and sought. All of these pieces come together to explain how families are separated, created, and imagined. The desire to discipline, to flee, to have sex, to find a husband are all efforts performed in the name of family; their results are not always those imagined, but in the face of unexpected and undesirable outcomes, girls and women react.

### **I. Situating Structural Violence in Guayaquil's Shantytowns**

The experiences and cycles described in this chapter are common across poor communities in Latin America and across the world. However, such cyclical observations of

poor communities are often criticized for falling into a “culture of poverty thesis.” Introduced by anthropologist Oscar Lewis’s ethnographies of poor Mexican and Puerto Rican families in the 1950s and 60s, this thesis has been criticized for decades by social scientists as being uncritical of the multiple forces that create living conditions of poverty and as blaming the poor for their poverty instead of observing their agency and their abilities to make positive and important societal contributions. The pillars of this thesis form part of the discourse surrounding and enforcing structural violence, which as Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2004) emphasizes, “erases the history and consciousness of the social origins of poverty...so that no one is held accountable except, perhaps, the poor themselves” (14). Based on my own research in Guayaquil and in Chicago, I have observed cycles and stigmas that accompany children and families who are poor in different socio-cultural contexts. It is not wrong to provide descriptions of their experiences, which was something particularly important for my research collaborators who often insisted that I not forget to include certain statements, stories, and ideas in my writing. I do emphasize, however, that these cycles are not automatic and my research collaborators are active agents in transforming them.<sup>49</sup>

A city of extreme socio-spatial segregation, Guayaquil has been and continues to be modeled and organized by the competing interests, needs, and imaginations of the Municipality and of Guayaquileños from the poorest to the wealthiest neighborhoods (e.g. Andrade 2005; Garcés 2004). It is Guayaquil’s shantytowns, the city’s poorest communities on its southern, northern, and eastern edges, in which my research collaborators live. These neighborhoods form a perimeter around Guayaquil with their physical structure of unpainted grey brick and bamboo always visible from a distance, surrounding the city in a perimeter of poverty. Nearly half of the

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<sup>49</sup> Chapters 3, 5 and 6, especially, highlight elements of the structural violence of poverty and the ways it manifests itself in Guayaquil.

city lives in these shantytowns. Many of these homes do not yet have basic household services, especially running water; most notably on the North Side, roads remain unpaved. The segregation of the city and the unequal distribution of resources and services reflect the structural violence that frames people's experiences in Guayaquil, particularly the experiences of the poor. Structural violence is not always clearly visible; it is embedded in political, legal, social, and economic systems that influence people's decisions, possibilities, and everyday lives (see also Tyner and Inwood 2014 on structural violence as direct and concrete). While it is primarily domestic violence that I describe in this chapter, the experiences of my research collaborators cannot be understood without also acknowledging that the structural violence of poverty, evident, for example, through the city's socio-spatial segregation, impacts their everyday experiences and possibilities.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the environmental racism and eroded ecologies in which people from the barrios live represent the structural violence of poverty. In these neighborhoods, I view forces of structural violence as being clearly visible. The barrios serve as physical markers that designate exclusion and value, underscoring who Guayaquil considers important and worthy of resources and opportunities. The limited state investments in these areas, especially as compared to other parts of the city – more valuable sectors, inhabited by more valuable citizens (whiter, wealthier) – maintain living conditions that give way to increased infections, diseases, challenges to personal safety and welfare via violence and failing public education. But the type of living these barrios house is not best portrayed as a “culture of poverty,” but as a “politics of poverty.” Political priorities, investments, and indifference, which are all contributing factors to the reinforcement of structural violence, are the leading forces implementing impoverished living conditions; such implementations are visible, for example,

through a failing public education system and the minimum wage and employment opportunities available for poor people.

Residents of all ages from Guayaquil's barrios take buses across the city to work in houses as maids, bodyguards, and chauffeurs or to work as lower-level employees in businesses: bag boys at grocery stores, servers at restaurants, custodians at shopping malls. Men also work independently as electricians, plumbers, and painters. Many also work on the city streets and on city buses as discussed in Chapters 1, 3, and 6. The shantytowns and its residents outline the city. While their neighborhoods form a physical perimeter of poverty, the shantytown residents who walk and work along Guayaquil's streets outline the different ways in which Guayaquileños interact with and inhabit city spaces, underscoring the city's exclusionary frame of life.

Certainly, poverty influences opportunities and access; while not all of the families with whom I work are classified by official statistics as living in poverty, my research of everyday life in Guayaquil, with a particular focus on the everyday life of shantytown families, emphasizes that it is the qualitative component that should drive our understandings of how poverty is lived.

By conducting extensive qualitative fieldwork across the city in various settings and with diverse methods and methodologies, I had the opportunity to gain a more holistic understanding of the socio-spatial forces that my research collaborators make sense of on a daily basis. This chapter reflects more precisely on the ways in which girls come to understand and navigate the violence that structures their everyday experiences. Some of the children I have worked with have been abandoned by their biological parents and are raised by aunts, cousins, siblings, grandparents, or group homes.<sup>50</sup> A majority of them have undergone emotional, physical, and/or

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<sup>50</sup> Hólger, for example, lives with his grandmother, Manuela; because of conflicts with his stepfather, his mother sent him to Guayaquil from Esmeraldas, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. JJ and his siblings live with their great aunt, Anaís, as discussed in Chapter 3. After their mother died, their father left them behind; Anaís said it was supposed to be temporary, but he never returned, and they never heard from him again. I did not work closely with

sexual abuse. These children talk about murder and abuse casually, and they even laugh, at times, as they narrate details and events that are terrifying and severe (for related ethnographic examples see Márquez 1999; Goldstein 2003). But all of these events form part of their everyday lives. Danger and violence, for them, have become routinized and expected (see Wells *et al.* 2014 for examples from scholars and practitioners of childhood on the ordinary and routine presence of violence in children's lives; see also Korbin 2003 for a review of danger, violence, and childhood). However, children and their families are not passive in the face of violence and their responses to hostile environments set kinship in motion, as they strategically adjust familial bonds for their wellbeing and survival.

## **II. Blood Ties and Bloodshed: The Interconnection of Violence, Childhood, and Family Formation**

The socialization and development of children is structured by their surroundings. For example, the violence girls endure in their shantytown homes, their interactions with their friends and neighbors on the street, and their decisions to move from one home to another are interconnected with their socialization and development. While streets are considered “sites of passage” for street children (Kovats-Bernat 2006:16), the shantytowns fulfilled this role for the children I work with, as it is in these communities that they learn, grow, and develop skills and interests. In communities like Guayaquil's shantytowns, “violence is a pervasive part of the social landscape. There is, in essence, no escape, just degrees of involvement” (Wolseth 2004, p. 218). While violence certainly frames the home and street life of children growing up in the shantytowns, the children I work with do not strive to escape their neighborhoods; rather, their

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the children at Fundación Crecer who lived in group homes; their schedules were more restricted because an “expreso” [similar to a school bus] took them to and from their house. They referred to the woman in charge of these homes as “Tía” [Aunt]. A group of siblings from the Fundación lived with the “Tía,” while their mother went through a rehabilitation program for alcoholism. A month before the Fundación closed, these kids moved to the Isla Trinitaria with their mother. Another group of siblings lived with a “Tía” because their father was in prison for killing their mother.

forms of escape involve creating or joining new families, sometimes on the same neighborhood block.

During one of my neighborhood visits on the East Side, a group of women pointed to their surroundings, and Irene asked me: “What kind of future is possible when our children are surrounded by drugs, prostitution, gangs?” Indeed, when children are raised in neighborhoods governed and terrorized by drug dealers and gang bangers and in households in which their mothers are knocked unconscious or in which their siblings are career criminals, these are the ways of life they know and contemplate as they determine their “degrees of involvement.” These are their “sites of passage.” Anthropologist Lawrence Hirschfeld (2002) insists that studying children is crucial to our understanding of the ways in which learning can and does happen, as “anthropology is premised on a process that children do better than almost all others, namely, acquire cultural knowledge” (624). Acquiring cultural knowledge from these environments, however, does not mean that children necessarily imitate what they learn from their surroundings; in fact, a majority of the children I work with spend their days in their neighborhoods playing soccer in empty fields, watching TV, gossiping with friends, and playing Bingo with their neighbors. Regardless of the extra-curricular activities they choose to join, the children in these neighborhoods are influenced by their surroundings, and they grow up and mature accordingly. They develop a skill set based on survival and instincts of self-defense that reflects a very different childhood and very different vulnerabilities from those experienced by their peers of middle and upper-socioeconomic classes.

In her review of violence, childhood, and anthropology, Caputo (2001) highlights the ways in which violence has complicated childhood “by exceeding its limits. Violence disrupts child/adult boundaries because it pushes children over the boundaries of what it is to be a child”

(p. 183). These “limits” reflect an implicit ideology of a child as a young person in need of protection. As this dissertation and this chapter, more specifically, demonstrate, however, there are no clear boundaries between “childhood” and “adulthood” in Guayaquil’s shantytowns, and forms of protection are often unconventional as the challenges to children’s wellbeing are severe. The poverty and violence that structure the shantytowns’ “sites of passage” create uncertain everyday living conditions; children do not always know if there will be enough food to eat or what forms of abuse they may encounter. Amidst these realities, the young people with whom I work referred to themselves as “niños” [children] while concurrently speaking of the childhood they never had. They, too, shared an idealized notion, not unlike many scholars and practitioners of childhood, of what it means to be a child. In our interviews, children’s reflections on childhood included ideals they believed should mark this period: “jugar” [play], “sin preocupaciones” [without worry or concern], “amor” [love], “alguien que nos cuide” [someone to take care of us].<sup>51</sup>

“Childhood” forms part of simplified discourses of rescue and safety in the name of “good” and “proper” forms of experiencing being young (e.g., Ennew and Swart-Kruger 2003). Scholars have recommended thinking about childhood as “going on” versus “growing up” to truly capture the everyday occurrences in the lives of young people (see Horton and Kraftl 2006) and to recognize the diversity of ways in which childhood is lived and experienced. However, the most productive part of these “conclusions” that traditional labels no longer suffice is

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<sup>51</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I draw on participants’ own categorizations when discussing childhood and adulthood. Their labels, as discussed in Chapter 1, largely coincide with UN definitions that classify “children” as being 18 and under and “youth” as ranging from 14-18. Similarly, Ecuador’s constitutional code for children and adolescents – El Código de la Niñez y Adolescencia – classifies a child as someone below the age of 12 and an adolescent as ranging from 12 to 18. This idealized notion of childhood that children expressed, particularly in earlier interviews, reflected lessons about appropriate childhood from the non-profit that stressed the importance of school and play over street work, for example. Beyond the non-profit, however, there is a notion children and families have about what childhood should be, which reflects a culturally-ingrained understanding of an ideal normative childhood equipped with food, love, parents, shelter, protection, security, education, etc.



identifying methods and methodologies through which social scientists can do research that highlights how different social positions and realities across the globe influence the pace at which children change and mature along with the decisions they make for their wellbeing. This chapter, in many ways, writes against “Childhood,” recognizing it as a term that, historically, has been used against children, limiting their possibilities to be agents and to be considered social actors capable of making important societal contributions and of teaching important societal lessons (e.g., Hardman 1973; Hirschfeld 2002). The young people I have worked with from Guayaquil’s shantytowns are active agents who are constantly making sense of their surroundings and, through their actions, negotiating “Childhood” with their actual childhood.

The violence witnessed and endured by children in the shantytowns attempts to limit their possibilities as active agents and complicates their understanding of “Childhood” alongside their own everyday experiences. The violence practiced on them strives to remind them that a child/adult boundary does exist. Caputo (2001) cites Jenks (1996), in particular, to stress the ways in which the categories of “adult” and “child” depend on mutual delimitations to ensure adult control over childhood (Caputo 2001, p. 183). In Guayaquil’s shantytowns, physical violence is the disciplinary measure that guardians practice on their children to remind and convince them that they are in control.

One morning at the non-profit, as I pinned a map on the wall for our English lesson, Darcy sat and asked me questions about the U.S. states. She practiced pronouncing *Alabama*, *Alaska*, *Arizona*, and *Arkansas*. With the map pinned down, I sat next to her to clarify her questions from the previous day’s worksheet. She was wearing a skirt, and I immediately noticed the red welts along her legs. When I asked what had happened, she said her father had ruined her birthday by beating her with a stick. Later that week when I spoke with him during

report card pick-up, he explained that he is strict with his daughter, because he wants to protect her and punishes her when she tries to leave the house to talk with older boys. In this way, he ensures adult control. He feels like he failed with his oldest child who is already a teenage mother, and he does not want history to repeat itself with his youngest: “Ya perdí a la otra. No quiero que la misma historia vuelva a suceder” [I already lost the other one. I don’t want the same thing (literal translation: the same history) to happen again]. The parents I have met through my research struggle as they work to protect their children. Overwhelmingly, they believe that physical punishments are the only ways their children will learn to respect orders and make good decisions; beating their children is one way of showing them love.

As a child, Elisa said her mother burned her hands when she took a cookie without asking. Just because something was in their house, did not make it hers; she needed the permission of the authority figure: her mother. After that lesson, she never stole again. Now, however, Elisa concluded that children’s rights have created delinquent youth who do not know how to respect, because they are not disciplined: “Los niños de hoy con estos derechos de niños hacen lo que les de la gana; sin disciplina, no hay respeto” [Today’s kids with these children’s rights do whatever they feel like; without discipline, there’s no respect].

Elisa, who worked as a maid in Guayaquil since she was 11 years old, left her children with her mother in the southern highland town of Cuenca. She visited them every 15 days when she had a break from work. During this period, her son, Darío, “se dañó” [went bad]. Apparently, older boys, who Elisa identified as 15, 25, and 28 years old, recruited Darío to commit delinquent acts. She explained that the recruitment of children to commit crimes and sell drugs is a relatively new practice, as “los derechos de los niños” [children’s rights] allow kids to live with a form of immunity; in the case of her son, this immunity allowed the older boys to take

advantage of him. She described these groups as gangs who recruit younger kids by strategically giving them drugs, “para que se queden brutos y que los mayores hagan dinero a costa de los más pequeños” [so that they’ll stay dumb so that the older ones can make money at the cost of the younger ones].

Darío began by stealing rabbits from his neighbors; then, he started stealing cell phones. His grandmother originally thought the rabbits had been left by their home by someone who was performing “brujería” [witchcraft] on them. Later, she realized it had been Darío. In response, just as she had done with her own daughter, she proceeded to burn her grandson’s hands, which is a common disciplinary practice in that part of the country, Elisa added. In Elisa’s case, she was burned for stealing a cookie from her own home.<sup>52</sup> These family traditions, however, as Elisa described them, are now regulated externally by “children’s rights.”

Ecuador was the first Latin American country and the third in the world to ratify the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); but, as Kate Swanson (2010) submits, outside of a 1998 constitutional clause for the protection of children and a 2003 approval of the Code for Children and Adolescents, Ecuador has done little to define and protect children’s rights over the last two decades. Over my last four years of research, however, I have observed more discussion and awareness of children’s rights in the barrios compared to my previous research terms in Guayaquil (2005; 2006-2007; 2010; 2011). Many of the families in these communities receive some sort of support from an NGO, an NPO, a church, and/or a foundation, and it is within these organizations that they are typically exposed to rights-based discourses. Kids and families also cite an increased surveillance by the DINAPEN, which is Ecuador’s

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<sup>52</sup> Elisa’s mother’s reaction to her cookie “theft” demonstrates how poverty inculcates an awareness of scarcity and privation monitored by a repressive authority figure and passed on from generation to generation. This example also connects with children’s conscious decisions to save food for later, discussed in Chapters 1 and 5.

branch of the police force that focuses strictly on children; the DINAPEN has directly impacted families whose children work(ed) on the streets.<sup>53</sup>

Accordingly, Darío, with children's rights on his side, reacted to his grandmother's disciplinary measure. He filed a claim against her and the police almost took her to jail. Elisa said that they did not take her in, but if it had happened in five years, they probably would have locked her up. "Children's rights" distorts the traditional dichotomy between children and their parents by granting children the power. Parents are the ones who should have rights, Elisa stated, so that they could teach their children right from wrong. Instead, she continued, these rights are "como una carta abierta para que los niños tengan una libertad excesiva" [like an open invitation for kids to have excessive liberties]. "Children's rights" is a challenge to the mental structure of many parents, like Elisa and like Darcy's father; they consider it "una alcahuetería" [a way of spoiling them], as their sense of keeping their children in line involves physical punishment.

Norma voiced similar concerns about "children's rights" and kids' growing disregard for their parents' authority. I was at their home when Norma told me about Elsitita's most recent act of rebellion. In response to not being able to watch television, she shouted at her mother:

si no pagan la luz, entonces me voy a la calle a ver televisión en otra casa hasta la hora que se terminen los programas que quiero ver – por eso no me vaya a hacer problemas por llegar tarde si usted no cumple con sus responsabilidades.

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<sup>53</sup> Additionally, while my own conversations with families in the barrios demonstrate that the local and national governments have implemented positive changes in their communities and for their children (e.g., more parks, improved access to healthcare, free snack distribution in public schools, increased surveillance of child workers), these families still provide examples of the ways in which policy efforts fall short, especially in the realm of education and in the persistent violence and crime in their neighborhoods which directly impacts their children's everyday lives. As discussed in Chapter 5, in spite of the new education law of 2013 and the government's promise to standardize and, in the process, supposedly improve education for all of Ecuador's children, many of the children I have worked with have been unable to enroll in school. After a year "off," they rarely go back and the gap between their age and their grade level continues to expand each year, making it less and less probable that they will ever return to the classroom and obtain their diploma.

[if you don't pay the electric bill, then I'm going to the street to watch television at another house until the shows I want to watch are over – so don't come to me and make problems if I get home late if you don't comply with your own responsibilities].

She said her daughter was imitating the biting way her father spoke to them. Although Elsita adopted her father's tone, she had started reacting when he addressed her that way. I became uncomfortable during the discussion of her husband's abusiveness, since he was passed out on the bed next to us while we spoke. Norma shared the latest story of Elsita's exchange with her father. Even though they all know that Elsita does not like interruptions while she does her homework, her father, who is often drunk, shouts out orders to get him things, like a glass of water. The last time he did, she didn't get it for him quickly enough, and he threatened to hit her. Norma was in disbelief when Elsita he stood up to him and said: "Pégue me no más – pégueme – ahí yo llamo a la policía y lo meten preso" [Go ahead and hit me – hit me – then I'll call the police and they'll put you in jail]. Norma was very serious and concerned throughout our conversation that morning, but she could not contain her laughter after she told me Elsita's response and her father's incredulity. I laughed, too, though I remained unsettled by his presence, hoping, for the sake of Norma, that he was not absorbing our conversation in his unconscious state.

Through my fieldwork, I have witnessed the routinization of danger and fear in people's everyday lives and how, frequently, the most severe forms of violence are perpetuated within one's own household and by one's own family. The violence described in this chapter focuses on the (threat of) physical and sexual abuse within households and how such abuse motivates family formation, stimulating a desire for change by creating or joining new families through marriage and reproduction. Through a husband, for example, girls can escape their abusive households and find new families through in-laws and through the babies they conceive. In

some cases, mothers must decide between the overall wellbeing of their family versus the wellbeing of their daughters, as they decide whether or not to take on a new husband. A stepfather in Guayaquil's shantytowns simultaneously (and paradoxically) represents a potential abuser and a potential source of income and support. The loss of blood brought about by abuse and by the fractured bonds between children and their biological parents gives way to a cycle of bloodshed and blurred blood ties that traces the patrilocal movement of family formation and its corresponding phases of girlhood and motherhood.

***“Se fue con marido” [She left with a husband]***

Angela was 15 when she left her home to live with her husband. She specifies, actually, that she was 15 and five months. Although she felt happy with her union of nearly two years, she told me that, for her, the connotation of leaving with a husband symbolizes “la vergüenza” [the shame] of being underage, of being too young for a husband. Her sister-in-law, Karen, also left home to live with her husband and his family. When I asked Karen why he didn't move in with her family, she laughed. She said there wasn't an answer: “es algo que así es; puede ser como una tradición” [it's something that just is that way; it could be like a tradition].

In Guayaquil's shantytowns, two of the most common phrases that repeatedly arise in daily conversations are: “se fue con marido,” which means “she left with a husband;” or, “se hizo de marido,” which literally means, “she came to be of a husband.” These phrases describe the patrilocal tendencies of girls in these neighborhoods who, at the ages of 16, 15, 14, or even 13 and 12 years old, leave their homes and go off with a man who is, on average, 10 years older.

Although the union is a spoken one, this man is referred to as their “marido” or husband.<sup>54</sup> The

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<sup>54</sup> Marcia supports informal unions, explaining that paperwork adds a legal level to the bond, making it more tedious to cut ties and move on. Based on her own experience as a teenager, Marcia whose 15-year-old daughter recently left with a husband, told her daughter to avoid the paperwork. When you want to separate, she explained, it's easier and cheaper if the relationship isn't legally binding.

husband lives in his family's home, and the girl (his wife) joins them. She typically has a baby during the first year of their union; that, at least, is the expectation. In some cases, girls move in with their husbands because they are already pregnant.

Many girls decide to leave their homes to be with their husbands, because they are escaping environments in which they have endured physical and sexual abuse; homes in which they barely had enough food to eat; and homes in which they felt neglected by their mothers or the aunts or grandmothers who raised them. Stories in this chapter demonstrate girls' experiences who are escaping these environments and who see these older men – their husbands – as a way to attain a safe space through a new home and a new family. At 14, Carito's friend, Samantha, for example, sought to find a husband – any husband – so that she could attain a safe space and leave behind a home in which she had been physically and sexually assaulted. Similarly, Carito's mother who left home at 15 concluded that girls decide to leave with husbands at such a young age to escape their homes, saying “Me hice de marido porque no me gustaba mi casa. Huí de un ambiente con un padre alcohólico y sin nada para comer” [I came to be of a husband because I didn't like my house. I fled an environment with an alcoholic father and nothing to eat]. Girls seek change because they want new relationships and new places through which to feel love, protection, and a sense of belonging. By leaving home, they also feel in control of their own lives – they are deciding where they eat, where they sleep, what rules to follow. This move begins their transition out of childhood and toward adulthood. When their adulthood, however, is connected to “haciéndose de marido” [becoming of a husband], the verticality of this relationship complicates their independence.

Girls' desire to “leave with a husband” and to “be of a husband” is contradictory in that they want to depend on him – for love and protection – but they also want to be free to make

their own decisions since they no longer have to abide by the rules of their childhood home. By “being of a husband,” however, girls must follow his rules; as I’ve learned through Angela and her sister-in-law Jessie, for example, both girls need their husbands’ permission to leave the house. I have needed to obtain their husbands’ permission for the girls and their children to be able to participate in an interview or to go out for lunch.<sup>55</sup> Angela told me that she used to go out with her friends, and she could continue to do that, but it would upset her husband. She told me to imagine meeting up with friends “con la boca hinchada -- que vergüenza” [with a swollen mouth -- how embarrassing].

The husband determines whether they attend school, who they can talk with, when they should have children. By becoming of a husband, girls know that they hold the subordinate role; the challenge becomes knowing this before hand versus living it in their everyday lives. Girls learn to navigate these relationships and their corresponding expectations. They evaluate and determine the levels of risk in their childhood home alongside the risk and the expectations in their husband’s home; sometimes, they change their minds and move back and forth between both.

Certainly, some of the girls who “leave with a husband” do have positive relationships with their parents; their parents care for them and provide for them, but they still fall in love and choose to leave. In these scenarios, girls have described being bored – bored with school, bored with their parents’ strict rules. In these cases, when the girls decided to leave home and move in with their husbands’ family, both sets of parents, or both sets of mothers, met to discuss the terms of this move. Marlene, for example, told me that when her daughter was pregnant and

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<sup>55</sup> Angela and Jessie are married to brothers; they live in a house together, on the same plot of land as their mother-in-law and sisters-in-law whose house is right next to theirs. Along with their husbands’ two sisters who live next door, they are all like sisters and their *suegra* is like their mother. As I edit this chapter, Jessie’s premature daughter passed away in the hospital. Her *suegra* was there with her to retrieve the body and make all of the funeral arrangements.



moved in with her husband, she scheduled a meeting with his parents and they decided that they would cover her food and housing, but Marlene would take care of the hospital bill when the baby was born. Part of the arrangement between Angela's mother and mother-in-law was that her mother would provide the furniture for the room she would share with her new husband. In these cases, then, although the girls made the decision to leave their homes, their new union with their husbands depended on some form of financial assistance from both families – a form of bridewealth in the shantytowns. This tends to be the case in younger relationships where both the husband and wife are still in school and/or unemployed.<sup>56</sup>

Because Carito's husband was 27, her parents met with him directly. They told him that she was 15, and if he wanted to be with a minor that badly, he had to be ready for what that entailed. All of the responsibility was on him; his job was to feed her, clothe her, and keep her happy. Carito told me that her father and grandfather threatened him if he ever hit her, as he had earned his abusive reputation from his relationship with his first wife. Marcia, Carito's mother, called me in the summer of 2015 to share the news: "Carito se fue con marido." She knew that she could file charges against him since her daughter was still underage, but she told me that as much as it hurt her, she had to let her daughter grow up: "Me duele lo que le pasa pero a veces uno tiene que dejar que crezca también" [What's happening to her (being with a husband at such a young age) hurts me, but sometimes one has to let them grow up, too].

Carito is one of several girls who I work with who maintains a strong relationship with her family. Because Carito has a baby brother and sister and because her parents both work, she walks to her parents' house every morning and babysits for them; she and her parents live in the Flor de Bastión. Similarly, although Morelia moved out of her parents' house when she was 13, escaping her father's and brothers' physical abuse, she maintains a strong relationship with her

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<sup>56</sup> In these cases, Marlene's daughter was 17 and her husband was 19; Angela was 14 and her husband was 18.

mother, Norma, who helps guide her and counsel her in her new role as a mother. After her first daughter was born, Morelia became frustrated. She was 14 and wanted to go out with her friends, often leaving her baby with her mother for several days. A year and a half later when Morelia's second daughter was born, she became hysterical and asked her mother to give both of her children away; she didn't want them. As Norma recounted the story to me, she said her daughter screamed "¡regálalas, regálalas!" ["give them away, give them away!"]. At that point, Norma intervened. She smacked her daughter – "le di su buen golpe" – and took her to the neighborhood clinic to receive birth control injections. She told me that she couldn't stand by and watch her child continue to have children before the age of 20.

After having their first child, some of the girls I've worked with do choose a form of birth control. From what girls and women have shared with me, the doctors from the health centers in their neighborhoods overwhelmingly associate birth control pills with sterility. Some women, like Marcia, develop these theories on their own, based on personal experience and stories from other family members or friends. In response to her conversation with one of these doctors, Jessie became terrified by this option after her first son was born and chose, instead, to receive an injection. Her sister-in-law, Angela, accompanied her, as she also wanted to use protection; they both had newborn sons and, along with their husbands, had decided to wait for the birth of the second. Jessie, however, was unable to receive the injection, because she was overweight. The doctor told her she ran the risk of death. Although she was unaware of her pregnancy until the fifth month, Jessie became pregnant with her second child only weeks after her neighborhood clinic turned her away.

Before their first child, however, a majority of the girls feels that it is their responsibility to give their husband a child as soon as possible. Girls and their mothers have explained to me

that if you wait to have a baby, men doubt your commitment to them and might choose to find someone else. Marcia, for example, took birth control pills during her relationship with her first husband, because she didn't love him and didn't want to be connected to him beyond their marriage. When she married her second husband, she told me that he was unfaithful to her and almost abandoned her, because it took her nearly five years to become pregnant; she now advises girls and women to avoid birth control pills at all costs, blaming them for her delayed maternity. Becoming pregnant and having babies makes girls and women feel more confident in their union – they feel they have a stronger hold on their husband and they feel a stronger sense of belonging to his family and their home.

Through their decisions to move, to stay, and to create new families, girls make decisions that, in the moment (in some cases), and with thought and reflection (in other cases), appear to be the best ones for them; the consequences of these are not always what they imagined nor what is in their best interest for their own wellbeing. Carito, for example, a week after she found out she was pregnant, spoke with me and told me that she was considering moving back home. Leaving with a husband, she reflected, was not the right decision for her: “A veces me arrepiento de hacer lo que hice. Hay chicas de mi edad que se divierten – prefiero estar soltera” [Sometimes, I lament what I did (leaving with a husband). There are girls my age who have fun – I'd rather be single]. Although Jessie plans to stay with her husband, she told me that when she first went to live with him at 14, she was taken aback: “yo pensaba que cuando me hice de marido, iba a ser fácil” [I thought that when I came to be of a husband, it would be easy]. When they were dating, she explained, he was never angry; she didn't know he was like that. She also thought that she was going to have fun and go out every weekend: “pensé que iba a salir a pasear todos lo[s] fin

de semana, pero casi no le gusta salir” [I thought that I was going to go out every weekend, but he rarely likes to go out].

At times, girls’ movement between homes and families is also a way to establish independence and to begin their transition into adulthood (see also Cole 2010 and Johnson-Hanks 2006 on generational changes based on girls’ life courses). Because they are young, as they move, they maintain relationships of dependency to support them as they continue to grow up and mature.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the phrases of “leaving with husbands” and “being of husbands” are colloquial, forming part of everyday conversation. These phrases, however colloquial, are concepts – concepts that are deeply ingrained upon shantytown family structures. This concept reveals an understanding that a union with a husband implies a verticality that is automatically embedded in being *of* him [*hacerse de marido*], belonging *to* him [*ser de marido*]. These relationships of dependency and support are not only visible through husbands, but also through girls’ relationships with their extended family: their *suegras* [mothers-in-law].

### ***Biology versus Bonds That Endure: In-laws***

Early anthropological studies of kinship, in particular, focused on blood as a way to organize relatedness (Carsten 2011). Biology structured understandings of familial relationships and was used to make evolutionary determinations to compare and render inferior different communities’ levels of development and sophistication (Feeley-Harnik 1999). In the shantytowns, however, it is bloodshed that frames kinship more than biological blood ties.

Kinship relationships are adjusted based on strategic decisions of women and children as they

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<sup>57</sup> Carito, for example, stopped going to school; but, her husband replaced her teachers and her classroom. She said that he explained and taught her things because he’s older and he knows more; as an example, she told me that she gets confused at night when they watch the news and other TV shows: “Cuando tengo dudas, me responde...él es mayor y sabe más de la vida...porque yo no entiendo casi.” [“When I have doubts, he responds...he is older and he knows more about life...because I barely understand [in reference to the news and other TV shows they watch at night]”].

determine the stakes of enduring versus escaping abuse. While biological relationships may, at times, provide a sense of love and belonging, they are not binding and are often not the ones that shantytown mothers and children deem the best fit for their wellbeing.

Many girls I have worked with, like Morelia and Angela, take action against the abuse they endure by searching for a way out. They seek out possibilities for love and belonging from young men who make promises before, during, and (sometimes) after sex of the future they can share together: a house, food, money, and babies (see also Strehl 2011 for a discussion of “push-pull factors” that street children confront as they choose between the streets and their homes). Yolanda, for instance, was thrilled to learn that she was going to be a mother at 17. She felt the pregnancy secured her relationship with her husband, Nestor, whose love she continually questioned. She found comfort believing they would be tied together for life through their baby. By becoming his wife, she moved in with his family and hoped to leave behind her abusive past. During an afternoon walk, her next-door neighbor, Lulita, told me that the rumors on her block were that after Yolanda’s father kidnapped her and her brother, she endured his sexual abuse during the years she lived with him. Lulita emphasized, “es lo que me han dicho” [it’s what they’ve told me].

During her eighth month of pregnancy, Yolanda was overcome with jealousy and became hysterical when Nestor arrived late from work. Marlene cried as she told me what her daughter-in-law had almost done – of the potential blood loss. When Nestor arrived, Yolanda pulled out a knife and threatened to stab herself, putting an end to her life and her baby’s. Lulita heard the screams from next door and ran over in time to witness Nestor struggle to take the knife from his wife’s hands. They were both cut in the process. Yolanda recognized their baby was not enough to secure their bond. Their relationship was not binding.

Not unlike Yolanda, girls often feel disposable upon becoming pregnant or upon giving birth, as their allure wears off on their partner. Carito, for example, was disillusioned when her husband disappeared over consecutive weekends without giving her an explanation. She told me that she did worry that he could contract a disease from another woman, though he promised her that he hadn't. As I have learned from interviews and observations, some girls who are abandoned or cheated on become resentful of their children, and this resentment supports their decision to leave them behind. Morelia serves as an example when she pleaded with her mother to give her children away: "¡regálalas!". Johnson-Hanks (2006), for example, discusses the flexibility of motherhood, emphasizing that not all women who give birth to children are mothers and that women manipulate the role of motherhood through their decisions to keep some children and give away others.

Although Yolanda's jealousy and insecurity over her marriage tainted her relationships with her new family and led to her temporary separation from Nestor, she stayed in Marlene's home. Instead of sleeping in Nestor's room, however, she shared a room with her mother-in-law and her newborn son. Several girls I interviewed and spoke with in the shantytowns, like Yolanda, expressed their happiness and willingness to live with their husbands' family. Not only is the new home a safer space than the one in which they grew up, but they love their mothers-in-law. Often, girls see this mother-in-law as the mother they never had. In fact, some of the young girls are more excited by their relationships with their mother-in-law and sisters-in-law than with their husband. Angela, for example, was 15 (and five months) when she went to live with her husband's family; she felt loved and protected by her mother-in-law, especially when her husband entered a rehabilitation facility for drug addiction. Even before her husband was sent

away, however, she told me that she was grateful for her husband because, through him, she finally had a mother who truly cared about her.

This relationship between girls and their *suegras* helps young girls with their transition into motherhood and adulthood. Angela wakes up at 3 a.m. to help her *suegra* make *mote* – an Ecuadorian dish – that she sells at the market the next day; she told me that she doesn't have to do this, but she enjoys their time together; from her mother-in-law, she's learned how to make this dish, how to sell and keep track of her money. And, she receives advice on everything as they work together. The high turnover rate of wives in the shantytowns, however, normally implies that these bonds, while important, are also temporary. These are not bonds that endure, but while they last, they provide girls with an environment that allows them to endure (e.g., Weston 2001). Through their husband, women gain a family of their choosing.

Others, however, are not as lucky in their new homes. Anthropologist Krista Van Vleet's (2002) research in Bolivia focuses not only on the violence between husband and wife, but between female affines. Her work is especially relevant as domestic violence in Guayaquil's shantytowns often implicates extended family members. Morelia, for example, told me that she ran back to her mother's house when her sister-in-law tried to force her into prostitution as a way of contributing to the household. Girls and women face criticism from in-laws and encounter violent attacks from their husbands on account of rumors circulated by his family. Typically, these rumors are based on claims of the wife's infidelity. These negative experiences demonstrate what some of the stakes are for these new unions and what decisions girls have to make as they navigate these risks alongside their alternatives.

While we sat and watched her son and daughter play at a park across from my house, Marcia described the last time her husband beat her on account of the lies his sister told him of

her supposed affair with a neighbor. She said that she sent all of her children outside and locked the door. She confronted her husband and fought him with everything she had. The final thing she remembers before she blacked out was hoping that her children would survive without her.

Marcia always asked herself why her mother stayed with her father when he constantly abused her emotionally and physically; she suspected that her mother stayed for financial reasons: “¿Por qué mi mamá aguantó tantos golpes? Tal vez en ese tiempo, la situación económica. Pero en estos tiempos, no tiene por qué quedarse.” She ended up in the same type of marriage, and she didn’t leave either. But, she realized that although men are stronger than women “la mujer también puede” [“women can, too” – that is, fight or fight back]. When she finally realized that, she fought back. Since that day when she blacked out, her husband has never laid a hand on her.

She knows what it is like to be beaten: “yo como mujer, yo sé lo que es un golpe” [“Me, as a woman, I know what a beating is”]. That afternoon was the second time I heard Marcia share this story. Her oldest daughter was with us. Carito listened, remembering the moment her mother described. She said that she was the one who ran to her aunt’s house to ask for help; her aunt, however, said that her father was his own man and knew what he was doing and why he was doing it. Marcia said she would never allow Carito to stay with an abusive husband.

### ***Blood Flow: The Menstrual Cycle***

Menstruation is another cycle that guides family formation in the shantytowns, as it symbolizes a girl’s entrance into womanhood and the possibility of reproduction. Indeed, blood’s “flow within and from the body is closely bound up with life itself” (Carsten 2011, p. 29), and by being bound up with life, the menstrual cycle’s potential to expand one’s family can



be a source of anxiety in the shantytowns. I interpret young girls' menstrual blood flow as taking one of two directions: one is forced and the other is desired.

For girls who are already enduring sexual abuse, their menstrual cycle gives this abuse a new level of risk as they may become pregnant. In the case Carmen, at 13 she discovered that her step-grandfather is actually her biological father. Along with her grandmother, this is the man who raised her and treated her like a daughter. In one of our first interviews, before either one of us knew about the DNA test her biological mother had performed, Carmen described herself as her "Papi's" [Daddy's] favorite. She differentiated him from other parents, saying, "No le gusta verme marcada" [He doesn't like to see me marked up]; she said that she only got bruised if she fell, like when she was learning how to ride bike: "solamente cuando quiero aprender a andar sin manos, ahí siempre me caigo – me da vergüenza" [only when I want to learn how to ride without hands, then I always fall – it's embarrassing]. When her grandmother told me about the DNA test, I asked her if she would stay with her husband. She told me that her husband would have to ask God for forgiveness. God will judge him, she told me – not her. Carmen's mother was Carmen's age when she gave birth and decided to flee her house and abandon her daughter. Thirteen years later, with her story revealed, Carmen is left to make sense of the relationships that have structured her life thus far.

For other girls, their cycle represents their interest in exploring and starting their own sex lives, and this new phase often takes the shape of a baby. During lunch one afternoon, Norma cried as she told me that Elsitita had started her first menstrual cycle. She was uncertain that she could protect her or avoid losing her to sex. Sex claimed her other daughter at 13. She used Morelia, Elsitita's older sister, as an example, telling me that Morelia's story should be a strong enough form of birth control for her youngest daughter. Morelia was 16 with two daughters of

her own; at that point, Norma forced her to receive birth control injections to prevent pregnancy. She actively intervened in her daughter's menstrual cycle, regulating her blood flow. Her son-in-law became angry by this intrusion, exclaiming that his wife would finally mature and become responsible only after having her third child. Norma, however, explained that she could no longer watch passively as her daughter continued making mistakes. Although her husband was "in charge," Norma concluded, "no sabe pensar, igual que ella" [he doesn't know how to think, just like her].

As girls actively attempt to create new families for themselves, their decision to have children is a way of securing the marriage and a way of inspiring confidence in a husband, convincing him not to doubt her and her fidelity. Carito was 15 when she moved in with her husband; she was scared because she was a virgin. She waited two weeks before having sex with him. From the beginning, she said, "I told him I didn't want to become pregnant right away, because I was still young" – "Iba a ser una niña criando a un niño" [I would be a child raising a child]. Carito described childhood as beautiful, saying that kids should take advantage of that time; she said that when you're older, "No vas a poder seguir jugando, sólo podrás ver jugar a tus hijos" [You can no longer continue playing; you can only watch your children play]. She decided to stop taking her birth control pills after her doctor told her she could become sterile. She didn't know she was pregnant until the middle of her second trimester. She said that as soon as she heard her baby's heartbeat, "ya comencé a cambiar" [I started to change]. She doesn't feel like an adult, she explained, but now that she's going to be a mom, she said, she knows she's no longer a child (see Johnson-Hanks' 2006 argument that motherhood does not imply adulthood).

For Lourdes, leaving with a husband and having sex with her husband was her opportunity for motherhood – she was thrilled about her pregnancy, exclaiming that she had waited her *whole life* to be a mother; her own mother had abandoned her and her siblings, and she had never forgiven her or understood how a mother could choose to deny her children of her love. One of my first entries in my fieldnotes is about Lourdes. She had just found out she was pregnant, and when I asked her due date, she told me that it depended on the baby’s sex: if it was a girl, she would be born in April, but if it was a boy, he would be born in May. At 15, Lourdes moved in with her mother-in-law while her husband lived in the police quarters for his training. She said that she suspected he had already been unfaithful. But, she told me, as long as he loved his baby and gave them everything they could want or need, she did not care how many other women he was with. She said she would be happy as long as she had her daughter. She told me in an interview before giving birth, that once her baby was born: “for the first time in my life, I will not be alone.”

Lourdes succeeded in attaining a safe space and new relationships through her mother-in-law, her husband, and her daughter. Simultaneously a girl and a mother, Lourdes made decisions to create a better life – a better childhood – for herself through motherhood; she would no longer experience it alone. And, she would be able to provide her daughter a mother’s love, which she never had. She was at once recreating the cycle by becoming a teenage mom, and re-routing it by choosing to be a different type of mother.

The overlap of girlhood and motherhood in the case of Lourdes remains evident with older mothers, like Jaqui who is 32. Jaqui ran away from home when she was 10 and lived on the streets for many years before moving in with an aunt and then with a husband. As one of the coordinators at the non-profit, I organized a fieldtrip to a historic park in Guayaquil. When I

called to confirm her sons' attendance, Jaqui informed me that she would also be joining us. She reminded me of what she had told me during an interview, and emphasized that she never got to be a kid and go on fieldtrips when she was her sons' age. It was only fair that we invite her, too. This example and many others from my fieldwork demonstrate that by giving their children a childhood they never had, mothers also seek to experience it simultaneously, reclaiming their own childhood through motherhood.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Family Formation and the Vulnerability of Girls: Risk-Taking and Wellbeing***

Households in the shantytowns are small and many children are raised in a space of 25 to 50 square meters in which an entire family sleeps in the same room. From birth, then, children can witness their parents or guardians having sex. Sex forms part of their everyday lives, part of their sites of passage. At the non-profit, a psychologist shared several cases with me. The first was of two sisters and a brother who described the different men their mother would allow into their home and the sounds and screams she would make. A sheet formed the dividing wall between her bedroom and her children's. During another session, a 10-year-old girl asked why her stepfather squirted milk from his body. The question the psychologist was never able to answer was why the young girl knew this: was she forced to watch or was it the inevitable eavesdropping of living in a one-room house?

Mothers often fear leaving their children home alone because of the dangers that overwhelm their neighborhoods. Sometimes, however, they become even more distressed if their children are accompanied by stepfathers or other male relatives. Based on my research, I have concluded that girls who are born in the shantytowns will likely endure sexual abuse at some point in their lifetime, making their positionality exceedingly vulnerable. I was taken

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<sup>58</sup> Jaqui's two oldest sons are on competitive soccer and cycling teams; she is constantly monitoring their progress in school and doing her best to keep them away from drugs and negative influences in their neighborhood. Her two oldest were active participants in this research project; her two youngest are my godchildren.

aback during interviews in which young girls spoke about being sexually molested and attempted to lessen the severity of this abuse by explaining that they were “only” touched and that it could have been worse. Even married women are subject to rape; sex is forced upon them by husbands they no longer love.

As several women have told me during interviews and informal conversations, economic dependency — exacerbated by a growing number of children — forces them to maintain their marriage and endure abuse and assault for the sake of their family. Jaqui is one of these women. Whenever a few weeks pass without seeing each other, she calls me and we often talk for hours, like we did on this particular day. She spoke about her family’s difficult month and emphasized that although I knew them well, I could not truly understand the desperation she felt and that other poor people felt:

We, the poor people, are so dumb that we load ourselves down with children. We don’t even have enough for them to eat. We give them herbal tea and water-down soup seasoned with chicken bones. You, Sister Alysa, do not know what it is to be poor. You don’t know what it is to not know what you are going to do to be able to feed your children. I can’t sleep at night because of these concerns.<sup>59</sup>

Conversations like this one have stayed with me and remind me that although I have developed strong relationships with families in Guayaquil’s poorest neighborhoods and although I have spent time in their homes and in their parts of town, I can listen, learn about, and try to describe and analyze the despair and the struggles, but I cannot truly know it the way they do. Segments from girls’ and women’s stories that I include throughout this chapter provide glimpses of these experiences. Examples of their decision-making-processes demonstrate how they navigate the impacts and challenge the hold of the structural violence of poverty (see also Farmer 2009 on the

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<sup>59</sup> “Nosotros, los pobres, somos tan brutos que nos llenamos de hijos. No tenemos ni para darles comida. Les damos agua de aniz, sopa de hueso. Usted, Hermana Alysa, no sabe lo que es ser pobre. No sabe lo que es no saber cómo vas a hacer para poder darles de comer a tus hijos. Yo no duermo en las noches por la preocupación.” This quotation is taken up again in Chapter 5.

poor as the primary victims of structural violence); Jaqui's description of herself and other poor people as "dumb," for instance, reflects this structural violence that blames poor people for their poverty and convinces them to blame themselves. This section underscores mothers' challenges as the decisions they make for the wellbeing of their families necessarily involve risk and uncertainty.

Norma worked as a live-in maid during her teenage years and was sexually abused by her employer. Although she never loved her husband, he represented a way out, and she ran off with him. She is determined for her daughters not to endure her same fate. She built a separate house on her property for her three sons who are addicted to drugs. She and her youngest daughter sleep in the original house. One day, Elsitá told Norma that she was scared because her brother snuck inside her "toldo" the previous night; "toldos" [mosquito netting] cover their beds while they sleep. Elsitá explained that just before he fell asleep right next to her, he stared down at her with a panicked look in his eyes. Norma told me that her sons love their sister. But, if they are high on drugs, they might not realize she is their sister and, unknowingly, abuse her sexually. Next time that happens, she instructed Elsitá to scream.

The potential for sexual abuse inside her household is also a concern of Rosario's. Nevertheless, she told me she will fight for her husband until the very end, threatening any woman who tries to steal his attention. He might not be the most handsome man or the most interesting or talkative one, but he is a hard worker and he is responsible, she explained. He looks out for all of her children, even the older ones who aren't his. He gives them money for food and school supplies, and he undertakes necessary home repairs. When I asked her about her plan to build an indoor bathroom for her daughters' room, she explained that her husband is a

good man, but that it is only natural for him to fall into temptation. It's safer for everyone, she said, if the girls have their own bathroom with a lock and a door.

Not unlike the separate house Norma built, Rosario hopes that a bathroom will protect her daughters. She is looking out for her children's wellbeing by fighting for a husband who provides for them. It is rare to find a hardworking and responsible man, she emphasized. In forming her family, Rosario decides that his positive attributes outweigh the risk of the girls' abuse, of their bloodshed. The potential sexual temptation that could get the best of him is an inevitable risk, and a risk worth taking.

My research complicates our notions of wellbeing by demonstrating the sacrifices of daughters and mothers for the sake of their families: just as daughters may be sacrificed, mothers sacrifice themselves and their bodies so that their husbands continue to provide for them. Delaney (2001) references *Genesis* and the story of Abraham to argue that kinship is founded upon violence. In the case of Carmen, for example, her life began when her mother was raped. Similarly, Norma started her family as a means of escaping sexual abuse. The ultimate violent act, Delaney proposes, is the sacrifice of one's own child. She states: "This is the son he waited so long to have, this was the son God promised. Yet, he is ready to cut the ties that bind them together as he takes the knife to slit his son's throat" (p. 447). Rosario chooses to expand her family and to bind them to a stepfather, potentially sacrificing her 11 and 13-year-old girls for the sake of her nine children. A private bathroom is her attempt to delay the cut of the knife. Yolanda's jealousy leads her to take the knife in her own hands and perform violence upon herself and, in the process, upon her unborn child. She imagines that through this sacrifice – or the threat of sacrifice –, her husband will love her. Other girls who say they have waited their whole lives for motherhood are ready to terminate their relationships with their children as

quickly as Yolanda. Their frustration and boredom with motherhood, coupled with their husband's growing disinterest in them and their child, motivates them to sacrifice their children by leaving them behind and reclaiming the rest of their youth.

While these actions of teenage mothers are not unique to Guayaquil's shantytowns, what my research highlights is that the "accidental," "naive," and "ignorant" associations attached to teenage pregnancies are not representative of the girls I have worked with. Often, they are intentional and they serve as girls' strategies to actively make changes in their lives. Sometimes, the changes they seek for safe spaces and new homes are connected to the abuse they face in their own homes. Other times, they seek changes because they want new relationships and new places through which to feel love and a sense of belonging.

While the families I have worked with are patrilocal in that girls leave their homes to live with their husbands, many of the women with whom I have worked and who had patrilocal pasts have become the heads of their households. As girls, they often fled home because of conflicting relationships with a male figure (father, grandmother, uncle, step-father); they left to live in another male-dominated setting: their husband's house. Eventually, these women established an independent household with this husband and were abandoned by him, leaving them in charge. Or, the women left their husband's home and created a household of their own. In *Wedding Bell Blues* (2005), Blackwell criticizes traditional kinship theories in that even matrilocal familial structures are still analyzed as being patriarchally-framed. While women may be described as leaders of their families and households, they are still always analyzed in relation to a "missing" man. Women are assumed to be in that role only because a husband is missing: a "narrative of loss" (2005:8).



One of my primary findings within female-led households in the shantytowns has been that single women do rely on their children, especially their male children, to help support their households; they also, however, seek out stepfathers for their children, especially if their children are still young. Blackwell argues: “It was the Patriarchal Man who was envisaged as activating and controlling kinship and family. It is his shadow that continues to trouble debates about kinship and marriage” (2005:6). In the case of Guayaquil, a male figure does trouble the familial structures as a figure that girls and women both flee from and run toward in the name of safety, wellbeing, and a quest to find love and belonging. But, “Patriarchal Man,” does not run the show. Women use him just as he may use them. In some of the households, I have observed that although women are partnered with this “Patriarchal Man,” they are the dominant ones; Lulita from Chapter 3, for example, represents a strong woman who leads her family as the breadwinner and makes demands on her husband when his economic contributions are too low, often kicking him out of the house. Accordingly, while the role of the man is still central for many shantytown households, the dominance and power of men and women fluctuates, depending on age, family dynamics, and overall expectations and economic possibilities and responsibilities. The examples throughout this chapter demonstrate how roles change as girls and women determine their next steps and their best interests.

### **III. Girlhood, Motherhood, and the Intersection of History and the Future**

The liminal stage, as theorized by Victor Turner (1967), was a period of being *betwixt and between*; and during these in-between moments, as children, for example, transitioned into adulthood, their personalities continued developing and their world views continued to form during an unframed limbo. In the shantytowns, the ways in which temporalities converge both perpetuate liminal phases and occlude them. The state of being *betwixt and between*, is evident

as girls leave with husbands, become pregnant, and enter motherhood; they are at once children having children, though the knowledge of their pregnancy followed by the birth of their child propels them more quickly through the liminal phase. The change of being a mother at once excites them, terrifies them, disorients them, and encourages them to make more responsible decisions that involve thinking ahead financially. For some girls, motherhood is a liminal phase in that they are mothers temporarily and then leave their daughters behind; their union is liminal, too, in that girls seem to be waiting for it to end – for the “novelería” [novelty] to wear off on him and then on her. The idea of history repeating itself perpetuates the liminal stage, as the reflection of children as mothers’ past lived experiences and as mother’s unattained futures maintains them all, in a sense, in limbo.

The stories and anecdotes in this chapter demonstrate the ways in which girlhood and motherhood are lived and conceptualized by mothers I worked with whose ages range from 12 to 70 years old.<sup>60</sup> The teenagers who became mothers described themselves in this liminal state: no longer children, and not yet adults. The “not yet” implies a process, as girls become mothers and gain life experiences and new perspectives as they continue to grow up. Definitions, however, fall flat in the face of the girls’ stories and the lessons they take away from what they have lived. It is within the diversity and commonalities of experiences and the ways in which these experiences are approached and internalized that “girlhood” and “motherhood” emerge as complex analytics through which to understand “growing up.” “Growing up” implies moving on, which in the case of the shantytowns, begins with moving out. Becoming a mother for the girls I have worked with is an exciting opportunity; it is a new person for girls to love – and to love the most. It is an extension of the project of building families of one’s choosing.

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<sup>60</sup> Although not all of my research collaborators’ stories have made their way into this chapter, I am including this age range, because all of the people from my fieldwork have provided data and influenced this chapter and the others.

Leaving with husbands as a teenager forms part of the “normative timing” that structures girlhood in the shantytowns (Freeman 2010:137). Freeman (2010) presents time “as not eternal or ‘timeless’”; instead, it is “contingent and rationalized” (2010:138). In the case of girls who “already leave with husbands,” their decisions are based on the relationships and experiences that have structured their childhood thus far – their timing is contingent and rationalized. There is also a synchronization of these girls’ individual bodies “not only with one another but also with larger temporal schemae” (Freeman 2010:4). This synchronization may be read through menstruation – as a traditional sign of “womanhood” – and the men in their 20s who look for teenage girls to be their wives. Their adolescence is their “prime time” for procreating and learning to care for a husband. The multiple levels of temporality are warning signs but also signs of encouragement for girls as their past, their present, their future, and the past, present, and future of their mothers, neighbors, and friends all work together, sending conflicting messages that girls must navigate to obtain a level of synchronization with themselves, at their own pace. Certainly, ideas revolving around “synchronization” must be teased apart so as not to clump the bodies of all teenage girls in the shantytowns into the same category, as the decisions they make are particular to their own life experiences.

“Normative timing” and “time reckoning” are useful to my understanding of how social reproduction works for girls and women in the shantytowns. This social reproduction is comprised of networks, like families – temporary or permanent, biological or social –, and is driven by an emotional need to connect and to belong more deeply through emotion: desire, love. As girls and women recall how their families have come together and broken apart across households and across marriages, it is often difficult for them to organize their memories and their stories chronologically. They do not remember years or ages, but they make connections,

for example, “before Carnival,” placing the event at a specific point of an unknown year. What has been more interesting to me in the realm of “time reckoning” and understanding social reproduction is the time it took girls and women to realize they were pregnant: Jaqui, for instance, was 31 and pregnant with her fifth child, Jessie was 16 and pregnant with her second child, and Carito was 15 and pregnant with her first child.

They were all unaware of their pregnancies, representing a disconnect between their minds and their bodies. Jaqui and Carito continued getting their monthly periods, leading to their confusion. As Jaqui explained, her body did not process how long it had been. It was tricked, and it kept bleeding, she told me. She associated this reaction with her own desire not to have any more children. She concluded that because she did not want another child, her mind did not want her body to be pregnant; accordingly, it was not until the fifth month of her pregnancy that her mind could no longer deny her body’s new state. The intellectual power of biology was not strong enough. She wished the baby would go away, but said there was nothing left to do but accept it and love it; it was, after all, her child.

This link between body and mind – biology and individualized plans and desires – is especially interesting to think through in relation to girls, women, mothers, and life courses, which are issues largely taken up by anthropologists who study similar topics and trends (e.g., Bledsoe 2002; Cole 2010; Johnson-Hanks 2006). When thinking of the contingent life course (Bledsoe 2002) and the ways girls and women manage “vital junctures” (Johnson-Hanks 2006) in their everyday lives as they approach motherhood, it is interesting to think of the life cycle and the points at which change is sought, accepted, and refused. Fifteen-year-old Lourdes, for example, sought motherhood, while Carito accepted it; Morelia, reached a point where she refused it, asking her mother to give her daughters away. Johnson-Hanks’ (2006) discussion of

“vital conjunctures” focuses specifically on the unintended pregnancies of Beti women; she defines this vital conjuncture which women face during such a pregnancy, like Jaqui’s, as “a duration of lived time with many possible outcomes, each of which suggests a radically different future” (2006:194). A majority of women, she suggests, follow a “judicious opportunism,” in which they select the most accessible option, without considering long-term benefits of other potential routes. My own pedagogical interest in working with kids to think toward the future attempts to challenge the near-sighted “judicious opportunism” that girls overwhelmingly take in the face of the “vital conjunctures” that arise when they leave their homes, join new families, and start families of their own.

### ***Motherhood as Social and Biological***

Before Carmen knew why her mother abandoned her, she just felt abandoned. I asked her, during an interview, if she felt resentful toward her biological mother. She said that she no longer did: “A veces me ponía a llorar, porque nunca había tenido cariño de ella; y mis primos me decían que por qué no me hacía fiesta – porque mi abuelita no tiene tanto dinero como mi mamá” [Sometimes I would cry, because I never had any affection from her; and my cousins would say that why didn’t I have a party – because my grandmother didn’t have as much money as my mom]. Her birth mother said that Carmen was born on December 3, 1998, and her grandmother said it was June 12<sup>th</sup>. She said that her grandmother was the one who officially registered her in City Hall, and she believes her grandmother. Her grandmother is the one who truly knows her. She is the one Carmen calls “Mami.”

Diana and Manuela explained that there was something about a mother and her child’s desire to bond with her, even if she abandoned her children. When Hólger’s mother kicked him out of her house in Esmeraldas and sent him to live with his grandmother in Guayaquil, he was

traumatized. Manuela described waking up in the middle of the night and running out of her house screaming when she realized her grandson was missing. They would find him in one of those large tubes in Las Malvinas, hiding and hugging his legs. “Era como un animalito salvaje” [He was like a little wild animal], Diana summarized.

Manuela criticized Hólger’s mother calling her a “puta” [whore], emphasizing that she had about ten kids and they each had a different father. Her son, unfortunately, fell for her, too. She said: “El hombre en la esquina que vende pescado, que venga – y queda preñada. Un hombre la saluda y lo invita a la casa para quedar preñada” [The man on the corner who sells fish, come on over – and she’ll be pregnant. A man greets her and she invites him to her home so that she can get pregnant]. Manuela was disappointed, but said that her other son had also fallen for a woman like Hólger’s mother. She said that she set a terrible example for her daughter, Hólger’s cousin. As we speak, she told me, her granddaughter was at the Maternidad [public hospital for delivering babies]: “Ya se quedó preñada porque es como la madre” [She already was left pregnant because she is like her mother].

She and Diana analyzed these mothers’ roles, especially the act of abandoning one’s child. Diana said that if her mother had abandoned her, “Yo sentiría rencor, y no quisiera nada que ver con ella” [I would feel resentment, and I wouldn’t want to have anything to do with her]. She said she did not understand why kids, like Hólger, insisted on loving mothers who neglected them and abandoned them. Marcela agreed and said that if Hólger earned \$30 for working construction, he would buy a ticket to Esmeraldas, a bag of bonbons, and give the candy and his remaining money to his mother. This mother, Manuela reminded us, was a woman who did not even give him a hug or say hi to him after so many years of not seeing him. She was a mother who did not even call to talk to her son, who could care less about him. Diana recalled a similar

story of another boy from their neighborhood whose stepmother fulfilled the role of his mother, while he continued yearning for his birth mother. “No tiene sentido” [It doesn’t make sense], Diana reflected.

What is it about a mother’s love – or the illusion, perhaps, of this love – that supersedes neglect, abandonment, and the lack of love and affection? Hólger’s situation calls into question the extent to which motherhood is social. That is, the extent to which women become mothers through the relationships they share. Although his mother was never this socially-constructed mother, their biological connection appeared to mean everything to him. Their blood relation was critical to the relationship he sought. Throughout this chapter, I refer to motherhood and familial relationships, like mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, as biological states and as social categories. My research collaborators shift between these realms in their discussions as well. Menstruation reflects a biological cycle that physically allows for motherhood, though emotionally and socially, girls are often not ready.

### ***“Being” Alongside “Becoming”***

As discussed in Chapter 1, based on the diversity of responses and observations from my research collaborators, I define childhood as a process whose speed and trajectory are driven by the relationships in children’s lives with people and spaces: specifically, relationships from their past, their present, and potential ones they envision for their future. This definition captures the relational nature of the experience of childhood. Tyner and Inwood (2014) underscore the importance of thinking about and writing about violence relationally, mirroring calls for relational approaches to research on urban environments and childhood (Hörschelmann and van Blerk 2012; Skelton and Gough 2013). By thinking and writing about violence, cities, and children relationally – that is, recognizing changing social relationships and dynamics across

space and time – this allows us to reflect on the multi-dimensionality of growing up across the world and “how deeply uneven the changes young people experience really are” (Cole 2010:8).

Beginning at 12 and 13, many girls I knew and worked with in Guayaquil’s shantytowns became mothers. A majority of the pregnancies were planned and, for some, were lined with the hope of giving their children an upbringing and a life they always longed for themselves; for others, it was a way of securing their relationship with their partner; and, it was a way for many of the girls to move to a new home with a new family: a safe(r) space. Cycles of girlhood and motherhood do overlap and complicate girls and children’s notions of what childhood is and what it should be: the contradictions between “Childhood” and their own childhood. I find it productive to think about the ways in which girls and women cycle through their changing roles and relationships, as the overlaps, the continuity, and the breaks begin to demonstrate the risk, despair, and cautious optimism that go into their movement and their attempts to stand still.

Mothers often lament their daughters’ choices, feeling powerless in the face of history repeating itself. Norma, for example, described her heartache and admitted that she beat Morelia when she discovered she was pregnant. While their parenting methods may differ, mothers work tirelessly so that their children can have different futures from theirs. As one mother told me, “I don’t want my son to be like me. I want him to have a future.” Other mothers, like Norma and Elisa, have said that they hope their children are not “ignorantes” (ignorant), “brutos” (brutes / stupid), or “sin cerebro” (brainless) like them. Through education and through different life choices, mothers hope their daughters and all of their children can have better futures, which they visualize in the form of: high school or college diplomas, full-time jobs, a house, and a responsible and hardworking husband.



Manuela is almost 60, and she cannot read or write. She said that her husband put his energy into other women, while she gave her 12 children an education. She washed clothes and worked in shrimp-packaging companies; laughing, she said that is why she looks shriveled up. “But because of my efforts,” she emphasized, “all of my children can read.” That is an enormous source of pride for her. Through education, she set them up for their futures. She has endured the murder of three of her sons and the others’ failed marriages, but she is proud of her children. Her youngest daughter is completing her college degree. Diana works as a seamstress, and she enrolled her daughter in a technical school so that she could learn the same craft. When a policy change replaced the curriculum of technical schools with a standardized one, Diana was dismayed. But, she hopes this educational model will provide her daughter with more career possibilities. “She can be more than me,” Diana said during a focus group.

Although traditional studies of childhood (e.g., Ariès 1962; DeMause 1974) have been criticized for concerning themselves with children to better understand adulthood and who they will become as adults, the future is not something that can be overlooked when trying to understand the lives of children, especially children in vulnerable environments, like Guayaquil’s shantytowns. While I agree with the importance of conceptualizing “children as social actors in their own right, in the present, rather than ‘future adults’” (Horton and Kraftl 2006:83), in communities like these in which violence and crime often result in premature death, it is essential for children to think about their short-term and long-term future, as many tend to think in terms of survival and making it from one day to the next (Bourgois 1996). Prompting children to imagine themselves as “future adults” serves as a strategy for them to get there. A call for scholars to focus on children as “being” versus “becoming” (e.g., Holloway 2014) is important in that we observe and learn from children’s everyday lives; however, it overlooks the impacts of

the precarious everyday realities – the present – of young people growing up in dangerous environments. Children’s stories of “being,” especially in shantytown communities, must be discussed alongside their plans and possibilities of “becoming.”

On average, during interviews, children selected 25 as their ideal age to start their family. The boys, in particular, said they wanted to run their own business, though boys and girls alike emphasized that their priority for their futures was making lots of money. For the majority of the participants, these interviews were the first time they attempted to articulate their future plans. Perhaps, because they were discussing their futures for the first time coupled with the fact that Guayaquil’s socio-spatial segregation does not provide much room for poor children to hope and imagine, most of the young people I interviewed did not have “dream jobs,” just an end goal of money. They quantified “a lot” as \$800 per month, which is double what most of their households bring in.<sup>61</sup> Undoubtedly, the structural violence of poverty apparent through the socio-spatial segregation and exclusion in Guayaquil limits people’s opportunities and attempts to limit children’s imagination. It is essential when working with children, particularly children from low-income communities, to find moments to discuss their futures and their dreams; alongside encouraging them to imagine, we must work with them and their families to develop strategies that position them to achieve their goals.

It is especially interesting that although their childhood was traumatic and prematurely adult in many ways, the children I worked with idealized the innocence that should characterize this period. They internalized and sought “appropriate” frames for their childhood and youth. Alongside studying children as children in their everyday lives, researchers of childhood should also consider children’s analyses and interpretations of their everyday experiences, of their

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<sup>61</sup> Average Guayaquilean business men average \$4,000 per month, the more affluent ones \$7,000, and the owners over \$20,000. These figures are based on my conversations with local businessmen and CEOs in Guayaquil.

“being” and “becoming”: what they have learned, what they have liked, what they would change, and how they envision their next year, five years, ten years. Accordingly, not only will researchers develop a stronger understanding of growing up from the perspectives of children, but they will be in a unique position to better identify appropriate resources for children’s wellbeing as they grow. In this way, too, scholarship can impact positive social change, informing policies on local, national, and international levels.

**Chapter 5**  
**Fundación Crecer and the Social Construction of Poor Children's Futures:  
Thinking Through Poverty, Possibility, and the Power of Imagination**

When Fundación Crecer announced its closure in January 2013, the children and their families were devastated. The Fundación served a critical role in their lives. For some of the children, it was their first and only school; it was the place they learned how to read. Through the school's psychologists, many of the children, their mothers, and grandmothers, were able to open up about their struggles with abuse, sexuality, depression, and anxiety. The workshops the psychologists offered the women, in particular, were cited as critical spaces for their development as independent women and mothers. When the Fundación closed its doors, the children were not only losing their school; they were losing their support system. The Fundación offered them friendships, food, medical assistance, legal guidance, and even financial support through bus fare and school supplies.

Institutions, like Fundación Crecer, are central to the lives of the families I have worked with. Many of these families are affiliated with other institutions – churches, international aid organizations, volunteer programs in their neighborhoods – that provide their children with tutoring, religious education, and gifts in the form of food, donated clothes, and presents for birthdays and holidays. But, Fundación Crecer was more than the other institutions that offer support multiple times per month or per year. This organization was there for them five days per week, two meals per day. Children and families trusted the CEO's power – and friendship with the mayor – to provide them with something different (and better) from regular public schools: a learning environment with smaller class sizes, fieldtrips, workshops, famous guest speakers, and

job connections. While I saw the importance of the space created by the Fundación for the children and their families, I also observed how this non-profit set the children up for an anticipated track. By providing students with an education that emphasized good behavior over a substantive academic curriculum, Fundación Crecer contributed to the social construction of poor children's futures, aspiring toward the creation of a student body that recognized the importance of going to school over working on the streets. But, by going to school, the Fundación, more than academic proficiency, valued teaching its population of poor children (and their families) the importance of punctuality, prayer before mealtimes, and respect for adults and peers.

In this chapter, I discuss the Fundación's closure to begin a discussion about the futures of children from Guayaquil's barrios and the resources and perspectives that accompany them as they grow. From a presentation of the uncertainty about their futures that children and women felt when they lost Fundación Crecer, I move into their barrios to present how futures are conceptualized there. In particular, I emphasize how a deep understanding of their poverty frames their outlooks for the future. I discuss, for example, women's fear of "history repeating itself" through their children alongside the hope offered through these children of different futures – better futures – from those surrounding them. Alongside these fears and possibilities, I also highlight the challenges for children to aspire without goal-setting, without role models, and without hope. I conclude with a final discussion of the Fundación, featuring Jota's story. By bringing the discussion of their futures back to these institutions of support, I emphasize how deeply embedded inequalities are in Guayaquil. Non-profits, public schools, and other organizations of supposed support are framed by and reinforce a social construction of poor childhood that encourages "good enough" expectations and aspirations.

By analyzing the ways in which children and their mothers and grandmothers talk about and imagine the future, the future serves as a reference point through which to understand how people from Guayaquil's barrios are making sense of their past and their present; specifically, how they internalize the structural violence of social and spatial inequalities that consistently limit their opportunities for education and employment. The future serves as a crucial reference point for anthropologists and practitioners of childhood who hope to better understand people's everyday lives and how the past and the present – and the families, neighborhoods, and schools that form part of these experiences – influence the extent to which they dream and aspire.

### **Part I: Thinking about the Future Upon the Closure of Fundación Crecer**

During my observations that first month of fieldwork at Fundación Crecer, the secretary – Paulina – was always in the middle of preparing forms and documents for the CEO and Principal to take to their meetings with the Ministry of Education. After the academic year ended, it appeared that the Fundación could no longer serve as a school per Ecuador's educational reforms of 2013. Because Fundación Crecer offered two years of primary education in one to help children who entered school at a later age catch up, this model did not fit the standardized curriculum that was mandated through these educational reforms. Accordingly, my fieldwork began with questions about what would happen to the children. Where would the children go to school? Would the new schools cause problems for the 13-year-olds, for example, who needed to enroll in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade? What sort of psychological support would the children and their mothers receive? Would the children remain motivated to stay in school?

These questions were asked behind closed doors, as the staff was sworn to secrecy. We could not tell the students or families that when the school year ended in January 2013, the school would shutdown completely. When I began my interviews with the children that January,

they still did not know, and I became more distressed about their futures when I heard many of them describe the ways the Fundación supported them and changed their lives. It was a safe space where they felt loved, regardless of the number and types of mistakes they made.

Just as many described their neighborhood blocks as being “like a family,” students described their community of friends and the community of the Fundación as a whole as a family, too. In Módulo 4, for instance, they all had nicknames that Hólger had made up for them. During my second month of fieldwork, I sat with Kiki and Damaris during afternoon recess, and they pointed to their friends on the playground and told me each one’s nickname. They laughed at my expressions when I heard each one, and giggled through their explanations of the less obvious ones. Kiki said that Hólger was always making up funny names. He could always make them laugh. He was like their big brother, she said. Although I had only spent a month at the Fundación in 2011 along with the last four months of 2012, I was saddened by the school closing: not because I thought the children were receiving an excellent education, but because they were losing a safe space in which they felt supported and loved – in which they felt like part of a family.

The end-of-year Assembly on January 24<sup>th</sup> was the celebration the children and families looked forward to. This time, however, it served as an opportunity for the CEO to announce that the Fundación was closing permanently. I sat on the left-side of the room near the back, next to Hólger and Jota. As the CEO began to speak, Jota anticipated what she was going to say, and he kept whispering: “Va a cerrar, va a cerrar, va a cerrar” [It’s going to close, it’s going to close, it’s going to close]. When she announced that the Fundación was closing, Jota bumped Hólger’s arm with his own and sighed out “Te dije” [I told you] with an angry look on his face. Everyone had a reaction in that moment: gasps, “¡no!,” “¿cómo?” [what? / come again?]. As I looked

around, I saw students with their faces buried in their hands. Children and mothers cried and many stood up one-by-one to share their own stories about why the Fundación had been so important to them. One mother's comment, in particular, struck me: "Aquí aprendí a ser mamá" ["Here I learned to be a mother"]. As they spoke, they thanked the CEO for everything she did for them. One father, however, stood up and asked what I thought was the most important question of the morning assembly: "What can we do as a community for the Fundación to remain open?" He followed up by saying that he heard all of the wonderful thanks and stories that so many had shared and that if these same stories were captured by the news cameras, the government would be embarrassed to shut down such a valuable program. The Principal glared at me when I clapped after this man spoke, but I agreed. I knew the CEO wanted to retire and wondered to what extent the educational reforms could be manipulated for Fundación Crecer to remain open. Guayaquil, after all, was largely run by last names and connections; and the CEO of the Fundación had both.

During the winter vacation (February – mid-April 2013), I moved forward with my research project, interviewing the children from Fundación Crecer; their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers began participating in the interview phase, too, and the women, in particular, described their difficulties in enrolling their children in schools. The biggest challenge was for those whose children were too old for the grade that corresponded to theirs. The Ministry of Education wanted those children to study at night or to do "estudios a distancia" [distance schooling] in which they could work and study independently during the week and attend school on Saturdays or Sundays. Women feared the night option because of the dangers in their neighborhoods. Anaís told me that her 14-year-old niece was expected to study at night since she was supposed to be in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. "How can I allow her to walk home at 10 o'clock at



night? She will be raped or pregnant before the school year ends.” Maikita, Anaís’s niece, never returned to school after the Fundación closed down.

Maikita’s brother, however, who was 13 at the time and eligible for the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade was able to matriculate in an alternative school for male street kids – “chicos de la calle”— called Don Bosco. I accompanied Anaís, JJ (her nephew), and a small group of boys to Don Bosco where I had volunteered several years earlier and, again, during that winter. We decided to meet at Fundación Crecer that morning; from there, we split our group into two taxis. As I waited for the kids and families to arrive, I spoke with Paulina who was organizing the student files that we needed to take with us. I asked her why Don Bosco was able to remain open even though it did not fit with the standardized model invoked by the education reforms; she explained that as an established Catholic organization, it was more difficult to shut it down. When we arrived at Don Bosco, the school psychologist interviewed the children, and they met with a social worker to write down whom they lived with and where they lived. Because Jota’s neighbor who he lived with could not attend, I stood in as his “representante” [representative/guardian]. We filled out paper work, the kids took a placement exam, and when they finished, they tried on donated jeans and shoes that would serve as their uniforms.

Before we arrived, Jota was excited about Don Bosco; as he had told me, “una carrera quiero” [a career is what I want], and in addition to the usual school subjects of math, language, science and social studies, this school offered training in a trade, preparing young men to be mechanics and electricians. After our morning there, however, Jota was uncomfortable and unconvinced by Don Bosco. I tried to be enthusiastic and hoped he felt some sort of connection with or trust in the adults he interacted with that day; I knew that was especially important for him. I had spoken with his guardian beforehand about this opportunity. She had asked me to

help find alternatives for Jota, because no school wanted to take him. He was almost 17 and still in primary school. She and Jota were upset with his teacher at the Fundación because he didn't pass Módulo 4, which would have allowed him to enter "colegio" [high school]. A motorcycle accident from earlier that year kept him injured and out of school for several weeks; his grades dropped significantly after that, and he never recovered academically. Jota told me that "Si me quieren meter a escuela, me voy" [If they want to stick me in primary school, I'm leaving (his guardian's house)]. He calculated that if he was 17 in seventh grade, by the time he could graduate, he would be around 23. That's not something he wanted for himself; he wasn't very interested in studying anymore.

This entire process stripped away his motivation. He was working various construction jobs during the winter vacation and was spending more time at his mother's house on the North Side. By the end of the winter, I learned that he was living with his mother full-time and was not attending classes at Don Bosco. Months later, Hólger told me that Jota had been arrested for armed robbery. As I write this, nearly two years later, I've learned that Jota has been arrested again for being in possession of a loaded weapon. He was tried as an adult this time and sentenced to six years in prison.<sup>62</sup>

### ***The Future as a Reference Point***

Toward the end of my first month of fieldwork at Fundación Crecer, the children's future was a major topic of conversation. The Fundación was going to close, and the children would have to be placed in other schools for the following academic year. For many of the children, Fundación Crecer was the only school they had ever attended; for others, it was the only school

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<sup>62</sup> In their edited volume, *Growing up in Poverty: Findings from Young Lives*, Bourdillon and Boyden (2014) present the experiences of children growing up in poverty and how being "left behind" in the realm of education influences the decisions they make and the possibilities they have.

in which they had ever felt relevant and cared for. The Fundación, for example, was Adriana's first school and the first place where Hólger received positive reinforcement. Through the Fundación and the help and support of its psychologists, mothers and children were able to file charges against abuse for the first time. Her classmates and teacher at the Fundación were the first ones with whom Lourdes boasted the news that she was going to be a mother. This was a special place of many firsts for many children and families during more than 25 years.

I also have fond memories and a strong sense of nostalgia when I think back on the Fundación. I am grateful for the ways in which it supported kids and families from the poorest communities in the city for more than two decades. I'm grateful, too, that the principal and CEO allowed me to begin my research there. This was the place where I first met my collaborators and began forming relationships with them that shaped my experiences living in the city and thinking about the city. As I think back on my first day at the Fundación and the first time I met many of the children and mothers, I can't help but think about the last times, too – the final moments. That is, the last time I saw Pammy and her younger sister who I had finally connected with as a teacher and a friend during our final month together; the last time Emperatriz asked for spare change for the bus and the last time hearing her toddler scream when anyone tried to pick her up. I think of the last time the full school sat together for lunch in the cafeteria to pray before their meal. I think of the kids who I still know, more than three years later, who attended school for the last time when the Fundación closed.

As I recall first and last moments and experiences, I'm thinking about the past; but, I am also thinking about these moments in relation to children's present and how these firsts and lasts have impacted the possibilities for their futures. Drawing from my fieldwork at Fundación Crecer, this chapter heavily considers how children's futures are already being constructed in the

present and the extent to which children's imagination and aspiration are also involved in this co-construction.

In an edited volume from the early 1990s, Sandra Wallman and her collaborators emphasize the centrality of the future on our ability to understand cultures and societies. With the goal of promoting ethnographic scholarship and anthropological interest in the future, Wallman explains that while thinking about the future can influence the future we aspire to and create for ourselves, the ways in which we imagine our future can also influence how we live our present:

...images of the future (may) affect what happens in the future; and, still more important, that images of the future (can) constrain the present at least as much as do images of the past. These observations...imply that future orientation of some kind sustains everything we call culture or social organisation – even that continuity itself depends on it (1992:2).

Not everyone's future orientation is the same, but we are all still involved – at various paces – in a forward movement, guided, in part, by the official pace and vision of our communities, our cities, our countries, and the world. Especially for my young research collaborators, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, gangs, and violence aim to constrain their abilities to envision different images for their futures. These constraints, activated by negatively charged images and realities, inform how children choose to live their everyday lives. As Arjun Appadurai (2013) submits, “especially in the lives of ordinary people, the personal archive of memories, both material and cognitive, is not only or primarily about the past, but is about providing a map for negotiating and shaping new futures” (288). Accordingly, people's memories do not only teach us about their past, but about how these influence their actions in their present and their perspectives on their future. Appadurai's archive comes to life in Guayaquil's barrios in the sense that children and women negotiate past experiences and

examples as they live their present-day lives; their past and present, then, inform their actions and the pace and direction of their forward movement as they envision and negotiate possibilities for their futures. For many, these images encourage them to be short-sighted; for others, these images lead them to partake in discourses in which they imagine futures that are diametrically opposed to those that surround them. Children's aspirations, hopes, and imagination for the future are always formed in interaction in their everyday lives.

Jane Guyer's (2007) essay on the "near future" uses economic principles to begin a discussion of thinking ahead, reflecting on the past, and making effective decisions in the present. For Guyer, power, value, and decision-making across cultures change based on distinct social positions, leading to different ways of envisioning time (2008 lecture at Johns Hopkins University via Georgetown University's Berkeley Center online video library). Different contexts encourage different forms of organizing one's day-to-day life, including how one perceives the short term and the long term. Because a discussion of children's futures in the barrios cannot be considered independently of poverty, the economic element of Guyer's future is relevant and useful to think with as I consider the everyday experiences of my research collaborators. When people's economic life is interconnected with everyday struggles to access basic resources, like running water, their days are framed by thinking about and acting on immediate solutions: obtaining food from one day to the next; preparing for tropical storms that could destroy their homes. Appadurai (2013), for instance, refers to forward-thinking capabilities and tendencies to think ahead as "cultural capacities," shaped by one's upbringing and environment.

How, then, does it become realistic for people in these settings to think about different temporalities, such as, the long term versus the short term? The winter rains, for example, are a

seasonal temporal construction that is a large concern in the barrios, as this season coincides with devastating weather, particularly for those who live along steep hills and unpaved roads or for those who live in houses made of bamboo.<sup>63</sup> People from Guayaquil's shantytowns visualize time and make decisions based on the wellbeing of their families; often, this wellbeing is a matter of survival, as many families struggle to feed their children from one day to the next. Accordingly, thinking about the long term versus the short term and setting goals for the future appears as a privilege not always afforded to those in Guayaquil's barrios, as "the capacity to aspire is articulated with and against the capability of doing so" (Appadurai 2013 lecture via Georgetown University's Berkeley Center online video library). Indeed, as kids and their mothers discuss their ideas for their futures, these are always projected alongside their poverty; they emphasize the extent to which certain aspirations may or may not be attainable because of who they are. It is not that they do not believe themselves capable, but they have internalized exclusive societal structures that largely define the extent of one's capabilities, overwhelmingly associating poverty as a hindrance. Organizations, like Fundación Crecer, are intended to work with children to develop their capabilities, but their own ideas surrounding the possibilities for poor children's futures lead to curriculum whose design limits children's possibilities for their long term.

The question of "How does it become realistic?" would be more anthropologically friendly if framed as: "(Why) Should it become realistic?" Future oriented thinking is a privilege, often not accessible or feasible for lower socioeconomic classes. "How does," then, in

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<sup>63</sup> "Perceptions of the future direct the management of practical life and are decisive to public policy. The success of any economic-development or health-improvement scheme depends crucially on the expectations of those who are subjects (or objects) of it, and on a reasonable match between their images of the future and those of the agents in charge. Planned change is not possible without a view of how things might be, and even the rehabilitation of individuals or groups who survive disaster depends on their being able to visualize a better or a safer time to come (Raphael 1986). Again, it seems that without a view of the future there may not be one" (Wallman 1992:3).

my opinion, works as a way to address socioeconomic inequity and instability, working with families to find ways, for instance, to organize their money and attain employment. Fundación Crecer, before my time there, held workshops with mothers precisely on such topics. While anthropologists traditionally make these observations without imposing their own opinions or suggestions, my relationship with anthropology and with the communities with whom I work necessarily involves this level of engagement; that is, looking through the data and working to find collaborative ways in which to offer support. Similarly, Appadurai (2004, 2013) envisions “the capacity to aspire” as a cultural capacity that can work in tandem with “the future oriented logic of development” as a strategy for poor people to work toward positive changes for their everyday lives:

It is in culture that ideas of the future as much as those about the past are embedded and nurtured. Thus, in strengthening the capacity to aspire conceived as a cultural capacity, especially among the poor, the future oriented logic of development could find a natural ally and the poor could find the resources required to contest and alter the conditions of their own poverty. [2004:59]

My emphasis, then, of speaking with young people in the shantytowns about their futures, setting short-term and long-term goals, coincides with Appadurai’s suggestion that cultivating one’s aspiration can be a method through which to begin to change one’s everyday living conditions and opportunities. Accordingly, the question of “How?” supersedes “Should?”

In this chapter, I present the ways in which the future is imagined, discussed, and constrained for and by children and families from Guayaquil’s shantytowns; but through this presentation, I am also interested in the value – for anthropologists generally and for anthropologists of childhood specifically – of using “the future” as a mode of analysis to better understand people’s lived and imagined experiences. Guyer ends her essay by asking a question that I intend to address through the discussion in this chapter: “What kind of ‘stories’ does

imagination create when the reference points lie in the future?” (2007:417). When there are so many “unknowns,” how are children’s imaginations activated? How do they make sense of uncertainty, their dreams and hopes, and the realities of their reference points; that is, the potential futures that surround them through their parents and neighbors? What stories do their imaginations create when their schools, neighborhoods, and households teach them that they have a pre-packaged future and that dreaming and aspiring are in vain?

By thinking of the future as lived experience and “as a cultural fact” (Appadurai 2013:285), Anthropology and Childhood Studies can attempt to ask and answer new questions about the lived experience, using aspiration, hope, and imagination as new modes of analysis.<sup>64</sup> Although the future is uncertain, it is the organizing force of cultures and societies: a tool of politicians, of educators, of non-profits, like Fundación Crecer. It is also an organizing force for children’s imaginations and dreams, as these are intertwined with ideas and images of a potential, and perhaps idealized, future. If we think of the future as part of the lived experience, we are able to tease apart the daily interactions that influence the extent to which children are motivated (and unmotivated) to imagine, aspire, and dream. Along with Chapter 2, this chapter is written, in part, for practitioners of childhood and for organizations that intend to support and work collaboratively with women, children, and families in Guayaquil’s barrios and in inner-city communities across the globe.

## **Part 2: “(Why) Does History Repeat Itself?” – Imagining the Future in the face of Poverty and Overlapping Temporalities**

People’s visions for the future inform how they live their present. In this section, I draw on the future as a reference point as I discuss the ways in which children and their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers, talk about and think about their futures vis-à-vis their poverty and

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<sup>64</sup> Certainly, as Appadurai (2013) reminds us, in culture, experiences with and understandings of the future and the past are cultivated and transmitted.



everyday lives. How they view the outcomes of their own lives alongside the experiences of their older children and kids from their neighborhoods influences how women envision their children's futures. These women want something better for their children than what they had and have. At once, then, their children represent potential failure – which mothers align with themselves and history repeating itself – and hope for something different – which mothers associate with futures they never had themselves.

“Why does history repeat itself?” struck me initially because of its hopelessness. It was not a “Will?”, but a “Why?” Over time, as my relationships with my research collaborators developed, I saw examples of children and adults that both corroborated and worked against such predetermined futures. “Why does history repeat itself?” transmits the idea of not having a future, of futile attempts to move forward, of living a future that merely recreates unfavorable pasts. This interconnection of the past – of history – with the future is useful to think with, especially in our understanding of children's experiences growing up in poor communities (see also Shaw 2007, 2013 on memory in the present and toward the future). Western ideologies of childhood are dominant in Guayaquil and invoke a sense of nostalgia for the past while looking toward the future. Such “official” versions of “Childhood” are romanticized and accompanied by a forward-thinking hope that situates children as future adults. There is, at once, a sense of nostalgia for the past alongside a sense of nostalgia for the imagined future. Both are idealized temporal spaces.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> In *Nostalgia for the Future*, Piot (2010) describes a longing for a future “represented not only in Christian End Times narratives and the universal quest for exit visas but also in the embrace of a thousand development initiatives that hail youth and leave elders behind” (20). While youth still have hope for change and forward movement, elders do not, creating a divide between an undesired past – elders – and potential for different futures through youth. Piot's descriptions, however, reveal that desired futures are rarely attained. Different futures – an escape from the undesired pasts – remain in the realm of nostalgia. The extent to which nostalgia becomes tangible in my own research requires a longitudinal study beyond my four years with this community of children and families.

In the barrios, this nostalgia for the past is contradictory as many children's childhoods are lined with trauma and events, perhaps, that they hope to forget. As described in Chapter 1, for example, kids I have worked with present childhood as a period free of worry and as a period they miss, contradicting their lived experiences in which they worked to help support their family or in which they were victims of abuse. Perhaps, a strategy to forget unfavorable experiences from their past involves idealizing this period and "the magic and unending possibilities of childhood" (Huby 1992:42), which I have often thought is the case with Tito and Hólger.<sup>66</sup> This idealization is undoubtedly influenced by discourses of "Childhood" that are transmitted through school and television, among other venues. While childhood evokes sentiments of the past and the future, the present is essential, too, as children's aspirations, hopes, and imagination for the future are always formed through their day-to-day interactions and through the images they carry of their past and of their potential futures.

Here, the past, present, and future – the triad of temporalities, as Wallman (1992) labels it – converge. And as these converge in the minds of the people living them, they inform one another, always influencing everyday decisions and actions. While long-term plans and aspirations are often privileges afforded to those with more promising socio-economic means, through my fieldwork, I learned that the children and adults I have worked with do talk about and think about the future, directly and indirectly. Sometimes these were prompted by guided conversations with me, but other times, the future came up organically as mothers, for example, asked: "Why does history repeat itself?" Women did not ask this expecting a response. Instead, this question was a way of expressing their frustration and despair and of teaching me about their

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<sup>66</sup> "Despite the poverty, the old people think of their childhood with fondness and nostalgia. I suppose we all do – no matter what our earliest years were like, we miss the magic and unending possibilities of childhood. For one thing, they look back on their childhood poverty as honest and proud. People managed, by hard work. Second, they remember their poverty and the stigma of poverty, as shared" (Huby 1992:42).

everyday realities. Automatically, this idea of history repeating itself evokes a cyclical pattern in which hope, aspiration, and imagination are absent. Many of the mothers who collaborated on this project, worked to combat these cycles and hoped for something different for their children, while simultaneously anticipating and cursing the circular flow.

Similarly, the phrase, “se fue con marido” [“she left with a husband”], introduced in Chapter 4, also serves as an example of the pre-packaged futures transmitted in everyday discourse. Through the commonly spoken phrase, “ya se fue con marido” [“she already left with a husband”], the adverb, “ya” [already], implies that by “already” leaving with a husband, the girl is (already) expected to repeat history. Marcia said that she always told her daughter “El día que consigas enamorado, tienes que pensar en tu futuro” [The day you find a boyfriend you have to think about your future]; but, she continued, “Ya se fue con marido” [She already left with a husband]. Kichy, down the road, she told me, already left with a husband, too; and, she looked like she was going to have her baby “cualquiera de estos días” [any one of these days].<sup>67</sup> The “ya” insinuates a foregone conclusion of what this girl’s future holds. That is, she already started recreating a cycle of girlhood and motherhood particular to Guayaquil’s shantytowns and across many urban poor communities. These experiences of leaving with husbands as teenagers form part of the “normative timing” that structures girlhood in the shantytowns (Freeman 2010:137).

This foregone conclusion for girls’ futures directly impacted the future Marcia’s parents outlined for her. Marcia, nearly 40 years old and a mother of six, told me that it was too late for the dreams she had as a child. “Ahora no tengo metas” [Now, I don’t have goals]. She said she would need a certain level of education to become a secretary, which was the future job she dreamed of when she was young. She loved the uniforms secretaries wore; they looked so professional, she reflected. She could have been a secretary, she assured me. In primary school,

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<sup>67</sup> Both Kichy and Carito were students at Fundación Crecer before it closed.

she was a prized student. Marcia was so good, that she won a partial scholarship. In response, however, her parents withdrew her from school. Even though they only had to pay half, they did not think her education was worth the investment. What good would it do to invest in her education “si igual pronto se irá a hacer de marido” [if soon she would go off with a husband anyway].

In our discussion, her past, present, and future converged as she reflected on what could have been, what her life was like in that moment, and what the future could hold for her children. Upon becoming a mother, Marcia, like many of the women I have worked with, consider their futures in terms of their children. Their own idealized futures they may have had as children can no longer be realized: “Now I don’t have goals.”

### ***And Then There’s Nothing and the Cow-Themed Kitchen***

I listened as Hólger and Jota discussed girls’ decisions to leave with husbands during lunch one afternoon. Our interview became an informal conversation, as we took the voice recorder and my backpack to another table to eat. When I returned to the table with a hamburger and fries and chicken, rice, and beans, Jota and Hólger were criticizing their classmates who were already mothers, saying that these girls lamented their choices afterward when they recognized the challenges of having a deadbeat partner and no money. Jota compared his friends to his sisters who had already left with husbands, explaining: “No llegan a un futuro...por tener sexo y de ahí no hay nada” [They don’t arrive at a future...because they have sex and then there’s nothing].<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Similarly, in reference to girls who become pregnant as teenagers, Carmen said: “Dejan toda su vida por delante por tener un hijo. No es malo tener un hijo – pero, tan temprano, no disfrutan bien su vida. Le pegan sus maridos” [They leave their whole life in front of them by having a child. It’s not bad to have a child – but, so early, they don’t enjoy life how they should. Their husbands hit them].

Jota's bleak reflection about girls' futures reflects mothers' discussions of their daughters' futures through past-tense images of their own lived experiences. *Why does history repeat itself?* Women, however, also demonstrate hope by contrasting the futures they aspire to for their children with their own lived experiences, as demonstrated through examples, like Diana's from Chapter 4, in which she aimed for her daughter to be "more than me." Other examples from Chapter 4 revealed women's comments in which they implied and even directly stated that they had no future. *And then there's nothing.* Such contexts of hopelessness – of having no future – supposedly serve as motivators for the children to be different from the examples set by their reference points: their mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and neighbors. The challenge for children, then, becomes navigating this uncertainty of being presented with models to work against and not toward. Role-models are essential for children as they grow; and, many children recognize their mothers' efforts to move their family forward: "sacar adelante".<sup>69</sup> But, what are the consequences of telling your children that you are a failure and not the example to follow; where, then, are the examples for them to follow? It is important for children to see models of success who look like them – people from the same family, from the same socioeconomic background, gender, race (see also Ford 2011; Lee 2007).

In the barrios, "then there's nothing," falls in line with women's reflections on their own lives and on girls' lives when they "already" leave with husbands. But, through their children there is "something" – there is hope and possibility. Mothers have hopes and aspirations for their kids in spite of the repetitive cycles that form part of their everyday discourse and are tempting and accessible for their children as they grow. Wallman concludes that "without a view

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<sup>69</sup> Literally, "sacar adelante" means to "take out" [*sacar*] "forward" [*adelante*]; that is, "to take out" so they can move forward; such as, to take them out of a rut, or of something holding them back. Thinking about the future and "saliendo adelante" [moving forward, overcoming obstacles] defies cyclical predictions of failure.

of the future there may not be one,” (1992:3); the challenge for my research collaborators is creating that view while being surrounded by an environment they are paradoxically encouraged not to emulate, but to live within. While youth and their guardians want something different for children’s futures, these futures are still envisioned within the barrios.

Although many girls I have worked with would disagree with Jota, as they see pregnancies and children of their own as a way of creating better futures, Carito did agree with Jota’s reflection when we spoke during her pregnancy. I sat with Carito and her mother, Marcia, who left with a husband at the same age, twenty years earlier. We were sitting at the edge of my neighborhood, facing the river, hoping to cool off from the breeze since the sun’s heat was intensifying as we moved into the afternoon. Marcia was with us at times when she wasn’t running after her two-year-old son.

Carito became confused when I prompted her to imagine her life at the age of 30. I tried to explain it conversationally in different ways, since the idea of being 30 – 15 years from then – was a difficult concept for her to grasp. She seemed to understand the question when she answered: “Como estoy ahora, mi futuro – no he pensado nada” [The way I am now (pregnant), my future – I haven’t thought anything about it]. She did, however, discuss the baby she was going to have in four months and her task to see how she was going to support him: “ver cómo salgo adelante con mi hijo” [have to see how I am going to move forward with my son]. The phrase Carito used, “salir adelante,” literally means to get out and ahead from a difficult situation. More than “to move forward,” then, this phrase, which the people I work with always say, especially when something difficult or tragic happens, combines “getting out” of a specific situation and, in the process, making headway, always in a forward direction. It recognizes that the forward direction is not automatic; to move forward, one must “get out” or, as previously

stated, “take out” [*sacar adelante*] their family, for example, from a rut or a standstill. It is interesting that this phrase connotes this determination to remain on a forward path, confronting and “getting out” of obstacles along the way, though many women’s reflections lament the cyclical nature of life in their communities, rather than the linear path connoted by “salir adelante.” These obstacles that need to be “taken out” and from which people need to “get out,” represent, perhaps, the challenges that attempt to push this path down in a circular motion.

As we continued talking about her pregnancy, Carito changed the course of our discussion. She had found her answer to the original question I asked: “Quería ser ingeniera...son tres profesiones las que quiero, no sé si logre las tres” [I wanted to be an engineer...there are three professions that I want, I’m not sure if I can accomplish all three]. She enumerated the three: engineer, lawyer, and the third took her a few moments to remember: secretary. Certainly, those were big goals, especially since she had dropped out of school several months earlier. Before I could say anything in addition to my nod and my note-taking, she continued: “Antes nos reuníamos y conversábamos todos” [Before, we would congregate and all of us would talk]. When she lived in her house, she and her six siblings would sit together and talk. Her mother, she explained, was there sometimes, but often, she was left in charge of the house and of her siblings, and they would have these discussions on their own. She said that in these conversations, she imagined she would have a room that she would build above her parents’ house. Her younger brother, Turiche, “iba a tener un carro y vivir con los millonarios” [was going to have a car and live with the millionaires]. Chivis “iba a vivir con los millonarios y con mi mamá – iba a tener un bebé también” [was going to live with the millionaires and with my mom – he was going to have a baby, too]. The rest, she explained, were too little to have dreams.

Her younger sister, Nini, was 8, and I asked Carito what advice she would give her sister about growing up: “que tenga enamorado sí, pero que no cometa el error mío” [to have a boyfriend yes, but not to commit my same mistake]. For Carito, her mistake was leaving with a husband, and being pregnant formed part of that same decision to leave. She said, though, that Nini “se va de viejita, ya a los treinta” [will leave as a little old lady, around 30]. She followed up by saying that she also thought that she’d leave “old” – “como a los veinte” [like at 20].<sup>70</sup> Marcia had joined us by this point and nodded, saying that she wished Carito had left later, when she was older and smarter. Carito rolled her eyes at her mother, though they both wished the same thing.

I turned the question over to Marcia, though I asked specifically about her kids’ futures. She said she wanted them to have “Su buena profesión, con eso es más fácil encaminar su vida, hasta para barrer las calles se necesita título; que no pasen las peripecias que nosotros hemos pasado; quisiera que sean mejor de lo que yo he sido” [Their good career, with that it’s easier to put your life on track, even to sweep the streets you need a degree; for them not to go through the struggles we had to go through; I would like them to be better than what I have been]. As her

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<sup>70</sup> Munn defines “time reckoning” as “the use of selected cultural categories or contingent events [‘time indications’ (147)] to ‘tell time’ – to ask ‘when’ something happened, will or should happen – and to ‘measure’ duration – to ask ‘how long’ something takes, or to ‘time’ it. The relevant categories may segment natural processes (including diurnal, solar, and lunar cycles) or human activities into successive intervals” (1992:102). Munn goes on to explain that “Since Malinowski, the importance of sequences of tasks as ‘reference points’ used in time-reckoning has been regularly noted;” however, she “highlights the failures of the models of time...to consider time-reckoning as itself a temporal activity” (103). Upon offering an example from Highland New Guinea in which people use time-based expressions to demonstrate their pace in relation to the expected daily tasks they need to complete, Munn concludes that “time being told relates to the time of one’s purposes: to the sense that one is not (in our own expression) ‘on time.’ This concern requires relating the actor’s speed to some defined standard of timing” (103-104). During interviews I saw “time-reckoning as itself a temporal activity.” The loose way in which time is remembered is common with the children and their mothers. As I tried to map their stories chronologically by relating their experiences to their age, they fumbled through years and dismissed my attempts by saying certain occurrences happened “por ahí” [around there, around that time]. This happens, for example, later in this chapter in Jota’s story. It is interesting, too, to think about this in relation to girls and women who are unaware of their pregnancies for several months, like Jaqui, Jessie, and Carito (see Chapter 4). As Jaqui explained, her body didn’t process how long it had been. It was tricked, it kept bleeding, she said. She associated this reaction with her own desire not to have any more children.



mother spoke, Carito smiled at her baby brother who was banging his hands on a table. I had always observed her to be a caring and gentle big sister, but as I looked at her in that moment, I saw her smile contemplate that soon it would be her own child banging on the table. I asked her what she would want for her own baby's future: "Sí quiero que estudie, que se supere mejor que yo" [I do want him to study, for him to overcome / succeed better than me]. Without a voice recorder, I jotted down their comments, and we were silent as I wrote down Carito's final words. Marcia broke the silence by telling her son to stop, because the table could break.

We began talking about Turiche and Chivis' dreams of living with the millionaires. Marcia said that she wouldn't want to live with these rich people, but that she did dream of having a kitchen like theirs. She works cleaning houses in higher-income neighborhoods, and described the beautiful kitchens she had seen. In her kitchen, she has two refrigerators. Only one works and the other she uses as a pantry. Carito interjected, saying that her mother "Quiere de vaquita su cocina – en sus sueños, quiere los anaqueles de los millonarios" [She wants her kitchen decorated with cows – in her dreams, she wants the shelving of the millionaires]. For the rooms, Marcia told me, she doesn't care much. For those, she just wants sheets and towels. They were seven now that Carito had left, and all of them were sharing one bath towel, which was always wet. But, the kitchen, she emphasized, was the space she always dreams about. "Algún día" [Someday], she spoke, "voy a tener esa cocina" [I'm going to have that kitchen]. Carito laughed, "mi mami y su cocina de vaquitas" [my mom and her cow kitchen]. I told her I did not have anything with cows on it, but I did go home to get her some spare towels so that they would not have to share.

### ***Poverty and Possibility in the Shantytowns***

“How did the long run become a plausible way to think about the framing of our life?” (Jane Guyer 2008 lecture at Johns Hopkins University via Georgetown University’s Berkeley Center online video library). This is a critical socio-cultural question as it allows us to analyze how time and an understanding of the past, present, and future influence the ways individuals and societies organize, analyze, and approach their everyday lives. Specifically, in this section, I explore the ways in which poverty among the children and families with whom I work has created a culture of collaboration, of saving for later, and of thinking ahead. In her presentation, Guyer thinks about changes in societal perceptions about the short-run and the long-run by focusing on economics. She describes changing economic trends and how these trends influence short-term versus long-term thinking. For example, she presents Marshall’s notion of value in the nineteenth century in which value is created by supply and demand as opposed to labor. Through Marshall and other neoclassical economists, Guyer explains, their understanding of value impacts short-term and long-term planning. She summarizes that on the one hand, price fluctuations influencing the demand are a short-term consideration; on the other hand, long-term consideration is on the influence of production on value as this shifts the conditions under which a product is put on the market. Persistent causes, Guyer points out, dominate long-term predictions, while “market value” is often influenced by causes that are short-lived; they are not consistent.<sup>71</sup>

While I will not continue Guyer’s efforts to trace historical changes in our conceptualizations of temporality, I recognize that it is an important socio-cultural question that is especially relevant for the communities with whom I work. Economics certainly informs how people think about “for now” versus “for later.” Saving money and investing money are

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<sup>71</sup> Guyer’s work on the “near future” and Evangelicals also demonstrates her observations of the overlap between economic theory and religion, which are both fields that take up the future and influence the ways in which societies have and continue to conceptualize it.

conceived of differently across socio-economic classes, as are the things one values. The families with whom I work, for example, do not make enough money to save or even to open a bank account. Many opened bank accounts for the first time when they needed a loan. A big business in the barrios is that of the “chulqueros” [loan sharks] who lend money with incredibly high interests, as discussed in Chapter 3. Although everyone has warned me about the *chulqueros* and their ruthlessness, Diana told me that she was not scared of the threats they made. But, she was angry that they addressed the threats at her daughter who cried when they told her they would kill her mother if they did not have their money – with interest – by the end of the week.

Many women, especially single mothers, take out loans during the year, thinking ahead about the cost of their children’s school uniforms and supplies, and the new outfit for their kids to wear on Christmas.<sup>72</sup> Other women, like Marcia, are active in seeking out non-profits, NGOs, churches, and other institutions that provide support for their children. Marcia, for example, is part of an international aid organization that everyone in the *barrios* refers to as “Childrens,” which is “Children International.” Through organizations like “Childrens,” children have “padrinos” [godparents] who they never meet, but who write them and send them gifts for Christmas and their birthdays. When Marcia enrolled her children into Fundación Crecer’s tutoring and resource program, I learned about “Childrens” when her son was absent. She told me he had to go to the center to write a thank you note to his “padrino.” From there, we started a conversation about “Childrens,” and she told me how important it was for her to know that her

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<sup>72</sup> I remember talking to Marlene, questioning why her daughter whose family was struggling financially needed to make birthday invitations for her son’s first year. If the neighbors and family were the ones invited, why couldn’t they cut costs by inviting them verbally? My suggestion, however, was not well received. She responded by asking if my mother-in-law would have allowed my niece to celebrate her first birthday without invitations. Just because her family was poor, there were certain ceremonial costs that were valued and would not be cut. My suggestion, which seemed practical to me, was offensive to her.

children would receive new shoes on their birthdays and at least one Christmas gift. Before she found more steady part-time jobs at houses, she only worked at one house two Saturdays per month and spent the rest of her time selling beauty products from catalogues to her neighbors.

Unlike Diana who worked from her house as a seamstress and earned money (eventually) to pay off her debts and unlike Marcia who could depend on her husband's security guard salary in addition to her own work, Anaís told me she could not risk getting into debt because she was unemployed.<sup>73</sup>

Yo la única deuda que tengo en mi casa es el agua, la luz, y ahí yo no me meto en deudas... como yo no trabajo... no me puedo meter en deuda porque despues cómo pago... antes sí... esa casita que está ahí hecha, la hicimos con mis hijas. Las tres hemos hecho esas paredes que tenemos ahí en esa casita porque cuando yo podía trabajar, que yo todavía trabajaba, yo me metía a hacer préstamos; yo hacía préstamos de 100, 200, 300, y pagaba porque tenía cómo responder... pero ahora no – ahí en ese tiempo cuando yo trabajaba ahí yo aproveché: compré mi lavadora que ahorita está dañada; compré mi lavadora, compré mi cocina, compré mi televisor. Todo compré fiado, pero trabajaba. Ahorita ya no puedo sacar nada porque no trabajo. Ya no trabajo, ya no me puedo endeudar en nada. Si las dos deudas que tengo que pagar, la luz y el agua, me quieren hacer loca, peor con otra deuda.

[Me, the only debt I have in my house is water, electricity, and from there I don't get myself into any debt... since I don't work... I can't get myself into debt because then how do I pay? Before, yes... that house that's built there, we made it with my daughters; the three of us made those walls that we have there in that house because when I could work and when I still worked I would take out loans; I took out loans of 100, 200, and 300, and I paid them back because I had a way to respond... but now I don't – there in that time when I was working there I took advantage of it and bought a washer that's now broken; I bought my washer, I bought my kitchen, I bought my television. I bought everything on credit, but I worked. Now I can't take out anything (loans) because I don't work. Now I don't work so now I can't get in debt in anything. If the two debts I do have in paying electricity and water want to drive me crazy, it would be even worse with other debt].

Anaís is conscious of her spending potential, which she reduces to paying her utility bills; and, she is proud of the things she was able to do when she was making money. Building her house – “the three of us made those walls” – and buying a washer, a kitchen, and a television are a source

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<sup>73</sup> Diana's son also helped cover household costs; he worked odd jobs, including building and refurbishing furniture at the factory next to his house. He also worked for the cell phone company, CLARO, selling minutes [*recargas*] and receiving a small percentage of the packages he sold for \$1, \$3, \$5, and \$10.

of pride for her. Although her washing machine is broken, she values these objects and, of course, her home. By sharing her experiences with money and debt, Anaís serves as another example of a woman, like Diana, who is the head of her household and is thrifty and strategic in what she has spent and what she can spend. One strategy I have observed from men from the shantytowns is that they ask their employer to distribute their payments in specific ways so that they do not spend it all at once; also, if they are paid in check, women and men who earn the minimum wage of approximately \$180 every two weeks, sometimes wait to cash their check or take the money home with them in small portions to avoid 1) getting robbed on the bus; 2) spending it all before the next check is ready to be cashed.

At parties held by the Fundación, like the Day of the Child celebration, children always saved food for later, not unlike the strategies of men and women who set aside paychecks and resisted certain purchases so that their money would last. They accepted and snuck as much as they could, wrapping it up in napkins, stuffing their pockets and backpacks. When I held interviews with children, I would buy them food during or afterward, and I quickly learned why some of them rarely finished their meal. At first, I wondered if the food court chicken was not to their liking, but learned that they liked it so much, they also wanted their mother to taste it. These were places they had never eaten at before. The generosity I saw in these children, especially in the girls, overwhelmed me, and I soon decided to buy something extra for them to take home so that they were able to finish their full meal at the food court and still share with their family.<sup>74</sup> The children caught on to my reaction and some of them arrived at interviews with their mothers' food order for that day!<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Through her ethnographic fieldwork with poor children outside of New Haven, Elizabeth Chin (2001) focuses on children as consumers, particularly black children as consumers, questioning the relevance of ethnically correct dolls, for example, on the lives of these children. One of the more interesting moments in her fieldwork, which is particularly relevant in the lives of children in Guayaquil's shantytowns, is the way in which children strategically

Mayra and her little sister Yani joined the tutoring and resource program about a month after it started. Yani never wanted to finish her food during lunch, though we assumed her sister tried to convince her to eat as she whispered to her forcefully, yet inaudibly. The girls who sat next to them who were also sisters seemed to know what was happening, but they shrugged when we asked. When Yani started crying a few weeks later as Mayra whispered to her, I took her aside. She would not say anything, just that she did not want to eat. Victoria (the co-coordinator) talked to the group of girls, as I spoke to Yani; Victoria came over, asking Yani if what Sarita said was true: she wanted to take the food home with her. Mayra joined us almost immediately, ready to clarify what Sarita had said. She explained that they were struggling financially and her mother wasn't eating. Yani didn't eat so that she could take the food home to her mother. "What were you whispering to her?" I asked. Mayra responded that she was telling her sister to eat, because her mother wanted her to. She preferred to be hungry herself; she didn't want that for her daughters. With this explanation, Mayra started crying, too, holding her sister who had become more upset. That same day, we began separating food for them to take home to their mother.<sup>76</sup>

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divide up and save money. She contrasts the purchases of the children she works with to those of wealthy children from private schools who spend all of their money on a game or on another purchase strictly for themselves. The children she works with, however, split the money and buy gifts for siblings and mothers.

<sup>75</sup> The Fundación's principal did not like the idea of me paying the kids in cash for their participation, so I paid them with food, which she approved of. For that reason, I typically set up interviews at malls across the city so that we could have a quiet and private place to talk, followed by a meal at the food court. Certainly, the opportunity to move with the kids across the city and to experience other city sectors alongside them formed an important part of what I learned through my research (see Chapter 6).

<sup>76</sup> Mayra is one of my favorites from the group. Her family struggles more financially than most of the families I work with. Although the scene I describe from lunch was very much sincere, after getting to know me and how I respond, especially when kids are hungry, she is strategic. She never says she's doing well or that her family is doing well, she always says "aquí pasando" [getting by] or "un poquito mal y un poquito bien" [a little bad and a little good]. I've heard her whisper to Yani over the phone, censoring her conversation with me so that she paints a tragic story, either through her tone, saying her mother is sick, or saying they are struggling economically. She is not the only one with this skill set. I do represent someone who cares for them, but also someone who has financial means to support them in various ways. I am cognizant of these strategic moments.

The kids I've worked with, from young ages – like 7-year-old Yani—, have a mentality of “saving for later” when it comes to food; their lived experiences have taught them that food is not always something they can count on. Carmen, for example, told me that sometimes she's not sure if she will eat. When I asked her why, she answered: “Porque a veces no hay platita y no se cocina” [Because sometimes there isn't money and we don't cook]. She went on to explain their budget: “Siempre a mi papi le pagan unos 15” [They always pay my dad around 15]; and with that money, “pagamos las deudas que tenemos a veces en la tienda; y compramos a veces 15 libras de arroz y un pollo, y eso nos tiene que servir *uuuuuuuu*...” [we pay our debts that we have sometimes with the corner store; and we sometimes buy 15 pounds of rice and a chicken and that has to last us *oooooooo*...]. I asked if the “uuuuuu” meant around a month, and she said it did, sometimes a little less. She continued:

A veces compran pollo o a veces compran – mire, unos 20 dólares, vale 17 el arroz; el medio saco a veces vale 17, compran el medio saco. Y le queda tres dólares y compran un pollo que vale dos y medio o algo así o uno o dos dólares. Digamos que le queda un dólar; un dólar, compra huevo, de los reventaditos y con los otro 50 compran tomate, cebolla, todo eso...o a veces...mi tía nos lleva a la casa huesito de choncho, así, para hacer sopa

[Sometimes they buy chicken or sometimes – look, with 20 dollars, the rice costs 17; the half sack sometimes costs 17, they buy the half sack. And then there are three dollars left and they buy a chicken that costs two and a half, something like that, or maybe one or two dollars. Let's say you have a dollar left; one dollar, buy eggs, of the cracked ones, and with the other 50, buy tomato, onion, all that...or sometimes...my aunt takes pig bone to our house, like that, to make soup]

Carmen is overweight, and she ended by telling me that she was trying not to eat as much rice:

“Dicen que el arroz es malo que hace engordar más” [They say the rice is bad, that it makes you get fatter]. I asked Carmen if she ever really felt hungry; that is, if she felt hunger. She said:

“Enantes cuando mi papi no trabajaba y mi mami de vez en cuando le salía una lavadita, nosotros a veces nos acostábamos sin comer y mi barriguita amanecía hinchada” [Before when my dad

wasn't working and my mom every now and then got a job washing clothes, we would sometimes go to sleep without eating and my stomach would wake up swollen]. Carmen, at the age of 13 when we had that conversation, was aware of her household income and how that impacted the ways they spent money, making strategic decisions to buy the right amounts of food to avoid going to bed hungry. Certainly, that level of understanding, which is made even more real by having truly felt hunger, influences children's mentalities of "saving for later" and being cautious and thoughtful about their purchasing possibilities.<sup>77</sup>

Jota's mentality of "saving for later" is illustrated through the money he saved. Jota said that fishermen went by his house and he helped them and they gave him a dollar from time to time; his mom assumed the money he saved was from that, though the majority came from what he stole. He didn't spend his earnings right away, though; he saved his money:

Nunca lo invertí en fumar, lo invertía solamente, lo guardaba y cuando tenía ganas de comprarme algo para comer, lo comía. Cuando los muchachos tenían plata, salían a joder por la calle; también sacaba mi plata. También estaba también reuniendo para una pistola que me la estaban vendiendo en \$60; estaba reuniendo para comprarla...ya pues...tenía la plata ya, pero llegó un momento que mi mami comenzó a coger de la plata, de mi plata...la invirtió en unas cervezas, ella vendía cervezas.

[I never invested it in drugs, I only invested in saving it and when I felt like buying me something to eat, I ate it. When the guys had money they went out to mess around on the streets, and I took out my money then, too. I was also accumulating it to buy a gun that they were selling to me for \$60, I was saving to buy it...well then...I had the money, but

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<sup>77</sup> Marcia was proud that her children did not have to experience hunger like she had. But, at times, she felt they were spoiled because of this. When they leave food on their plate, she tells them "que algún día quisiera que ellos fueran a dormir sin comer por la falta de comida para que entendieran lo que es eso" [that one day she wishes they would go to bed hungry because of a lack of food so they could understand what that was like]. She and her siblings endured extreme periods of hunger when they were growing up. One day, she told me, they were so hungry that they stole a rooster. They didn't even know how to kill it, she laughed, but between them all, they attacked it and somehow managed. They found a way to "destriparla" [take out its guts] and to peel it before they finally fried it. Their neighbor who knew their dire financial situation gave them rice and beans. Along with the fried rooster, that day, they all ate a hearty lunch. She said it was the first time they had eaten more meat than rice. Their mother arrived "con una colada y arroz con lentejas" [with a fruit drink, rice, and beans]. But, it was fine because they had already eaten; for once, she said, they went to bed without feeling hungry. The next day, their neighbor went door-to-door, trying to find his rooster that had escaped. Marcia told me that just five or six years ago, they told their mother the truth about the fate of their neighbor's rooster.



the moment came and my mom started taking money from my money...she invested it in beer, she sold beer]

Such examples of “saving for later” show the ways in which poverty is experienced and understood, especially by children from the city’s shantytowns. Because Jota grew up very independently and surrounded by his gang of friends more so than his mother, his savings were structured differently from Mayra, Yani, and Carmen who have strong relationships with their families. Jota’s savings, then, are framed based on his own needs and ambitions versus the girls’ savings that are based on a deep connection to and concern with their families’ needs and possibilities.

The examples from this chapter push the question of history repeating itself further, exploring the interconnection of history with children’s potential futures, questioning what it means for families in the barrios for poverty to be inherited and how parents, in particular, reflect on this inheritance and possibilities for their children’s futures. Poverty and the experiences of those growing up and living in it is not something that can be understood without also coming to know the larger net: the family, the household. Certainly, the leadership of women in their households and neighborhoods, like Lulita who organized her neighbors to chase away gang members and Diana who runs after thieves who threaten her block with only her fists and a metal pot, contradicts Lewis’s “Culture of Poverty Thesis,” promoted through his research in the 1950s and 60s, which discusses the poor as powerless and self-centered. Throughout these chapters, the descriptions of people’s everyday lives provide a contemporary interpretation of the ways in which poverty is lived and understood from within Guayaquil’s shantytowns.

I am providing descriptions of people and their experiences that do reflect cultural elements from Guayaquil’s barrios. Although some of these experiences that I do describe, such as young girls leaving with husbands and becoming pregnant, present cyclical experiences that

mothers often lament, these are not elements that render people powerless or hopeless. Indeed, children's paradoxical move of "remembering" happy and worry-free childhoods while their own childhood was often unhappy and stressful, also speaks to the fact that these children are always finding ways to make their own happiness. Happiness, of course, is never strictly material; and, happiness, for these children, can coexist alongside pain and anxiety. Perhaps, part of their own emotional survival depends on their abilities to overlook and to live in the moment; that is, not thinking about what awaits them when they arrive home after their soccer game or after school – like Carmen, they may go to sleep hungry and wake up with swollen bellies.

There is an element of prudence inherent in the decisions of my research collaborators, working against Lewis' ideas of the culture of poverty as one of instant gratification. Their poverty both forces them to think ahead, while limiting them from thinking too far ahead. While Lewis concludes that poverty encourages people to think about themselves, the children I worked with think about their families and their friends. Although developmental phases of childhood link children with the pull of instant gratification through an inability to wait and save (a piece of candy, for example), poor children have foresight and patience. They know what it is to be truly hungry – a hunger that does not have an immediate solution.

My conversation with Jaqui, for example, which I refer to in Chapter 4, demonstrates, as Appadurai (2004) reminds us, that poverty "is material deprivation and desperation. It is lack of security and dignity. It is exposure to risk and high costs for thin comforts. It is inequality materialized. It diminishes its victims" (64). In her words:

Nosotros, los pobres, somos tan brutos que nos llenamos de hijos. No tenemos ni para darles comida. Les damos agua de aniz, sopa de hueso. Usted, Hermana Alysa, no sabe lo que es ser pobre. No sabe lo que es no saber cómo vas a hacer para poder darles de comer a tus hijos. Yo no duermo en las noches por la preocupación.

[We, the poor people, are so dumb that we load ourselves down with children. We don't even have enough for them to eat. We give them herbal tea and water-down soup seasoned with chicken bones. You, Sister Alysa, do not know what it is to be poor. You don't know what it is to not know what you are going to do to be able to feed your children. I can't sleep at night because of these concerns].

These interpretations and experiences with poverty reflect how society and its legacies of colonialism lead people to accept and use negative descriptions and understandings about themselves and their possibilities: “We, the poor people, are so dumb.” Jaqui and the other women and children I work with recognize themselves as poor, “conscious of themselves as a group” (e.g., Appadurai 2004, 2013) and conscious of class distinctions and a social hierarchy that places them at the bottom. Even Carito's 12 and 9-year old brothers referred to living with “the millionaires,” and the group of boys playing Monopoly (Chapter 3) identified the different sides of the board as the different city sectors, with a divide between the wealthier and the poorer communities. Appadurai (2004) highlights poor communities' understandings of themselves as poor and the worldviews they develop based on their lived experiences:

There may not be anything which can usefully be called a ‘culture of poverty’ (anthropologists have rightly ceased to use this conceptualization), but the poor certainly have understandings of themselves and the world that have cultural dimensions and expressions. These may not be easy to identify, since they are not neatly nested with shared national or regional cultures, and often cross local and national lines. Also, they may be differently articulated by men and women, the poorest and the merely poor, the employed and the unemployed, the disabled and the able-bodied, the more politically conscious and the less mobilized. But it is never hard to identify threads and themes in the worldviews of the poor. These are strikingly concrete and local in expression but also impressively general in their reach” [65]

The examples presented throughout this text demonstrate experiences of poor communities that are both local and unique to Guayaquil, but are also applicable across other poor urban

communities in Latin America and around the world.<sup>78</sup> Ways of structuring time and of envisioning the future, for example, are formed through interactions in everyday life and these interactions – the images and experiences available to children in shantytown neighborhoods, for example – do share common threads with other neighborhoods and other parts of the world in which children are surrounded by extreme violence and poverty. Through children’s thoughtful decision-making and generosity with food, for instance, and through adult’s careful considerations with loans and payments, I have learned that economic limitations in Guayaquil’s barrios greatly influence how the children and families I work with organize their day-to-day lives.

While I am impressed by the maturity of children, like 13-year-old Carmen who understands how her family’s finances are distributed, their understandings of time as shaped by money – that is, how long a half sack of rice can feed their family or how long their mother can survive on an empty stomach –, are grounded upon survival. As an educator and an anthropologist who has observed kids’ intelligence first-hand, I am invested in how this culture of awareness and prudence in spending can be applied to strategic planning for children’s educational and professional futures. In Guayaquil’s barrios, the social construction of childhood is shaped by the possibilities poverty occludes. Poverty does not inspire long-term planning, as limited resources often force children and families to think from one day to the next or from one paycheck to the next. Children who do aspire for something different only have models to work against, not toward. Children’s decisions and actions are always co-constructing their day-to-day lives and their futures alongside the socially segregated city that has limits on

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<sup>78</sup> As I discuss in Chapter 6, children and women’s understandings of themselves and their social positions as they move across the city demonstrate how personhood is made in interaction in everyday life; through exclusions, children learn that they are not welcome and that being unwelcome is based on their poverty and their phenotype.

what people from lower socioeconomic classes can access and to what extent they should dream and aspire.

### **Part III: Fundación Crecer and Children's Futures: Jota's Story**

While I saw the importance of the space created by the Fundación for the children and their families, I also observed how this non-profit set the children up for an anticipated track – that is, a track suitable for kids from the city's barrios. Perhaps because the Fundación began as an organization intended to encourage children to study in place of working on the streets, their academic expectations for the children were low. The emphasis on discipline and religious training versus academic preparation demonstrated, to me, that Fundación Crecer was not providing children with the skills that could present them with different opportunities in their futures from those of their families and neighbors – the opportunities their mothers wanted for them so their futures could be different from their own. While graduating from high school would already set these kids apart from a majority of their family and neighbors, this diploma (accompanied by decreased street work) proved to be the non-profit's end goal. But, what opportunities did the children have upon graduating from high school when their proficiency across subjects remained limited? Carito said she wanted to be an engineer, but the math education she received when I worked with her in the afternoons was not setting her up for this option. Schools like Fundación Crecer and Guayaquil's public schools overlook limited literacy and math skills (among others) and focus, instead, on behavior and helping students pass, prioritizing averages versus content mastery to “help” them move forward.

Nevertheless, the children and their families clung to Fundación Crecer. This space was too important for them; it was their support system. Regardless of the quality of education, the care they received from teachers and staff and the friendships they developed with students were

central in their lives. During an interview in March of 2013 with Holger and Jota, I asked them what they would do differently and what they would do the same if they were Jaime Nebot (Guayaquil's mayor). Jota immediately spoke positively about Nebot because he associated the mayor with Fundación Crecer. Because of the Ministry of Education's reform laws, Jota blamed the President directly for shutting down the Fundación. The rivalry between President Correa and Guayaquil's mayor is well-known, and Jota highlighted this tension as part of the reason the Fundación closed:

Jota: "Nebot hizo buenas cosas, la fundación...ya pues, la fundación la cerró Correa...si yo tuviera la oportunidad de hablar con Correa, *uuuu* con pocas palabras lo mato...ahí no supo pensar lo que hizo Nebot porque dejó muchas personas, a niños...dejaron de trabajar los niños ahora por estudiar, pero **ahora Correa le quitó su futuro** y ahora no pensó en los niños...Y Ahora les toca trabajar y hacer malabares en la calle y sólo por culpa de él, porque era enemigo de Nebot...no supo pensarlo lo que había hecho por los niños...y deja muchas personas, niños, adolescentes, niños ahora q dejaban la droga y la fundación los ayudaba...y ahora Correa ha hecho lo peor, en eso. En esa ocasión."

[Nebot did a lot of good things, the Fundación...but Correa closed it down...if I had the opportunity to speak with Correa, *oooo* with few words, I'd kill him...in this, he didn't know how to think about what Nebot did because he left a lot of people, children; they stopped working so they could study, but **now Correa has taken away their future** and now, he didn't think about the children...And now they have to work and juggle and do stunts on the street and it's all his fault, because he was Nebot's enemy...he didn't think properly about what he'd (Nebot) done for the kids...and he's left many people, children, adolescents, children who'd left drugs and who received help from the Fundación...and now Correa has done the worst in that. On that occasion.]

I was sad hearing Jota's voice through my computer, more than two years after the interview, lamenting the end of the Fundación and predicting, perhaps, his own future. While the Fundación's leaders structured their programs and their delivery based on a board of directors that never met the children or the families they supposedly represented, the Fundación was an important space with essential resources for the members of its community, like Jota. After the Fundación closed, Jota never went back to school. He moved back in with his mother, a person

the Fundación always tried to keep him away from.<sup>79</sup> Upon this move, he also went back to his former group of neighborhood friends whom Diana referred to as “delincuentes” [delinquents]. They were infamous in las Malvinas, but she wasn’t afraid to run them off her block.

During our conversations and interviews outside of the Fundación, Jota shared very personal stories with me about his experiences and how the Fundación helped keep him “encaminado” [on track] and motivated him not to go back to his band of friends. He explained that two years ago, he got off track with his life [“me descarrilé”]. He and his friends had their strategies when they went into stores: distract, steal, and run away. He said, “Tuve la fama yo” [I had the reputation, the fame], of being the best thief of the group; he said that his friends knew “quién era el más loco para actuar, robar, coger las cosas” [who was the craziest – the most skilled – to act, to rob, to grab the stuff]. No one taught him, it was something he figured out on his own: “yo mismo por mi cuenta.” When their earnings were low, he decided to borrow a gun from a guy he knew. He didn’t load it with bullets, but it helped having one.<sup>80</sup> He equated his decision to join this “banda” [street gang] with being bored and not having options within his childhood home:

Yo comencé a descarrilarme así en la vida como quien dice un video juego nunca tuve en casa para distraerme y olvidarme tanto casi de las cosas de mis amigos de que andaban... un video juego teniendo en casa, me distraigo ahí jugando; y yo no salgo de la casa, no... comienzo a pensar cosas: ¿cómo hago? ¿qué hago? y andaba chiro y yo dije “¡Muchachos!”... todos comenzamos a robar... ahí comenzamos a vender drogas, ahí comenzamos a robar también.

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<sup>79</sup> During his time at the Fundación, Jota lived with a neighbor and her family. While he never felt fully at home, Candy was nice and responsible when it came to him: “es por la voluntad de ella que me tiene ahí” [her will is the reason I’m there (in her house)].

<sup>80</sup> “Cogíamos, preguntábamos cuánto valían -- nos llevábamos unos 30, 40 CDs... después, salíamos afuera, cogíamos piña... pasaba a la panadería: par de leche, mortadela grande... salíamos corriendo... en algún momento cogí una pistola, me la dieron” [We would get the stuff then we would ask how much it cost – we would take 30, 40 CDs... then, we would go outside and get pineapple... we’d move over to the bread store: a couple of milks, a big bologna... we would run out of there... at some point I got a gun, they gave it to me]. Later, he remembered that he’d borrowed the gun from a guy: “le presté la pistola un man.” During this time, he said there were so many things that happened, that he no longer remembered them all: “Muchas cosas, ya ni me acuerdo.”

[I started to get off track in life; as one would say, I never had a video game to distract me and to forget much or to almost forget the stuff my friends were up to...having a video game at home, I could distract myself playing and not leave the house...but I start to think about things, how and what do I do – I was broke, and I said “Guys!”...we all started stealing...then we started selling drugs, then we started stealing, too].

I asked him if he ever felt like going back to that life: dealing drugs, stealing.<sup>81</sup> He explained that he did, but he also realized that he had to put in the effort to avoid temptation, or he would fall again; and this time, it would be very difficult to get back up: “Sí tengo la tentación...me esfuerzo a no hacerlo porque si caigo, ya es difícil volverme a parar otra vez.” In addition to the Fundación, Jota became “evangélico” (Evangelical) and that changed him – God saved him by putting him on track for something positive. As he shared his story, his timing was off – he switched between which came first: the Fundación or the Church. He made reference to “el año pasado” [last year], though he said he was 14, which was two years earlier, not one: “más o menos” [around there], he answered, as I tried to make sense of his experiences chronologically.

He said he was 14 when began having unprotected sex:

Comencé a tener relaciones con mujeres todo eso, comencé a tener relaciones con muchas personas, mujeres y homosexuales...una enfermedad en mi cuerpo...esa enfermedad que se llama la...gonorrea. Ya, eso me salió a mí.

[I started having relations with women and all that, I started having relations with many people, women and homosexuals...a disease in my body...that disease that’s called (can’t remember the name)...gonorrhea. Ok, that’s what I got].

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<sup>81</sup> Increased drug consumption and sales within and outside of Guayaquil’s public schools, in particular, have been central news stories since 2013. The drug referred to as “H” – because of its chemical connection to heroin – is homemade and sold for a dollar per bag; this drug is comprised of a combination of animal sedatives (and feces, too), heart medication, and paint particles (which are said to create the cocaine base). These descriptions are based on conversations with kids and parents, news stories, and newspaper articles between 2013 and 2015. Darío’s mother took him out of school when she learned he had become addicted to H. She told him he was stupid for spending money and getting high on rat feces, emphasizing that kids who make H throw anything in the mix so they can sell more. Hólger denies it, but his friends tell me he has started selling the drug.



He was embarrassed to tell anyone and was deeply upset when the doctor told him there was no cure. What struck me as he recalled his interaction with the doctor, was that in that moment, he thought about his future: “Me dijeron que para eso no había cura, y yo dije ¿cómo no va a haber cura para eso? Yo estaba asustado; entonces ¿que será de mi vida más grande? Yo quiero tener niños” [They told me that for this there was no cure, and I said, how is there no cure for this? I was scared. Then what would become of my life when I got older? I want to have kids]. When he received that news, he found a young guy who used to be in his same crowd on the street corner. He told him to go to his church, that it had changed him. That church, Jota told me, saved him. It even cured him: “me fui al baño a hacer mis necesidades y ahí me di cuenta que ya no estaba la enfermedad...se desapareció por completo...comencé a ir a la iglesia...ponte así de la nada no pudo haber desaparecido” [I went to use the bathroom and that’s when I realized I no longer had the disease...it completely disappeared...I started going to the church...I mean it couldn’t have just disappeared, just like that]. At that point, Jota became committed to his church and his attitude and behavior at the Fundación changed, too, as staff from the non-profit had intimated in conversation; when I started teaching English, they were eager to tell me stories about my students.

Before becoming *evangélico*, Jota explained, “yo estaba dispuesto a todo yo” [I was willing to do anything, I was]. He carried around his gun, holding it in his hand as he walked along the street and no one said anything to him: “cuando ya comencé a tener arma, la tenía afuera en la mano...en le calle, nadie me decía nada.” I followed up by asking if he always carried his gun without bullets. Sure, he said, but we went to buy bullets sometimes, for instance, when “tal y tal me estaba viendo la cara” [so and so was looking at my face]. Earlier in the interview, he told me how glad he was that his gun wasn’t loaded on one occasion when his

instinct was to shoot “por los nervios” [because of his nerves]. If the woman had gotten shot, I told him “eso sí te hubiera cambiado todo” [that certainly would have changed everything for you]. I told him it’s worse, too, when you reach 18 “los castigos son diferentes” [the punishments are different]. He didn’t say anything for a while. Then, he explained that the DINAPEN “Sí, sí es fuerte, sino que ... chicos así 18, 17 años...esos manes que ya son más avispados que uno...” [yes, yes it’s tough, but...the guys there, 18, 17...those guys are more alert than one is]; “pero ya los adultos es diferente...bandas, más duro...año tras año” [but adults is something different...there are gangs, it’s harder...year after year]. Months after this interview, Jota was arrested and held at the DINAPEN, which is the police force that focuses on children and adolescents. After being released, as a 19-year-old, he was taken to prison. I asked Candy about Jota, recently, though she lost touch with him after he moved back in with his mom. She told me that she only knew he had been arrested, but she never found out for how long. *Año tras año.*

### ***Poor Children’s Futures***

While Fundación Crecer supposedly served as an important stepping stone for children to attain different outcomes from those surrounding them, in this section, I describe the non-profit’s role as constricting the futures of poor children. The Fundación, while providing an important community in which the children learned, ate, made friends, and felt cared for, was also a product of Guayaquil. By being a product of a city that is deeply segregated socially and spatially, the Fundación “knows” the extent to which children from the city’s barrios should aspire. I attribute the non-profit’s emphasis on discipline and religious training versus academic preparation to Guayaquil’s rigidity in offering poor people futures beyond high school diplomas and the corresponding limited employment options.

When the Fundación closed, children and families mourned. This organization, for many, changed their lives. While his church helped Jota move away from the decisions he was making to commit crimes and to live dangerously and carelessly, the Fundación helped him stay on this new track, always calling home if he missed a day of school, if he was late in the mornings, or if he acted out in class. This was certainly one of the benefits of being part of a small school community. Everyone knew everyone, and kids could not blend in or hide in a corner. Teachers communicated with the principal, the secretary, and the psychologists, and someone always communicated with the family.

When the Fundación announced it was shutting down in January of 2013, the students and I entered our winter break together, engaging in interviews. During these two and a half months of break, I emailed the CEO to tell her about the progress I was making with my research and emphasized how important the small group interviews and workshops were proving for the children. First, they were able to spend time with their friends and to be more active than they were at their houses watching TV. Second, they were able to ask and answer questions and participate in meaningful conversations; in this way, they worked on their oral and written communication and thought critically about various issues we discussed related to childhood, family, Guayaquil, education, and their futures. During our email exchange, I sent her potential ideas for the Fundación to continue as a tutoring and resource center. The CEO is wealthy and powerful because of her connections as part of Guayaquil's elite social class; she has a strong friendship with the mayor. In fact, the mayor was heavily invested in Fundación Crecer as the Telethon he organized in 2001 funded the building where the Fundación was located, right next to the city's airport and central bus terminal. He did not want the building to go to another organization and supported any initiative for Fundación Crecer to continue. The CEO eventually

agreed to let me lead a year-long tutoring and transition project along with Victoria, the Fundación's Activities Coordinator. The principal, secretary, accountant, and gardener would also remain in their same roles. The purpose of this project was to support the students in their transition into a new school environment. Our students were moving from 20-person classes in a small building where everyone knew them and their families to 80-person classes where they were easily overlooked.

I was excited to see my students and to offer them help with homework and to create more exciting educational opportunities than those they received in their schools through enrichment math and social studies games. Unfortunately, I learned that the same teaching styles from Fundación Crecer were also employed in their new public schools. That is, teachers with their backs to the students, writing on a chalkboard for them to copy. Few concepts were explained outside of the brief explanations they gave as students furiously copied down what was right in front of them. By working with the children, I learned that many were receiving passing grades based on copying from the chalkboard and not based on skill mastery, which they were clearly lacking. They failed their exams, but had enough accumulated points from mindless classwork and homework that they were able to pass their classes. This was an educational system that was setting its students up for failure. Based on his fieldwork in West Africa, Anthropologist Charles Piot (2010) criticizes the state of children's education in Togo, making observations similar to my own based on Fundación Crecer and the public schools its students transferred to. After all of the effort the Fundación's families put forward to matriculate their kids in these schools, the schools, in turn, offered little effort to engage and teach students:

Moreover, why is so much expended on getting children into the schools and so little on the schools themselves – schools that are appallingly ill equipped for the task of education? Those schools I know are not only resource-starved but also staffed by teachers dispirited by the fact that they receive paychecks only intermittently. [Piot 2010:147]

I was appalled by the education my students were receiving; and, I was saddened by the enormous effort so many mothers, aunts, and grandmothers put forth to enroll their children into such mediocre schools. They invested their time and energy into this tedious enrollment process for their children's futures. They wanted so badly for their kids to receive an education, and it was unfair, that this education was a farce. My experience living and researching in Guayaquil, has underscored the social and spatial segregation that structure everyday life in the city. Accordingly, I realize that these schools are not meant to set students up for success, because they are intended for Guayaquil's poorest sectors. They are, thus, meant as a rite of passage so that some kids get diplomas before pursuing those careers accessible to Guayaquil's poor.

Similarly, although Fundación Crecer was critical for children's social and emotional development, it fell short academically, at least during my fieldwork. The Fundación was excellent in organizing fieldtrips and extracurricular events for the students; the non-profit was successful, too, in acquiring donations, giving donors tours of the institution and pointing out certain children whose sad stories they could share. I remember Victoria taking a potential donor to the cafeteria and telling her to look at how joyfully the poor children ate: "¿No le dan ternura?" [Aren't they adorable?], hoping to inspire her to continue making donations for the food. Although their presentation of the children to secure funding aligned the kids with pity and sadness, the Fundación did work to support them through a free breakfast and lunch and special programming for the children and mothers, among other activities. Classroom instruction, however, in my opinion as a former teacher and teacher coach, was severely lacking.

Through these educational institutions, poor children's futures are constructed. The mediocrity performed by the teachers and the schools matched the mediocrity that was expected. Completing busy work, failing tests, and showing appropriate behavior set children up to

“achieve” in their public schools. Highlighting the children’s poverty and sad stories was the Fundación’s strategy to remain open as a resource center for them and their families. Children performed for the donors, too, as they were strategically selected to participate in interviews and answer questions. The children understood how they were being perceived and how to present themselves to inspire donations. They performed so as to inspire pity, and, in the process, collaborated with the Fundación so that the organization could continue investing in them and their (mediocre) education.

Organizations, like Fundación Crecer, intervene in kids’ everyday lives in preparation for particular futures; that is, futures that poor children can aspire to. Poverty influences children’s imaginations and the love, care, discipline, and pity that frame the interactions between Fundación Crecer and its community of students and families. Public education and the interventions of Fundación Crecer are near-sighted in envisioning and creating opportunities for the children they work with who come from the poorest areas of Guayaquil. This near-sightedness is directly connected to the socio-spatial stratification in the city whose strength limits children’s hopes and dreams for their futures. While I do not consider this center to be an educational model, I do believe its strength lies in the sense of community it created for all of its participants. And, I believe these types of support centers and community-building institutions can be extremely beneficial for the lives of kids and families from Guayaquil’s barrios.

#### **Part IV: The Power of Imagination: A New Mode of Analysis for the Anthropology of Childhood**

Guyer reflects on the warning Munn gives in her 1992 essay of time in the Annual Review of Anthropology: “Futurity is poorly tended as a specifically temporal problem ... anthropologists have viewed the future in ‘shreds and patches,’ in contrast to the close attention given to ‘the past in the present’ (1992:116)” (Munn in Guyer 2007:418). Through this chapter,

I demonstrate how thinking about and imagining the future go beyond temporal considerations and help us understand the ways societal, familial, and individual expectations and opportunities shape children's paths. The social construction of poor children's futures underscores the socio-spatial inequalities that inform children's experiences growing up in Guayaquil's shantytowns, which I take up more directly in Chapter 6.

I have found it useful for the future to serve as a mode of analysis to better understand the everyday lives of my research collaborators; aspiration, hope, and imagination provide insight into the ways children absorb their surroundings – their homes and families, their neighborhoods, their schools, their city, the images they see on the television – and the extent to which these surroundings influence how they think about themselves and their positioning and potential within their social worlds. As Wallman (1992) reminds us, the purpose of an anthropology of the future is “to try to interpret the way we and others picture the future, and then to understand the effects of our (or their) picturing it as we/they do (2). Through the children and families with whom I have worked, their poverty determines how they picture and structure their everyday lives – when to invest, when to take out a loan, when to save food for later. Envisioning their lives and working toward “salir adelante,” or moving their families forward, “the future” exists as something they hope for and imagine; but, their interests are framed more directly around short-term necessities, like purchasing food and kids' school uniforms.

Through this chapter, examples from Carito and Marcia demonstrate how their past and their present have influenced the ways they envision their lives and develop aspirations. Carito, for example, did not see much point in thinking about her future since she was pregnant; her main goal for her future was through her child – for her child to have something different from what she had. Jota whose future was co-constructed through institutions like Fundación Crecer,

his church, DINAPEN, and “la peni” (Guayquil’s maximum security prison), lost his opportunities. He wanted training for a career, but he never finished primary school. During an interview, he said that if he fell into temptation again, it would be very difficult to recover: “ya es difícil volverme a parar otra vez.” Based on decisions and outcomes from their past and their day-to-day lives, their futures are being defined, emerging as part of their lived experiences.

By thinking of the future as part of the lived experience, I have learned that children are positioned as both potential failures and as potential sources of hope for change; this change is described as something different and better – *I want her to be more than me*. In Chapter 4, I discuss the importance of talking with children about their futures, especially with children like those with whom I have worked whose surroundings of poverty and violence inspire short-term planification versus long-term aspiration. Discussions of the future are important pedagogical strategies to encourage children to set and reach personal and professional goals. Although plans are often revised and replaced, children approach their day-to-day lives – in school, in their interactions with friends – with new purpose and meaning when they think ahead; thinking ahead, for instance, gives a boring school day a purpose. Although the kids I worked with were excited when we talked about their futures, this topic must be approached with care and caution, as some kids’ negative perspectives – influenced, perhaps, by observing the futures of the adults who surround them – can impact the decisions they make in their present-day lives. When kids perceive their futures with pessimism and hopelessness, these could be dangerous decisions, like joining gangs or doing drugs. As an educator and a researcher, I firmly believe in the importance of goal-setting with children (and with people of all ages). During my discussions with the children, however, I let them provide their ideas and listened as they thought through what they



wanted to be or what they could be; when kids discussed the cars and houses they would buy, I would ask them questions about budget and about monthly income.

Certainly, along with thinking of the future as a mode of analysis through which to better understand the ways people internalize their past and present, the future is also a critical mode of practice for scholars and practitioners of childhood. Conversations with children about their futures serve as productive entryways for scholars to better identify how their past and present and the influence of institutions, their families, and their neighborhoods influence their imagination. Our limited ethnographic research on children's imagination, as Appadurai (2013) also acknowledges, creates a gap in an anthropological project of the future. For practitioners of childhood – like teachers, social workers, and others involved in projects like *Fundación Crecer* –, understanding how children envision their futures and working with them as they draft goals and plans to achieve them can help orient the ways they support and collaborate with the kids and their families. Because the future represents a mode of analysis through which to understand people's everyday lives and past experiences, exploring children's visions for their futures also challenges attempts to socially construct near-sighted futures for poor children.

Again, based on my experiences working with children and families from Guayaquil's barrios, the "how" supersedes the "why." We must explore how to adopt future oriented thinking in our work with children so that thinking in the long term is not limited to higher socioeconomic sectors. Working with children to set goals and talking through the ways they imagine their futures allows us to partake in collaborative discussions with them, helping us better understand how they see the world so that we may offer support in addressing their visions and aspirations.

## Chapter 6

### **“Street” Children and Socio-Spatial Segregation: From the Barrios to Samborondón**

This chapter is about the experiences of children from the shantytowns as they move across Guayaquil: from the barrios to Samborondón, Guayaquil’s wealthiest township. In this chapter I explore socio-spatial segregation in the city from the perspective of poor children, many of whom are Afro-Ecuadorian; I think of their social positions as they move across the city, and I reposition “street childhood” in the context of Guayaquil. I relate their experiences in the city and their analyses of these experiences to discussions of race and place elsewhere in the Andean region. In contrast to other literature, the socio-spatial segregation in Guayaquil creates a different set of expectations and ambitions in the shantytown neighborhoods; ideas and aspirations in these shantytowns are not based on whitening or on fitting oneself to other socio-economic sectors. Instead, they are focused on progress within one’s own neighborhood and within one’s own household.<sup>82</sup> I show how segregation frames everyday experiences and interactions across the city, and ultimately argue that children’s internalization of this socio-spatial segregation informs the ways they think about themselves, their city, race, their poverty, and their future.

#### **Part I, “No hay igualdad” [There is no equality]: Mapping Out Segregation in Guayaquil**

*Entrevista, Febrero 2013*

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<sup>82</sup> As discussed, especially in Chapter 3, progress within one’s household includes replacing caña with cement, installing tile flooring, putting glass behind the steel bars that make up the windows. Anaís, for example, saw her purchase of a washing machine as progress, indicating her own success through her job at the shrimp packaging company. Within their neighborhoods, barrio residents see progress through such efforts as pressuring the Municipality to replace tanqueros with running water and to pave their roads. More personal progress is captured through advances in education and employment that position people to have a steady income.

- Hólger: “No hay. No hay igualdad.”
- Alysa: “¿Por qué piensas eso?”
- Hólger: “Fíjese en una cosa. Unos son amargados, otros son felices. Pongamos, su esposo es Guayaquileño. Ya. Él es un man todo buen dato -- pero con otra persona, pongamos, un amigo, algo, no. No lo va a tratar igual. Nos va a tratar con rabia, con desprecio, pongamos los millonarios a los pobres. Nos tratan con desprecio. En cambio que millonario y millonario se llevan bien, pobre y pobre se llevan bien -- porque si los millonarios y los pobres se llevaran bien, sería igualdad, no es igualdad pues. ¿Si o no, Jota? Los millonarios se preocupan por ellos mismos en cambio que los pobres – usted mira – usted es pobre, digamos no tiene sal, va a la casa de una vecina (pausa intencional) -- le presta; va a la casa de un vecino (pausa intencional) -- le presta...”

Interview, February 2013

- Hólger: “No, there isn’t. There isn’t equality.”
- Alysa: “¿Why do you think that?”
- Hólger: “Think about this. Some people are bitter, others are happy. Let’s take your husband who is Guayaquileño. Okay. He is a nice guy...but take another person, let’s say a friend of his. He wouldn’t treat us the same way. He would treat us with rage, with contempt. Let’s take the millionaires and the poor. They treat us with contempt. But, the millionaire with the millionaire get along well, and the poor with the poor get along well – because if the millionaires and the poor were to get along well, that would be equality, and, well, it’s not equality. Right, J? The millionaires only worry about themselves, but the poor – look – let’s say you are poor and you don’t have salt, you go to your neighbor’s house (intentional pause) – she’ll give you some; you go to another neighbor’s house (intentional pause) – he’ll give you some.”

At 16, Hólger articulated Guayaquil’s poles of wealthy versus poor during an interview with me and his friend, Jota. Like the other children and families with whom I have worked, both boys talked in these extremes and demonstrated animosity in their descriptions of the millionaires versus the poor. At times, it was the animosity that millionaires felt toward them, while at other times, it was an animosity with which they spoke of the wealthy. One of their favorite TV shows when I started my research was *Tres Familias*, which chronicled a family from the lower-class, from the middle-class, and from the upper-class; they frequently referenced this show during our discussions. Although they often used *Tres Familias* as a reference point, the kids primarily talked in the extremes of wealthy versus poor; they identified themselves as

poor and most others as wealthy.<sup>83</sup> During our conversations on social class, they would say “un poco más” [a little more / a little higher] when comparing the teachers from the Fundación to themselves; this was generally as close as they got to mentioning something in between, a middle class. During one interview at a food court with Tito and his brother, they used the voice recorder, my pen, my notebook, a straw, and our hands to represent a hierarchy that they then broke down for me based on people the three of us knew.<sup>84</sup>

The kids I work with refer to all of the people from my family whom they have met as exceptions: “millonarios humildes” [humble millionaires].<sup>85</sup> Initially, when I tried to explain that they are not millionaires, they laughed and told me to pay closer attention. Because these kids very rarely interact with people outside of their neighborhoods and outside of their social classes, their understanding of those with more flexible economic means is shaped by common stereotypes in their communities of “millonarios amargados” [bitter millionaires].<sup>86</sup> At first, the kids didn’t place me in one of the poles, because they liked me and it was easier to like me if they could visualize me as an outsider who didn’t fit in their internalized hierarchical frame.

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<sup>83</sup> Sarita, as a 12-year-old, answered many questions based on the *Tres Familias* TV show; she enjoyed recalling the previous night’s episode and mimicking the voices of *las peluconas* – another name coined (or re-introduced) by President Rafael Correa to refer to snobby, wealthy people.

<sup>84</sup> When I asked Alex and Milton directly about poverty and wealth, Milton appeared unsure about describing his own social positioning as poor. Milton thought aloud: “¿Ser pobre? Yo no sé?” [To be poor? I don’t know]. Alex responded: “No tener plata” [To have no money]. Milton, however, was quick to explain what being a millionaire was: “Millonarios – cuando le dan de comer en la cama” [Millionaires – when they feed you in bed].

<sup>85</sup> The Fundación lost several donors during its final years, and my mother-in-law volunteered to donate chicken for the kids’ lunch. The kids knew she was the one who made this donation and came up to me to ask if she was rich, exclaiming those were the biggest chicken legs they had ever seen.

<sup>86</sup> The interactions some of the children do have with people of higher socioeconomic classes occur when they meet their parents’ employers. In one specific case, I have observed two children who spend time in the home where their mother is employed as a domestic servant. I have become uncomfortable when the children witness their mother being reprimanded as though she were a child: being told, for example, not to make so much noise when she walks because she can wake up the neighbors; being spoken about (although she and her children are within ear-shot) of the things she consistently does wrong, like putting too much sugar in the juice. She is from Esmeraldas and has an accent and a slight speech impediment; they often imitate the way she speaks. Because she laughs and, they insist, she says words incorrectly on purpose to be funny, they disregard my interpretation of the condescension inherent in this mimicry. Her oldest son, in particular, disrespects his mother, and I have always suspected that, in part, this stems from what he has observed in her interactions with her employers. He is ashamed of her because of her social position, her job, and because of the things they say she does incorrectly and inappropriately.

Conscious of this, I also positioned myself as an outsider who wanted to learn about the city from them, and from our first interactions, always asked basic questions about them, the city, and my observations. Although I have traveled to Guayaquil and observed and experienced life in the city since I was a child, I attempted to see things from scratch: from their perspectives. And their perspectives taught me that they do not see or experience Guayaquil as a city that is equal, but as a city that is deeply divided between the rich and the poor, the white and the others. Hólger explained that the rich get along with the rich and the poor get along with the poor; he stated that if the rich and poor were able to get along, there would be equality. “And, well, it’s not equality.” Although the kids did not speak specifically in these terms, colonial histories that frame Guayaquil and cities across Latin America, are rooted and routed (Clifford 1997; Greene 2007; Gilroy 1993) so that groups remain disconnected and hierarchies remain enforced. The creation of Guayaquil’s barrios serves as an example of the social and spatial disconnects that attempt to maintain certain Guayaquileños on the city’s periphery.<sup>87</sup>

Children’s relationships with city spaces change as they move across Guayaquil, and especially as they move into Samborondón. Social class divisions in Guayaquil are not only created by the levels of inequality in people’s resources and opportunities, but by people’s interpretation and analysis of these inequalities and how these structure their everyday lives. As children, they become aware of city spaces and their relationships and potential relationships to these; that is, they learn where they are welcome and unwelcome, where they fit in, where they blend in, and where they don’t. Poor children are aware of their social positions as their surroundings change, and they react accordingly, demonstrating the depth with which their social class and its accompanying stereotypes are imprinted upon them and even accepted by them

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<sup>87</sup> I recognize the strength of colonialism in continuing to shape social interaction (and exclusion) in Guayaquil. By focusing this chapter specifically on the ways kids understand racism today, their stories, experiences, and analyses of these serve to situate how, where, and why racism is manifested in the city today.

(e.g., Bourdieu 1977; De Certeau 1984; Fanon 1967[1952]). In interviews and focus groups, children discussed their understanding of race, moments in which they encountered racism, and how they responded. My findings indicate that children's understanding of (their) race differs within their neighborhoods versus outside of them. This difference emphasizes how city spaces and those who dominate and invade different parts of the landscape change the ways in which children traditionally think about each other and themselves, leading, at times, to the children's own manifestations of racism.

In this chapter, I present children's discussions of and experiences with race and racism and how these frame my understanding of the official and unofficial ways in which socio-spatial segregation manifests itself in Guayaquil and impacts children's everyday lives. After a discussion of race and racism in the Andean region, I introduce stories from the children to begin to understand race and racism from their perspectives. My analysis of these moments that children describe and that I observe alongside them privileges the discourses and narratives of racism and segregation from those who experience discrimination first-hand, which is a critical contribution, as "published narratives of racism are remarkably rare" and "works that take narratives of racism as a unit of analysis within scholarly research are rarer yet" (Sheriff 2001:88). I find it useful to re-route the term "street children," localizing it so that it encompasses the realities of the children I work with who I met at Fundación Crecer, the non-profit organization originally created for working children [niños trabajadores], which is a term used interchangeably in Guayaquil with street children [niños de la calle]. By focusing, too, on children's movement across the city, I introduce Samborondón, which is Guayaquil's wealthiest township and the city sector where I live. I discuss my own position as a *gringa* [American], the

daughter of a Guayaquileña, and the wife of a Guayaquileño and how my identity and my socioeconomic flexibility are also mapped onto the everyday realities in the city.

## **Part II: Children's Perspectives on Race and Racism in Guayaquil**

*Preliminary Fieldwork, Summer 2011 – Fundación Crecer*

*Sitting in class with their writing workbooks, the teacher asked the children to turn to an "About Me" page in which they would list facts about themselves. I sat alongside a group of ten-year-old boys who required extra help with reading and writing skills. The teacher stated the instructions, explaining that the first part required them to complete the sentence "I am..." [Yo soy...]. He offered examples, as though it were a multiple choice exercise: "male or female," "black, white, or mestizo." As an anthropologist, I was uneasy by this presentation of such limited possibilities for students to self-identify. And, I was caught off guard when, amidst all the screaming that overtook the room with children pointing at each other playfully and mockingly saying "you're black!" [¡eres negro!], Samuel turned to me and asked, "y yo...¿qué soy?" [and me...what am I?]. I hesitated, unsure of how to approach a discussion of racial identification with a young, black boy probably all-too familiar with the maligned stereotypes of blackness in Guayaquil. Before I could respond, he spoke: "Creo que yo soy canela" [I think I am cinnamon]. I helped him spell it out.*

I met Samuel and many of the other children at Fundación Crecer during my preliminary research in the summer of 2011. Even through this brief research period, I saw the ways in which race played a role in the children's lives. In this particular case, the teacher simplistically referenced racial self-identification for his students, offering three options; Samuel, however unsure, quickly created his own category to self-identify. While his reaction was to pick a term that he felt best described his skin color, his classmates' shouting may have swayed him (and others) from describing themselves as "negros," as they used this label to make fun of each other. The kids' reactions to their teacher's instructions demonstrate the racism inherent in everyday interactions in Guayaquil as a racial insult is naturally conveyed as a joke: *you're black!* Such jokes are emblematic of the ways in which race is infused into everyday conversation with blackness represented as a derogatory classification. Racism is supposedly occluded by discussing it with humor, which explains, in part, why people from wealthier social spheres "informed" me that there wasn't racism in Guayaquil; here, they weren't hypocrites like in the

United States, worrying about political correctness, because there wasn't a need to be politically correct, a group from the higher socioeconomic class informed me over dinner one evening. While mentioning people's race is not a social taboo, as people call each other "negro," for example, as an insult and as a term of endearment on a daily basis, there is rarely any serious discussion among people in Guayaquil about race and racism, particularly among those of higher socioeconomic classes. There is no mention or conscious recognition of history and the ways in which colonialism is still present in people's daily interactions and their corresponding exclusions.

Although my observations of everyday life and of moments, like the one described in Samuel's classroom, indicated that race and racism were central to understanding the sociocultural interactions in Guayaquil, I was initially dissuaded from taking on a research project about children and race, because these conversations were not occurring organically among the children during our interviews. When I first approached such topics during interviews, the children appeared confused, mirroring Samuel's question: *what am I?* I was afraid to bring up questions and create conversations that would provoke a self-consciousness that the kids, perhaps, did not have before being exposed to the research project. Soon, however, as the interviews of 2013 progressed and as the children became more comfortable talking to me and opening up about personal experiences, topics of racism and segregation, in particular, emerged as a natural extension of our conversations. Additionally, because my interactions with the children took place across the city, observing their movement between and within different city spaces taught me first-hand how race and racism are embodied: their "bodily hexis" (Bourdieu 1977); that is, what and how their bodies (including their voices and their language) reflect and how their bodies internalize the looks and the feelings emitted within different city



sectors on account of their physical presence and forms of social interaction (see also Goffman 1959, 1983 on how the individual presents himself and how others respond to this presentation).

In my research, ideas of and experiences with race overlap the realities of day-to-day life of poor, urban children living in Guayaquil. While analyzing the ways in which the children I have worked with think about race and racism, my work conceptualizes race as a historical, cultural, and political construction that attempts to define and, often, to exclude and /or render invisible the presence of Afro-communities. From the beginning of the twentieth century, Latin American national identities have been discussed through a trope of *mestizaje*, a political nation-building strategy that feigns a multicultural inclusion to negate the existence of difference and to silence the voices and resistance of “undesirable” groups: indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants (Hale 2002; Rahier 2003; Whitten 2003a, 2003b, 2007). It is important to highlight that these projects of *mestizaje* rarely considered Afro-descendants and largely reflected on indigenous groups (de Friedemann 1984); in fact, in the Andes, *mestizo* evokes a mixing of Indian and white blood while other terms exist for mixings with black blood (i.e., *zambo*, *mulato*) (de la Torre 2002; Rahier 2003; Whitten 2003a).

In Latin America, discussions of race are considered alongside discussions of indigeneity (Anderson 2007; Hooker 2005; Pitt-Rivers 1967, 1969; Restrepo 2002, 2004; Wade 2010; Whitten 2007), highlighting a tension and even a level of indiscernibility between constructions of race and ethnicity. With political legislation in the early 1990s surrounding indigenous and Afro land rights (Asher 2009, Wade 1999b), political discourse within Afro-descendant communities has attempted to link blackness with ethnicity, claiming this identification as a reflection of a particular culture, history, territory, and (ethnic) identity (Hall 1996[1989]; Restrepo 2002, 2004). The concept of the “ethnicization of blackness” (Restrepo 2004; Wade

1999a) is particularly useful in moving “blackness” beyond simplistic ideas of color while resisting homogenizing discourses of hybridity and *mestizaje*; instead, “blackness,” particularly as theorized by Restrepo (2004), should be understood through an imagination cognizant of its (silenced) history—its roots and routes (Clifford 1997; Greene 2007; Gilroy 1993)—, and cognizant of the importance of recognizing that history alongside possibilities and goals for the future.

Certainly, communities’ claims for land rights and for official recognition as distinct ethnic groups underscores what scholars discuss as a deconstruction of the coloniality of power, of knowledge, and of being (Escobar 2003; Maldonado-Torres 2004, 2007; Mignolo 2000; Quijano 2000; Walsh 2004, 2009) that allows communities to recognize and break with colonial legacies of repression and negation. In Afro-communities today, specifically in Colombia and Ecuador, activist leaders are utilizing a methodology of *la etnoeducación* as a strategy for telling national and regional histories from black perspectives—both a resistance strategy toward official discourses that have denied Afro-descendants their history and presence and a revitalization strategy within Afro-communities to learn, know, discuss, and appreciate their historical trajectories (Walsh 2007, 2011; Walsh and García 2002; Walsh and León 2006). In the future, in a continued effort to go beyond academic and discipline-driven perspectives, it would be useful to also engage with Afro-Ecuadorian grassroots activists (i.e., Juan García) who serve their respective communities as intellectuals, albeit not from a purely academic tradition. These leaders are determined to cultivate among Afro-Ecuadorians a strong sense of a collective memory that is simultaneously Ecuadorian and transnational (Restrepo 2004; Walsh 2009).<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> In the future, too, I intend to engage more regularly with the events offered through a relatively new center on Guayaquil’s South Side: *Centro Cultural Afro Guayaquil*.

A coexistence of the local and transnational is reflected in discussions of diaspora and imagination, and the ethnicization of blackness is a way of imagining community both locally and transnationally (Restrepo 2004). Andean geography reflects a spatial distribution of Afro-communities that reveals the histories of diaspora, slavery, and colonization that continually and forcefully solidified social and political negation of Afro-Andeans; in Colombia, community activists are using cartography and census data—tools traditionally used to negate their existence—as community-building projects that affirm the existence of Afro-communities and their ancestral territories (Restrepo 2004). Images of diaspora and homeland, while relevant analytics through which to consider the experiences of Afro-descendants, are less commonly applied to South America and more commonly considered in Caribbean contexts (Fanon 1967[1952]; Rahier 2003; Ritter 2011). Ritter's (2011) text on Colombia, for example, critiques Gilroy's Black Atlantic paradigm for its failure to extend to the Black Pacific (Feldman 2006; Gilroy 1993, 2006). Wade (2000, 2008), however, demonstrates how the elements of imagination and reality inherent in diaspora are useful for black communities to think through as they consider their own communities in the past, present, and future; while he sees its utility in this context and in relation to the African Diaspora and Colombian art (hip-hop, in particular), he also demonstrates the ways diasporic links have been used historically to further primitivize black descendants. Again, the imagination inherent in the ethnicization of blackness appears useful here as it considers these legacies of the primitive, affirming the realities of discrimination and exclusion and challenging collective memories of silence and denial (Hall 1990; Restrepo 2004).

While an African Diaspora, Andean histories of colonialism, and a co-Andean-existence of Afro and indigenous groups serve as ways to discuss Afro-Andean communities in relation to

one another, it is important to recognize the heterogeneity of black communities in the Andes (Busdiecker 2009; Wade 1999a, 2000, 2008). Each group's experiences have been uniquely shaped by national and regional histories and traditions, leading to different cultures and different activist and political agendas. As critics of multiculturalism have stated (e.g., Hale 2002; Turner 1993), groups that resort to unifying discourses, like multiculturalism or like "Afro-Andean," are strategically investing in political rhetoric to attain change. Such political strategies, however, often lead to an essentialization of group identity and experience, which is a constant challenge and a constant negotiation for groups of excluded peoples (see de la Cadena 1998 on culture-class discourses as silent racism). Here, discourse surrounding the politics of identity and recognition (Brown 1995; Taylor 1994) demonstrates the inherent social and political injuries (Brown 1995) that often accompany social movements of marginalized communities. Accordingly, the utility of an "Afro-Andean" analytic must be critically analyzed by scholars as its attempt to categorize, understand, and speak across the region may simultaneously erase the heterogeneity of experiences among black communities in the Andes.

Part of my research has considered the ways in which Afro-descendants and people across Guayaquil and Ecuador talk about blackness. Do their discussions, for example, demonstrate diasporic discourses that make connections across Afro-descendant communities? The histories presented in Chapter 3 demonstrate women's discussions of their migration through their histories of building their neighborhoods within Guayaquil; there is not, however, a direct discussion of Afro-descendant communities outside of recognizing that many people from Esmeraldas migrated to Guayaquil in the second half of the twentieth century. Examples from this chapter show that the children, in particular, are curious to learn more about Afro-Ecuadorian history; they have several questions that I present throughout. I am especially

interested in the local knowledges that exist and are reproduced in Guayaquil about blackness and, in this chapter, describe those and their pertinence to the construction of race and power. In particular, I analyze how children internalize local knowledges of race and use them to create their own categorizations and perceptions (e.g., Gelman 2003; Hirschfeld 1998; Tatum 1997), such as their ideas of the “los pobres” [the poor] versus “the millonarios” [the millionaires]. To what extent are children in Guayaquil, especially black children, being socialized to discriminate and even to deny their own histories and their own identities? To my knowledge, there are no critical studies of race in the Andes that specifically consider the ways race is experienced, learned, discussed, and imagined by Afro-descendant children.

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*La entrevista continúa, en Samborondón:*

- *Hólger: Cualquiera sabría eso. Todo el mundo sabe lo q es un racismo. ¿Quiere que le haga un ejemplo ahorita mismo? ¿Quiere que le haga un ejemplo ahorita mismo? Yo me puedo levantar y acercármele a todas las personas y verá q son racistas...¿quiere ver? [He starts to stand up].*
- *Jota: No, Hólger...no.*
- *H: ...es discriminar otra persona por su forma de ser*
- *J: [interrupts] o por su racismo*
- *H: ...su color de piel, como vive. La raza es el origen de su*
- *J: [interrupts] su piel.*
- *H: ...o forma de actuar, forma de ser...como los indígenas actúan de su manera...es una raza, marca de indio.*
- *[LATER] – H: ...la gente millonaria o gente blanca me comenzó a discriminar ahí me di cuenta porque soy negro, soy pobre...no dejan que se junte con sus hijos porque ellos son blancos, soy negro, piensan que les voy a pegar, les voy a robar...*

*The Interview Continues, in Samborondón:*

- *Hólger: Anyone would know that. The whole world knows what a racism is. Would you like me to give you an example right now? Would you like me to give you an example right now? I can get up and walk up to everyone here and you'll see that they are racist...do you want to see? [He starts to stand up].*
- *Jota: No, Hólger...no.*
- *H: ...it's to discriminate another person because of how he is...*
- *J: [interrupts] or because of his racism*
- *H: ...his skin color, how he lives. Race is the origin of his*
- *J: [interrupts] his skin.*

- *H: ...or a way of acting, a way of being...like the Indians act their own way...it's a race, the mark of the Indian.*  
*[LATER] – H: ...millionaires or white people started to discriminate against me and that's when I realized it's because I'm black, I'm poor...they don't allow you to be with their kids because they are white, you are black, they think you are going to hit them, steal from them...*

The historical, cultural, and political trajectories of race and racism in Guayaquil are reflected in Hólger and Jota's discussion, as official and unofficial representations of race and racism and their own experiences with these inform their understanding of what race and racism mean. They defined race as "the origin of his skin...a way of acting, a way of being." Although they do not cite specific historic events, this "origin" connotes a notion of the past – a notion that there is something from history and from one's ancestry that has led to different races, different skin colors and phenotypes, and different cultures that mark distinct groups: "the mark of the Indian," for example. These racial differences and the racism that accompanies them are presented by the boys as commonplace, as socially ingrained, not just in Guayaquil, but everywhere: "The whole world knows what a racism is." Although "anyone would know that," Hólger's final comment demonstrates that there was a point where he learned these differences through his personal experience. When he started studying at a school with kids of different races and different socioeconomic possibilities, he experienced discrimination: "because I'm black, I'm poor." Anthropologist Peter Wade (1999) cautions against framing experience exclusively in terms of race and highlights how race, class, discrimination, and accommodation should not be fragmented but thought of in conjunction with one another (460). Hólger's analysis reflects Wade's discussion and both are useful in highlighting how experience is influenced by a combination of factors, not solely on race. Similarly, Sheriff (2001) demonstrates how her own interlocutors in Brazil "refer to color and class in the same breath"

(85); these are inextricably linked and always influencing the ways in which her interlocutors are perceived as they move across the city.

Accordingly, one of the first questions I asked as a way of starting discussions about racism, was about difference. As Hólger's comment demonstrates, his blackness and his poverty are the qualities that he draws out – these set him apart from his peers and lead to his understanding of how and why discrimination works: “discriminat(ing) another person because of how he is.” These are the definitions of race, racism, and discrimination that this chapter is based on.

Throughout children's stories, there are new ideas that add on to Hólger and Jota's definitions. What is central across these stories is not only what the kids say, but what experiences and what social lessons their ideas are based upon. Furthermore, their physical and emotional reactions across spaces and experiences are critical to my presentation of the ways in which children internalize and externalize race, racism, and discrimination in the city. Hólger, for example, knows what will happen if he stands up and walks up to those around him: he knows how who he is is reflected through his physical appearance and presentation of himself. Unlike the abilities to manipulate face-to-face interaction by performing a specific role and highlighting specific attributes, Hólger knows that he cannot convince those around him to see him beyond the stereotypes already ingrained in their minds. Bourdieu's *habitus*, based on an unconscious embodiment of our positioning within our social and spatial environments, situates such stereotypes as persistent as social facts.

### ***Children's (Hi)Stories of Race and Racism***

During a focus group in the fall of 2013 with five 12 to 18-year-old girls who live in Guayaquil's southern-most shantytowns, the youngest in the group, Vanessa, asked if she could

share a story about the history of “la raza negra” [the black race], which she told us was her race. Her cousin, Shenoa, the oldest from the group and the one who had contributed the most that afternoon to our discussions of race and racism, rolled her eyes and whispered something to Lisette who had also been actively participating. Vanessa was the jokester of the group and she and Sarita, her best friend, seemed more focused on running off to flush the toilet in the bathroom than on our conversations. Nevertheless, we gave her an opportunity to share her story.

“El color de los negros es una maldición” [The color of black people is a curse], she began. “*Hace mucho mucho muuuuicho tiempo [a long long loooooong time ago]*, children could not see their parents naked.” The group of girls burst into laughter – even Shenoa –, and Vanessa began giggling, too, though she defended her story, saying: “It’s true – my teacher told our whole class.” She continued, and described a man who was picking grapes. He left them in a bucket and forgot to take them home to wash them. A year later, as he walked down the same road, he found the bucket. The water had turned purple during that year, but he decided to drink it. “He was very thirsty, and it tasted *soooo* good,” she told us, moving her head to add emphasis to the “*muuy*”; Sarita laughed the loudest, covering her face with the pillow on my couch. After a while, this man became drunk—and she explained that he became drunk during a time when no one even knew what it meant to be drunk. The laughter continued, though I found her last statement was a clever way of setting this tale deep in the past or *hace muuuuicho tiempo*.

The man made his way home and passed out on the floor of his room, completely naked. One of his three sons happened to walk in – and, again, this was a time when children could not see their parents naked. At this point, Vanessa clarified that the son *only* saw his father’s back, which made the girls laugh even harder. The man reprimanded his son, condemned him, and



sent him far, far away to a place, she said, that she thought was called Africa. He put a curse on his son and his daughter-in-law so that when she – a white woman – gave birth in Africa, her baby came out black – “*más negro que el carbón*” [blacker than coal], Vanessa emphasized. Black, the father said, would be the color of all things cursed from then on. “Y esa es la maldición del negro” [And that is the curse of the black man], she concluded, as she stood up and took a bow.

Stories, like Vanessa’s rendition of “La maldición del negro,” are ways in which the children I work with have shared their knowledge and ideas about race and racism. Although, at times, they laugh through stories and examples, the ideas they relay and the ways in which they present them are multi-layered and shed light on the place and space of racism in their everyday lives. In the story Vanessa presents, the phrasing of blackness as a curse evokes racist ideologies and experiences of being black. Her reaction to this story, however, is that it is true, because her teacher told her class. For her, this story, then, provides the historical background to explain why blackness is a curse – why her race is a curse. Lisette highlighted the offensive conclusion of this story by saying that she wasn’t cursed; “maybe you are,” she told Vanessa. She lightened the mood by adding, “I mean, look at you.” Again, laughter ensued, and in response, Vanessa stuck out her tongue and crossed her eyes.

That afternoon, the girls each answered a series of questions independently before our focus group; these questionnaires form part of my pedagogical strategy that encourages participants to think critically about their responses and their ideas before coming together to speak (see Chapter 2). Always eager to be a group leader, Carmen asked the group one of the questions from the questionnaire while I prepared snacks in the kitchen. As I saw on the video, my husband entered the room as Vanessa was shouting out her response: “¿La raza? Tener color

en la piel...es un color que tienes en la piel” [Race? To have color on your skin...it’s a color that you have on your skin]. Danilo was behind the camera, on his way to the kitchen, and he told the girls that it sounded like they were having a good discussion. Carmen stopped him and said, “Don Danilo, usted no se puede ir hasta responder la pregunta: ¿Qué significa la raza?” [Mr. Danilo, you cannot leave until you’ve answered the question: what does race mean?].

He turned it around and said he was more curious to hear what they had responded. Vanessa looked up at the ceiling as she stated in her loud voice: “La raza, la raza, ¿qué es la raza? – La raza humana” [Race, race, what is race? -- The human race!]. Danilo said that sounded like a good response: la raza humana. At that point, all of the girls began talking and shouting at once. Carmen listed types of races: “Cholo, negro, café, morado” [*cholo* (which, for her, means lighter skin), black, brown, purple (which is the color she has often been labeled with by her peers, considered the darkest black before “blue”)]. Vanessa, again, shouted “significa tener un color de piel” [it means to have a skin color]. Carmen followed-up, emphasizing that it was not just the color of one’s skin, but the difference between these: “la diferencia del color de piel” [the difference between skin color]. Shenoa looked up, toward the camera, apparently making eye contact with Danilo: “de todos los que estamos aquí, todos no tenemos el mismo color de piel” [of all of us who are here, we do not all have the same skin color]; in fact, she went on, no one in the room had the exact same skin color. Carmen took over, starting with Danilo and ending with herself, ranking their skin from the lightest to the darkest.

Danilo, unexpectedly, began participating as a group facilitator, and asked the girls if they thought race was important. Sarita shrugged her shoulders, the other girls thought for a moment, and Vanessa automatically shouted out her response, “Yes,” explaining: “Para que nos diferencie, es bueno para las especies” [so that we can differentiate among ourselves, it’s good

for the species (it seems like she meant that it helped define different species, different groups; this was likely a term she had recently heard in school)]. Carmen's response was "Regular, porque no tanto porque hay veces que discriminan demasiado" [sort of, but not so much because sometimes there are times when they discriminate too much]. "Yes," Shenoa agreed: "Piensan que todos los negros son ladrones" [They think all black people are thieves]. Sarita chimed in and started sharing common discriminatory sayings, including the one about a white man running versus a black man; one was playing soccer, while the other was a thief. Shenoa said she recently heard a worse one: "Blanco vestido de negro es chofer y negro vestido de negro es murciélago" [White man dressed as (in) black is a chauffeur and a black man dressed as (in) black is a bat]. Two years later, going through the video footage from this focus group, I asked Shenoa what exactly she meant by the "murciélago." I had heard versions of that racist saying in Guayaquil, but never with a bat. She clarified: "Eso es racismo. Es porque el murciélago es negro. Y un negro vestido de negro es como murciélago. Hay una música que dice esa frase, pero no me acuerdo cómo se llama" [That's racism. It's because a bat is black. And a black person dressed in black is like a bat. There's a song that says that phrase, but I can't remember what it's called]. We continued talking, and she emphasized that "murciélago" is a term used by racists as an insult toward black people.

Such sayings along with labels, like "negro" [black, black boy, black person], form part of everyday discourse in the city, but that does not mean that they are devoid of racist innuendo. In the Módulo 2 classroom where I spent the majority of the school days in 2012, JJ became upset with Janice when she yelled "inepto" [inept (person)] across the room, though she pronounced it incorrectly: "inecto." JJ thought she said "negro," and became angry, responding: "¿Y tú? ¿Qué? ¿No te has visto tu consistencia?" [And you? What? Haven't you seen your

consistency (what you're made of)?]. Both kids began shouting at each other over what JJ had misheard and interpreted as a racial slur; she emphasized again that he was "inecto," because he couldn't even hear her properly. Because I worked with JJ every morning, helping him with his reading and writing, I managed to calm him down and told Janice it was a misunderstanding, though she shouldn't say anything negative to her classmates, because they formed part of a small group and needed to support each other and be friends. "He's not my friend," she responded, which made JJ start shouting again. This fight was triggered by "negro," which underscored that while supposedly infused with humor, this is not a label accepted and laughed at by all, especially by JJ in this case. And, based on more than a year of working with him as a tutor and as a researcher, I know now as I re-read my fieldnotes from that first September, that his reaction is not because he is ashamed of being black, but because he views this slur for what it is: his race thrown back at him in a way that's derogatory and discriminatory.

Tito was 13 when he told me the story of his first time studying at a school with white children. He entered this school when he was nine. A woman who had seen him *cuidando carros* [guarding cars]<sup>89</sup> downtown befriended him and his mother and enrolled him in a school, convincing his family to allow him to study instead of just working. As he remembered this experience, he explained that this was the first time he became overly conscious of his race – everyone around him was white. That is not how it is in *los barrios*, he told me. The children would call him names and make fun of him for being black. While some of his friends call him "negro" or "negrito" out of "cariño" [as a term of endearment], others do not use these "apodos"

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<sup>89</sup> "Cuidando carros" is an informal street job and is very common in Guayaquil. It consists of helping people park and standing guard near their vehicles to protect them against theft (of parts and/or of the whole). When the person returns, s/he pays the "guard" what s/he deems fit or fair. People generally pay \$1, though the prices vary depending on the sector of town.

[nicknames] with good intentions, he clarified.<sup>90</sup> One day, he became so angry with the comments and the looks he was experiencing that he fought one of the boys: “le metí una golpiza” [I beat him up], he told me proudly, grinning as he looked over at Hólger who formed part of our interview group that day. Because black people were slaves, he and Hólger explained to me, “we are stronger than the other races – except maybe for *los serranos*,” which Tito said in reference to the Indians.<sup>91</sup> After this fight, Tito was immediately expelled from the school.

Although Hólger had already experienced discrimination as a young boy in school, the year the Fundación closed, he was once again sent to a school environment in which he was in the minority.<sup>92</sup> He said that some days were so bad, “hasta estaba listo para ponerme a llorar...para decirle la verdad, algunas veces se me salieron las lágrimas.” [I was even on the verge of crying...to be honest, a few times, I did]. He and one of his friends—both former students of Fundación Crecer—were the only two black students, and their classmates would call them “monos” [monkeys] and make comments like “toma tu banana” [take your banana]. They reacted and beat up several of the bullies, he boasted. At that point, they stopped being bothered: “Now they call me *negro*, but it’s okay, because they’re my friends. Now they respect me.”

Carmen, at 14, also entered a new school, like Hólger and her other classmates from Fundación Crecer. She said that at first the students called her “Felipao,” the name of a black Ecuadorian soccer player. She has an outgoing and aggressive personality, and replied right away that they

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<sup>90</sup> “Negro” and “negrito” mean “black” and are frequently used as nicknames for those who are Afro-descendants and/or for those who have darker skin; when they say these nicknames out of *cariño*, it means they are used as terms of endearment.

<sup>91</sup> This reflection of strength reminds me of a note I wrote to myself in my journal while I was conducting fieldwork at Fundación Crecer. Two of the boys from Módulo 2 – Darwin and JJ – were showing off their muscles one day, and I was surprised to see how strong they were in spite of being very skinny. When I commented on their muscles, Darwin responded: “la \_\_\_\_ de ser negro” [the \_\_\_\_ of being black]. I couldn’t remember the word he used when I wrote it down later that day, but it was synonymous with “privilege.”

<sup>92</sup> Shenoa said that each year, she was always one of two black students in her entire grade. She was used to it. Sarita replied that her group was “mixto -- hay de todo” [mixed – there’s everything]. Because she is not phenotypically black, however, Sarita’s reactions to the racial environment at her school is not described as fiercely as the settings experienced by her black friends from her neighborhood, like Shenoa, and from the non-profit, like Carmen and Tito.

had no business calling her names since she was a student just like them; now, she said, they were her friends. “They laugh at all of my jokes,” she told me. While Carmen’s approach was likely verbally aggressive and intimidating, as is her typical style, the boys all resorted to physical violence as a means of gaining respect. Certainly, gaining acceptance through physical force calls into question the types of relationships black boys are forming with their classmates.<sup>93</sup>

The children’s (hi)stories of their “lessons” from school and their understandings of these reveal how race is understood – a color that allows people to differentiate – and how racism is manifested – the “curse” of blackness, insults in the form of “negro,” “murciélago,” and “mono.” Vanessa’s story, rooted in the biblical mythology of Genesis 9, which recalls the narrative of Noah’s drunkenness and the subsequent curse of Cain, situates this set of children’s (hi)stories as foundational texts; their experiences serve as narratives through which they first began to understand and internalize their social positioning on account of their race.<sup>94</sup> All of their stories, then, emerge as foundational texts – as mythologies – that ground their understandings of themselves in interaction with those around them. These foundational moments have long-lasting impacts on the children and the ways they view themselves, each other, and themselves through the eyes of others; they are sad moments, as they are the ones in which children come to

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<sup>93</sup> In a U.S. context, social and educational psychologists (e.g., Bean and Eaton 2000; Hallinan and Smith; 1985; Hallinan and Teixeira 1987) have discussed the experiences of black students in predominantly white school settings, highlighting the difficulty in establishing interracial friendships, though not discussing the role of violence in the creation of these relationships. Anthropologist Robin E. Sheriff (2001) does not discuss the school setting, but does give an example of how a child, as young as the nine-year old she interviewed from a Brazilian favela, recognizes racism: “he not only understood the destructive power of racism in the lives of people of color but could also communicate his understanding...” (85). Psychologists, in particular and in U.S. contexts, ranging from Clark and Clark’s studies in the 1930s and 40s with preschoolers to Cross (1991) and Tatum’s (1997) work, decades later, serve as important examples of the ways in which children and adolescents have come to understand race and racism, to self-identify, and to seek out spaces of belonging in response to their interpretations of their surroundings. Such studies with children and adolescents are largely missing in Anthropology, especially in Latin American contexts.

<sup>94</sup> It is important to analyze stories and legends that implicate race to see the ways in which they are interpreted and internalized by the communities they describe. José Chalá Cruz’s (2013) work considers the place of and the transmission of stories and games in the Afro-Ecuadorian community of the Chota Valley region. He argues that stories and games are opportunities to transmit ancestral traditions and histories while adding contemporary twists and impressions that reveal how children react to or think about the lessons they learn from games and stories.

know racism first-hand. These are the moments in which race is not just skin color and a way to differentiate. Race in Guayaquil and in the eyes of these children is blackness; the darker you go, the worse you are (envisioned to be).

Scholars of Latin America (e.g., Mignolo; Wade; Walsh) have written about the ways in which people internalize the legacies of colonialism, often leading them to accept negative portrayals of themselves. Although the girls from the focus group resist Vanessa's "explanation" for why blackness is a curse, Vanessa takes her teacher's mythology as fact. Racism with its intent to confine, exclude, and oppress is reflected in this coloniality of power, of knowledge, and of being (Maldonado-Torres 2004, 2007, 2009; Mignolo 2000; Quijano 2000). That is, the aftermath of colonialism continues to structure people's everyday lives, as it is deeply rooted in their being. Coloniality survives as colonialism's legacy, emphasizing how such rootedness leads to ever-expanding routes that are extensions of manifestations of and justifications for racialized exclusions:

Coloniality is different from colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday...Coloniality emerges in a particular socio-historical setting, that of the discovery and conquest of the Americas. [Maldonado-Torres 2007:243]

The "common sense" of these children demonstrates that coloniality does, indeed, survive colonialism. In Chapter 5, for example, I demonstrate how children's self-image influences their aspirations and the extent to which they allow themselves to dream and imagine particular futures. Coloniality, which is manifested in children's (hi)stories of racism and its corresponding

socio-spatial exclusions, structures everyday life in Guayaquil. Hierarchies, based on race and class – “...because I’m black, I’m poor” –, structure social interaction and possibility and the ways in which children come to understand themselves in relation to those surrounding them.

While the children identified forms of racism in which black was perceived as inferior, they, too, demonstrated ideas of superiority as linked to whiter phenotypes: coloniality surviving colonialism. At the end of our focus group with Vanessa and the girls, I summarized what I had learned from them that day about race and racism. I reminded the group that I would eventually write about those themes and what they shared with me would drive my writing. Lisette asked what other people, like me, had written about race; I went back several decades and talked to them about the doll studies from the 1930s and 40s (e.g., Clark and Clark 1939). I explained that these were attempts to understand how preschoolers already had ideas about race, beauty, and their own identities. Shenoa became excited; she said she could relate to that: “de chiquita yo veía la negrita y la blanca y yo me iba por la blanca” [as a little girl, I saw the black one and the white one, and I always went with the white one]. She and her friends agreed that the white ones were prettier; there were more options for white dolls, Lisette pointed out. Shenoa also referred to the selection of black dolls, saying that there was finally a “princesa negra” [black princess] thanks to the wife of “Presidente Oba” – she looked at me, and I completed his last name for her: Obama.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Although Carmen was not very active that day in our discussion of dolls and race, she loved dolls. During some of our partner interviews, the children took turns also speaking with me individually. While I spoke with Tatiana in the food court, Carmen went into Jugueton, which is one of Ecuador’s largest toy stores. When she returned, I asked her if she had fun. She replied: “Vi la Barbie que siempre quise tener – una Barbie con bebés chiquititos que estaba embarazada” [I saw the Barbie I always wanted to have – a Barbie with itty bitty babies who was pregnant]. Do you have any Barbies in your house? I asked her. “Tengo una que nos regalaron” [I have one that they gave us]. What do you play when you play with Barbies? I inquired: “a los modelajes... algunos bebecitos de cinta, lo envuelvo en cinta y los hago bebecitos, y le pongo como un trapito – cuando las medias ya no me valen, las medias blancas, ahí las corto y las pongo ahí” [Fashion shows... some babies made of tape, I wrap them in tape and I make little babies, and I put like a little rag on there – like when my socks get worn out, the white ones, then I cut them and I put them



I encountered a similar reaction to the black dolls from Marlene, who was one of the grandmothers who helped me organize the donated dolls for our 2015 Christmas party in her neighborhood. She criticized the ones I had purchased. Because the toy stores in Guayaquil only had two black dolls to choose from, I brought more from the U.S. Marlene told me that I should have brought all white dolls, because they are more beautiful. The girls would be happier receiving white dolls as gifts. As we sorted the donated toys into piles by age and gender, I told her about different theories of empowerment for young children and the importance of seeing someone like them reflected as beautiful. She said that sounded nice, but she held up one of the white baby dolls: “Mírela qué linda es con sus ojitos azules y su pelito rubio. Esta les va a fascinar” [Look at how beautiful she is with her blue eyes and blonde hair. They are going to be fascinated by this one]. Although Marlene is not black, many of her friends and neighbors are, including her best friend, Lulita, who she refers to as the sister she never had. Shenoa and Marlene’s ideas of beauty are influenced by the media, by peers, and by the world around them (e.g., Chin 2001) – a world that is structured around a frame of coloniality.

The colonization of the Andes introduced specific ideologies surrounding race and racism that touted European superiority while condemning indigenous backwardness and pre-modernity. This superiority was premised on a vertical social classification – European, white, Indian, mestizo, black – in which superiority was directly linked with the degree of humanity (Maldonado-Torres 2007:244). Racial thinking has served not only to divide people into physical categories, but to explain people’s behavior and justify why some – particularly “criollos” and those aligned with whiteness – were superior to others (Wade 2008b:178). In response to what I was studying in Guayaquil, Mimi, a grandmother like Marlene, but from the

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there]. She became embarrassed and laughed in response after sharing how she made dolls of her own from old socks wrapped in tape.

highest social classes, told me that she thought about race, too. Unlike others in Guayaquil, she was not racist, she told me; she did not think she was better than others for being white. She reflected, however, that she felt sorry for black people: “Me dan tanta pena los negritos porque ellos tanto quisieran ser blancos” [I feel so sorry for black people (said with the diminutive), because they want so badly to be white].<sup>96</sup> Such conclusions perpetuate racial hierarchies; white, upper-class Guayaquileños, like Mimi, can hide behind these statements of concern and compassion, cementing a divide of misunderstanding and disconnect across racial and class lines. While I am sure that Mimi and her white, upper-class friends would interpret the children’s (hi)stories from this section as manifestations of their desire to be white, this observation only serves to deny black children of the pride they can find in their racial identities. Children must negotiate the inferiority imposed on them through the eyes of others, like Mimi, and find pride in who they are, resisting notions of their race as a curse, resisting their race used against them as an insult, and resisting bullying and exclusions by their classmates in school. When boys, like Hólger and Tito, decide to fight physically in response to blatant racism, they are not fighting and forming friendships in hopes of being white, but as a way of confronting an exclusionary society, as they make sense of their surroundings and attempt to (forcibly) make a (tenuous) place for themselves.<sup>97</sup>

Margarita Huayhua’s (2013) study of racism in Peru as manifested through sociolinguistic interaction between Quechua and Spanish speakers, explains that people “read” and interpret available cues as indexes of participants’ social standing; thereby they position

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<sup>96</sup> Sheriff’s (2001) ethnography of race and racism in urban Brazil concludes that while middle-class whites do not deny racism, they are very strategic about the terminology they employ.

<sup>97</sup> As Afro-Ecuadorian activist Juan García Salazar (2010) emphasizes, people must take caution in the lessons they are taught from “the Other” and recognize “que somos mucho más débiles cuando queremos ser como el otro, ver el mundo y el bienestar como el otro. Tenemos que saber que ser diferentes es una Fortaleza” (2010:122) [that we are much weaker when we want to be like the other, see the world and our wellbeing like the other. We have to know that being difference is a Strength].

themselves in a structural system of social distinctions” (2). Huayhua distances her work from previous scholars of the Andean region by focusing on face-to-face interaction instead of the traditional use of conceptual categories, like “Indian, peasant, *cholo*, *mestizo* or *criollo*” (3). These studies, she explains, view a transition across those conceptual categories, from Indian to *criollo*, as a work in progress that people aspire to. My own research, which draws from face-to-face interaction and the use of conceptual categories, demonstrates that such an aspiration is not what is happening in Guayaquil’s poorest neighborhoods (which are also the blackest). While Huayhua’s critique is useful in presenting other ways of understanding and analyzing social distinction and racism, she critiques conceptual categories because they act as though “people...were identifiable through visual and linguistic cues” (3); and, such categorizations, she continues, are not the ones employed by Quechua-speaking people in reference to themselves. Instead, she submits, these are the labels used by people who live in cities; these categories, she argues, “do not emerge in face-to-face interaction” (3).

My research demonstrates how such conceptual categories, which in Guayaquil emerge in the form of “negro” and “moreno,” are used in face-to-face interaction, sometimes as terms of endearment, sometimes as descriptive markers, and sometimes as insults. The kids I work with – who do live in one of the largest Andean cities – do utilize such conceptual terminology as they make sense of race and racism in their communities and their place within different societal spaces. While her argument is a powerful counterpoint to previous scholarship, highlighting how previous analyses, in their own ways, manifest potentially racist disconnections from the communities being studied, and while I agree that people should not be identified based on “visual and linguistic cues,” these are the ways people are being judged in a Guayaquileño

context. This is a conclusion I have arrived at based on face-to-face interaction across the city and based on my research collaborators' understandings of and use of conceptual categories.

While Maldonado Torres (2007) and other scholars situate these conceptual categories historically as hierarchical, many of my research collaborators, resist such hierarchical interpretations; Hólger, for example, emphasizes that poor kids have more fun than rich kids and that poor people look out for one another, while rich people are only concerned with themselves. Through this example among others, my research collaborators have provided a new frame through which to consider the conceptual categories that Huayhua critiques by infusing them with new interpretations that do not consider their race or their class to be works in progress.

### ***The Absent Presence of Race (and Racism)***

I attended Anthropologist Peter Wade's panel at the Latin American Studies Association meetings in Chicago in May 2014 in which he discussed the challenges of studying race and of talking about race in Latin America. He described race in Latin America as "buried alive" and talked about the "absent presence of race" in the region, explaining that there is little official presence outside of the census. He also cited his own challenges as a researcher and the difficulties of asking people directly about race, as it can be an uncomfortable topic to talk about. Nevertheless, in its absence, it's there; "it appears and disappears in different ways," he said, mirroring the myriad ways in which the children with whom I work have discussed and experienced race and racism. Depending on their changing social and spatial positioning, their understanding of themselves and of their reception by others demonstrated how ideas and realities of race and racism change, while always remaining present.

Afro-Ecuadorian communities are criticizing the images of blackness represented by national media. Afro-descendants are recognized by the media's racist accusations of deviancy

(Rahier 2008) or they are celebrated for their musical talents with the *marimba* and the *bomba* and for their soccer skills, as though those were the only elements of blackness worthy of recognition and celebration. Anthropologist Sara Busdiecker (2009) makes a related reflection in her discussion Afro-Bolivians' invisibility and their inability to gain land rights or any recognition outside of *saya* dance. During President Morales' political appearance in the Afro-Bolivian Yungas region, his only reference of Afro-Bolivians was his reaction after dancing *saya*: "I feel like I'm in Africa" (113).

In Ecuador, a 1998 constitutional reform declared the nation "pluricultural" and Article 83 acknowledged indigenous rights:

the state recognizes the indigenous peoples 'define themselves as nations' ...in response to the widespread appropriation of the term *nacionalidad* by indigenous activists. The state itself of course does not define them as such. In effect, 'multicultural' and 'multiethnic' rhetoric becomes a strategically 'safe' alternative to protect against the apparent threat that an explicit recognition of 'multi-nationalism' might imply to state sovereignty. [Greene 2007:346]

This official "multicultural" recognition allowed the state to "bury alive" the demands of indigenous communities through a "safe alternative" that feigned inclusion. Similarly, in 2007:

a sector of the Afro-Ecuadorian social movement developed and distributed a document entitled, 'The Ecuador We Envision and Want, as Afro-Ecuadorians' ....For the first time in many years, Afro-Ecuadorian civil society articulated their vision for the country, making public a proposal about the type of state, nation, economic development, citizenship, and democracy that they desired for Ecuador's future...central proposal: 'As Afro-Ecuadorians, we propose that state political reform must be oriented towards strengthening inclusive and intercultural democracy and towards consolidating a multiethnic and pluricultural nation'. [Antón Sánchez 2008:221]

In a 2016 *Telégrafo* article, Afro-Ecuadorian activist, María Lucetty Pachito Quintero, highlights the difference between official legislative inclusion and the practice of these mandates.<sup>98</sup> She

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<sup>98</sup> This article is listed as an Interview with María Pachito Quintero who is the Coordinator for the "Colectivo Afroincluyente." The article's title is a quote from Pachito Quintero: "Queremos que vean nuestras capacidades intelectuales" [We want them to see our intellectual capabilities]. This article from February 15, 2016 was

asks the government to find ways to take legislative promises and documents, like “The Ecuador We Envision and Want, as Afro-Ecuadorians,” and put them into action. Even though, she explains, the constitutional reforms of 2008 supposedly granted Afro-Ecuadorians the same rights as all other Ecuadorians, they still do not have the same access to jobs, which necessarily implies that her rights and the rights of other Afro-Ecuadorians are not equal in practice. The 2009 Plan Plurinacional stipulates, through Article 060, that Afro-Ecuadorians should have access to jobs in the public and private sectors, and that this inclusion should reflect the population size of the Afro-Ecuadorian community, which the last census listed as 7.2%:

que, según el número poblacional, debemos estar incluidos en las diferentes instancias públicas y privadas. ¿Cuántas instituciones lo hicieron efectivo? ... el pueblo está cansado de la utilización, de la discriminación.

[that, according to the population size, we should be included in different public and private capacities. But how many institutions actually did this? ... the community is tired of being utilized and tired of this discrimination].

In reading this article, I was reminded of my cousin’s reaction working at an employment agency in Guayaquil. He told me that the grocery stores in Samborondón, for example, seek out cashiers and bag boys who are white, specifying that their clientele is “different” (that is, whiter, wealthier), and they need to have staff people who fit this part of the city. He was disheartened, though not surprised, when the agency turned away the people he recommended for the open positions, because they had darker skin.

In the summer of 2015, five years prior to Guayaquil’s 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its independence, Mayor Nebot formed a planning committee for the 2020 festivities. Nebot explained that this celebration was not simply about celebrating the 9<sup>th</sup> of October of 1820 in 2020, but about “la culminación de un proceso” [the culmination of a process, the article

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originally published in Diario El Telégrafo: <http://www.eltelegrafo.com.ec/noticias/sociedad/4/marialucetypachito-comunidadafro>.

paraphrases]. He personally selected its 82 members. Afro-Ecuadorians and indigenous citizens complained, because there were no representatives from their communities on this panel: “Entre las 82 personas elegidas no consta ni un afroecuatoriano, pese a que Guayaquil es la urbe con más población afro. Tampoco hay montubios o indígenas” [Among the 82 people selected, there is not one Afro-Ecuadorian, even though Guayaquil is the city with the largest Afro population. There are not *montubios* or indigenous people either].<sup>99</sup> Apparently, people from these communities were not deemed to be part of “the process” by Nebot. Within this exclusive group are businessmen, former presidents, beauty queens, heads of foundations, writers, and artists, among others. The article cites Guayaquil’s mayor who addressed the question of the black, indigenous, and *montubio* exclusions: “Se trata de personas que tienen un demostrado espíritu cívico y actitud de servicio hacia la comunidad guayaquileña, y actitud de la defensa de los intereses ciudadanos, especialmente en materia de libertad y progreso” [This is about people who have demonstrated a civic spirit and a spirit of service toward the Guayaquileño community, and an investment in the defense of citizens’ interests, especially in relation to liberty and progress].

Josefina Orovio, who forms part of a group of Afro-Ecuadorian women, reacted to this municipal exclusion of her community, and the article highlights, in general, that many leaders across the city who are Afro-Ecuadorian and indigenous were outraged by Nebot’s decision. According to the Corporation of Afro-Ecuadorian Development [Corporación de Desarrollo Afroecuatoriano], the majority of Afro-Ecuadorians live in the province of Guayas (36%), followed by the province of Esmeraldas (25.5%), and by the highland province of Pichincha where Quito is located (13%). Although the population is the highest in Guayaquil, and while INEC data from the 2010 census presents 11.4% of Guayaquileños identifying as white while 10.9% identified as Afro-Ecuadorian, I have been asked by people from higher socioeconomic

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<sup>99</sup> This article was published in the national newspaper *El Telégrafo* on July 17, 2015.

circles – most of whom identify as white – where I meet black people in the city.<sup>100</sup> The majority of the Afro-Ecuadorian population lives in the city’s shantytowns, which are located on the city’s peripheries to the north, south, and east; and because these sectors are on the outskirts of the city, people can pretend they are not there: again, an absent presence.

The Andean republics, particularly Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, are frequently associated with their indigenous populations, and are often overlooked for their communities of Afro-descendants (e.g., Busdiecker 2009). Such a stereotype was made clear in the 2006 World Cup when spectators and commentators reacted with shock in the face of a predominantly black Ecuadorian soccer team. Ecuador’s victorious matches led to increased attention from the press, during which an Argentine commentator referred to the team as “nationalized Nigerians,” accusing Ecuador of cheating (Rahier 2008:169; see also Muñoz 2007). Through his research, anthropologist Jean Muteba Rahier (2008) describes the burst of nationalism that came from the 2006 World Cup and the way Ecuadorians, even white-mestizos, spoke of themselves – blacks, whites, and *mestizos* – as “we.” Nevertheless, during interviews and questioning about the black presence in Ecuador, interviewees described the regional separation, explaining that the Afro-Ecuadorians are located in Esmeraldas and the Chota Valley, vehemently drawing a geographic distinction while supposedly invoking unity. Accordingly, even though Guayaquil has the largest Afro-Ecuadorian population, Guayaquileños choose to render these groups invisible and appear confused by my ability to conduct research with Afro-Ecuadorians in Guayaquil.

History lessons in Guayaquil’s public schools further represent the “absent presence of race,” as they largely overlook Afro-Ecuadorian histories. During our focus group, I asked the

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<sup>100</sup> According to the Consejo de Afroecuatorianos in an article published in October 2013, for el Día Nacional del Afroecuatoriano, 250,000 people living in Guayaquil are Afro-Ecuadorian, or roughly 7 percent. This article, entitled *Afroecuatorianos se unen a través de labor comunitario*, is from the Diario El Universo, October 6: <http://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2013/10/06/nota/1542826/afroecuatorianos-se-unen-traves-labor-comunitaria>.



girls what they had learned in school about Afro-Ecuadorian history. Sarita and Shenoa began to respond simultaneously with very similar stories: “que antes los negros eran esclavos de los blancos” [that before the blacks were slaves of the whites]. Shenoa changed Sarita’s wording to say “Los españoles les daban durísimo” [The Spanish beat them severely]. While the group came to the consensus that the whites were Spanish, they seemed unsure when I asked where the slaves were from. Carmen, however, responded “de la India” [from India], and the rest seemed to agree.

Shenoa was conscious and disappointed that their history lessons were incomplete. She said, very firmly, and more than once: “Pero no dijeron por qué los negros ya no son esclavos de los españoles. No dicen por qué. Tienen que decir el por qué” [But they didn’t tell us why the blacks were no longer slaves of the Spanish. They don’t say why. They have to tell us why]. Shenoa wanted to be taught *what* happened, *what* changed. Her teachers had done her a disservice by only stating that there was slavery. She and Lisette, in particular, were extremely eager to learn more about Afro-Ecuadorian history – more about their history.

The girls put me on the spot, asking questions like: *Did we really come from Africa?*<sup>101</sup> *When did the first black person arrive in Ecuador? Were they all slaves? Why were they slaves? Were the Indians slaves, too? Are there black people in the U.S.?*<sup>102</sup> Even though the largest percentage of Afro-Ecuadorians lives in the Guayas province where Guayaquil is located, the standardized curriculum in Guayaquil’s public and private schools overlooks these questions and discusses historical facts of slavery superficially, as Shenoa noted and as I’ve observed, too, from questions I’ve asked kids from public and private institutions.

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<sup>101</sup> They asked if black people had come from Africa, even though, earlier in our discussion, they identified India as the point or origin.

<sup>102</sup> After the final question about the U.S., I asked if they had ever heard of Martin Luther King, Jr. or Malcolm X; they said they hadn’t, but Carmen soon realized that she had heard of Beyoncé.

The girls' questions and curiosity underscore the differences of being black in a larger city like Guayaquil, versus being black in neighborhoods or in rural communities in Esmeraldas or in the Chota Valley region in the highlands. Activists in Afro-descendant communities in Colombia and Ecuador, specifically in Esmeraldas and the Chota Valley, are utilizing a methodology entitled *la etnoeducación* that focuses on history lessons and structuring curriculum based on the experiences and viewpoints of Afro-Ecuadorians (see García Salazar 2010 and Walsh 2011 for more discussion of Afro-Ecuadorian collective memory and educational initiatives). Children who form part of this pedagogical initiative likely have a different way of talking about, thinking about, and imagining their race and their identities; and exploring this will likely form part of my next research project. In Guayaquil, there is now a "Centro Cultural Afro," which has an archive and has started programming for Afro-communities in the city, especially on the South Side.

Carmen and Lisette both attended some of the Saturday activities at the Centro. When I asked what they learned there, Lisette told me "te hablan de las diferentes culturas de la gente y en los países" [they talk to you about different cultures of the people and in the countries]. She told me that the people who work there "no son de aquí" [aren't from here]. I asked if they were "gringos" [Americans], and she replied: "No, son negros" [No, they're black]. Her response is not unlike one of the questions they asked about whether or not there are black people in the United States. At a report card pick-up at Fundación Crecer, Hólger's grandmother, Manuela, was shocked and ecstatic when she met the African American volunteer from New York. As I wrote in my journal that day, "She told me that she couldn't believe they're both 'morenas' and from so far away – asks if she speaks English; seems surprised" ["morenas," here, can be understood as "negras;" it is often used interchangeably, though depending on the context, it may

be understood as describing a lighter skin color than “negro;” some also use this term, viewing it as a more politically correct way of describing blackness]. The children reacted similarly when they met my friend from the U.S. who visited us in Guayaquil in 2014. They all posed for pictures with him and kept asking him if it was true that he was a doctor. Jaqui, Kaín and Tito’s mother, was thrilled, she told me, to meet such a handsome black man and to know that he was American and a doctor.

Educational psychologists, in particular, emphasize the importance for black and Latino children in the U.S. to find role models who look like them (e.g., Gurian and Stevens 2007); in the context of my own fieldwork, I have often thought the same thing. Their reaction to my friend, for example, struck me. He was greatly impacted by their reaction to him, too, seeing how important the interaction was for them. For the young boys with whom I work, they have found role models in black soccer players from the national team; but, part of what María Lucetty Pachito Quintero emphasizes in the article, is the importance in finding black role models and positive examples off the soccer field. She gives an example of a black lawyer who no one talks about, and emphasizes that the time has come to start pointing out aspects of black culture in Ecuador that move beyond soccer, dance, music, and crime.

### ***La Etnoeducación (in Children’s Barrios)***

*El Abuelo Zenón* – a mythical grandfather – is the voice of Afro-Ecuadorian collective memory (Walsh 2011), highlighting *la etnoeducación*’s emphasis on learning from one’s elders and recognizing the importance and power of knowing and re-telling one’s history:

Aprender del pasado significa buscar en la memoria colectiva de la comunidad propuestas válidas para recuperar sentido de pertenencia y derechos para seguir siendo nosotros mismos como comunidad, como familia, como pueblos afroecuatorianos.  
[García Salazar 2010:158]

[To learn from the past means to look within a community's collective memory to find valid proposals to recuperate a sense of belonging and of rights to keep being ourselves as a community, as a family, as Afro-Ecuadorian people] (my translation)

This pedagogical practice serves as both a resistance strategy toward official discourses that have denied Afro-descendants their history and presence and as a revitalization strategy within Afro-communities to learn, know, discuss, and appreciate their historical trajectories (Walsh 2007, 2011; Walsh and García 2002; Walsh and León 2006). The emphasis on Afro-history and telling these histories in a way that makes sense for the community – through the figure of *el Abuelo Zenón*, for example – represents a direct challenge to the colonial imposition of a Western form of history and of knowing as the legitimate form (see Mignolo's 2000 discussion of Wolf's *People Without History*). Though Walsh (2009) presents “interculturalidad” as a decolonizing philosophy that has yet to be built, the racism inherent in a state of coloniality requires particular methodologies to eliminate the layered forms of oppression of power, knowledge, and being. Methodologies, like *la etnoeducación*, are important starting points, as they demonstrate the power of combining cosmovisions, histories, ancestral territories, and activism. Archiving and analyzing children's (hi)stories of race and racism are critical, too, so that we may begin to understand the complexity of the layers of absence and of presence of race and racism and how the children experience, understand, and react to their overt and subtle manifestations and representations.

In many ways, the interviews children conducted in their neighborhoods apply principles from *la etnoeducación*. Through their neighbors, kids learned about their communities' histories and people's personal trajectories as a means of better understanding their own barrios. Especially coming from an educational context, as Shenoa and Lisette highlighted, in which there are critical history lessons they feel they are not receiving, the children who conducted

interviews were able to fill historical gaps about their own cities and neighborhoods through this research project.

In drafting neighborhood surveys that several children conducted in their barrios, Charo, who identifies as “negra,” had the idea to ask people what race they considered themselves. We reviewed their neighbors’ answers to this particular question during follow-up meetings and learned that some labeled themselves as *negros*, others as *afroecuatorianos*, others as *mestizos*, and some listed provinces as their race, such as “raza Manabita” and “raza Guayas.” I asked a group of boys what they thought about those answers. Caín explained: “That’s how race works...you can be more than a skin color, you can also be of a place.” He went on to say that he was *Guayaquileño* and he was also black because his grandparents were black. He explained that he has been black since he was a little kid. His brother, Tito, stopped him and clarified that it is his *descendencia* [ancestry].

While reading her interview responses, Carmen, a 14-year-old, said that a woman responded that she was *negra* and when she asked her why she identified that way, the woman said: “This is how I was born, and this is how I’ll stay, unless my mom decides to make me all over again!” We both laughed as she shared this response. Several people in the surveys replied that they were *negro* because “*así nací*” [that’s how I was born] or because “*mis abuelos eran negros*” [my grandparents were black]. The boys in our discussion group were surprised that most people were from Esmeraldas.

I have always been conscious of the Afro-Ecuadorian presence in their neighborhoods, and in so many conversations I have come to learn that parents and/or grandparents of the children are from Esmeraldas. “Why?” both brothers asked me. I told them that many people moved to Guayaquil for more employment opportunities, which they thought they would find in

a bigger city. I said the downtown area was full and many people moved to the barrios, first toward the south. They thought it was an interesting coincidence.

In their neighborhoods, they are all of similar socioeconomic backgrounds and, as many describe, they are like a family. Accordingly, they do not seem to think about race in relation to their neighborhoods, which for many children is their everyday life. It is in their neighborhoods that children grow up, learn, and develop their sense of identity. Since the children I work with often talk about race in relation to skin color, during our focus group on race I thought it was interesting that all of the girls identified as *negras*, although Sarita, in particular, has significantly lighter skin. Later on, Shenoa said: she's not actually *negra*, she just says that because we are and all of our friends and neighbors are. I did not want to push her on this topic, making her feel uncomfortable or self-conscious, but this instance was especially interesting. When I asked the girls how they self-identified, she was the last one to answer; and, it seemed as though she had never answered that type of question or even thought about it before this particular occasion. She was 11 years old at the time. She did not see herself or her friends as being different or as having different experiences: they are neighbors, they are family.

Just as many kids, like Hólger and Tito, shared in our discussions, they became conscious of their “difference” – of their race and class – when they entered school for the first time. This experience at school was one of their first experiences outside of their barrios. The next section focuses more specifically on children’s changing experiences across city spaces and how overt or subtle city exclusions actually are for them, especially as they enter Samborondón.

### **Part III: Racialized Spaces: Sites of Local Knowledge and Internalized Difference**

At the food court where we held a majority of our interviews, we were surrounded by fast food options, including “Menestras del Negro” [Beans of the Black Man]. The slogan “como

preparada en casa” [just like (the one prepared) at home] is accompanied by a caricature of a black man (see Figures 37 and 38). The fork appears behind a bun of black hair, gathered on top of his head, like the Inki cartoon; the fork resembles a bone, linking the figure of this black man to the racist images and stereotypes of black people as cannibals, savages, and as prehistoric.

One afternoon with Hólger and Jota, we were walking in circles as they reviewed their menu options rather indecisively. We were at the food court in one of Samborondón’s shopping centers called “El Village.” Jota had been sick to his stomach for several weeks, and I recommended “Menestras del Negro,” so that he could have some chicken with rice instead of the hamburger Hólger had selected. Hólger made us laugh when he told me not to ask, just to order it. “It’s just how he likes it,” Hólger said just before reading the slogan to us: “Como preparado en casa.” Jota insulted Hólger under his breath, and Hólger responded with laughter; he put his hand on my shoulder and stood in front of me, pointing to the sign. He laughed through telling me that that was the perfect choice: had I not noticed Jota’s face on the sign? Jota shook his head and rolled his eyes as Hólger grabbed his face and told me to notice how white his teeth were, just like the picture.



**Figure 37** This is the current sign of the establishment at the Food Court in "El Village."



**Figure 38** This is an older version of the sign, taken from the Internet. The monkey-like caricature of "el negro" [the black man] is further associated in this representation with a monkey, as the M is formed from three bananas.



Certainly, knowledge is created and transmitted through these signs and establishments that form part of Guayaquil's landscape. Hólger makes jokes about Jota's teeth and tastes as being reflected through the racist image that links blackness to monkeys and pre-history, which, to me, was a reminder of how common and expected such images and overt racism are in the city. People from higher and whiter social classes with whom I interact on a daily basis believe that jokes, like Hólger's, are emblematic of the fact that there is no racism in Guayaquil; they tell me that I am the only one who analyzes these images. Through this section, I discuss shantytown children's experiences across Guayaquil, particularly in the wealthy township of Samborondón, and my observations and analysis highlight that the racism embedded in such images forms part of the de fact segregation that structures everyday life in the city; and, in the process, informs poor and black children of their possibilities for belonging and blending as they move.

Similarly, Sheriff's (2001) ethnography of the racial and class divisions in urban Brazil makes a distinction between the favelas and "the asphalt," which are the spaces shantytown dwellers cross and inhabit as they leave their homes for work. She describes how color and class are more closely linked on the asphalt, making people of color more conscious in these spaces "when he or she crosses ostensibly invisible but subjectively perceived boundaries" (2001:92). Sheriff describes how people feel out of place in these spaces – these "enemy territories" (2001:111) – and how people's reactions to them on the asphalt creates, or at least exacerbates, their personal discomfort. It is these interactions and the ways in which they are internalized, she says, that construct and maintain boundaries. Although kids like Hólger and Jota can enter Samborondón – Guayaquil's "asphalt" –, for example, the city's landscapes is always informing them of their changing social positions and the weight these carry; as previously stated, Hólger

knows that if he gets up from the table at the food court in El Village, people will react to him with distrust and fear, informing who he is in their eyes. Sheriff states that “Because people of color so frequently respond to these boundary-maintaining forms of prejudice by withdrawal, moreover, they become, ipso facto, forms of discriminatory exclusion” (2001:93). This section demonstrates the social and emotional injuries of these border crossings whose supposed invisibility is subjectively perceived.

### ***Samborondón: Injurious Landscapes***

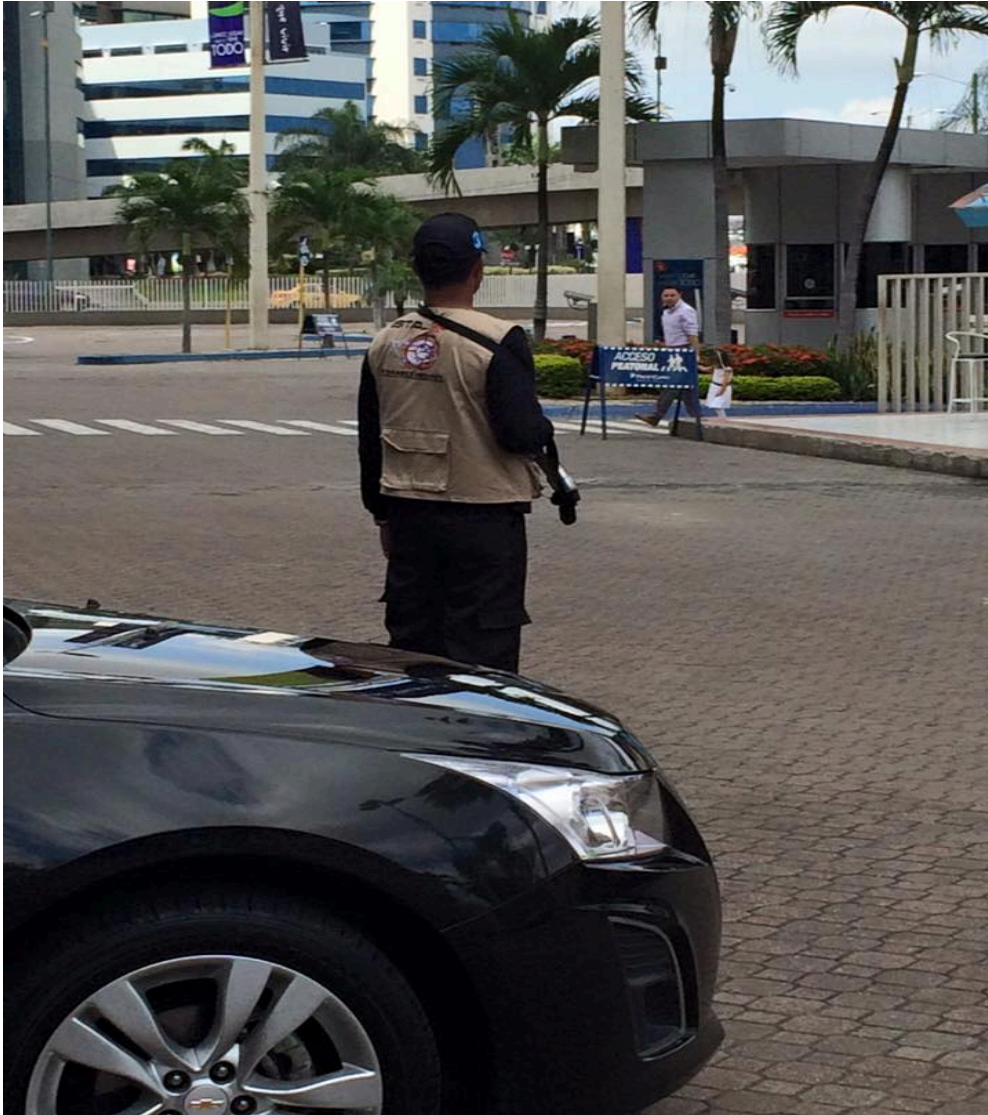
One of the first questions I asked the kids I interviewed as a way of starting discussions about race was to think about the first time they met someone they thought was different from them or from their family. Remembering the teacher’s categorizations of black, white, and mestizo, I wanted to avoid asking a question in which I was providing specific labels, so that the kids would discuss and describe using the terminology they typically employed. “What do you mean *different*?” many kids would ask. I gave them an example that, perhaps, I was different because I was from another country. This question was largely unsuccessful the first time I asked it. My favorite response was Alex’s. He was unsure of what I meant, but he thought for a few moments and told me he knew the answer: “el doctor” [the doctor]. ¿Cómo? [What do you mean?] I asked him. He told me that it was easy; the first time he met someone different from him was the day he was born: the doctor. They were different, he clarified, because he was a doctor, while Alex was just a baby: “Él era un doctor, y yo era un bebé.” Alex, who has nicknamed himself “Your Majesty” on Facebook, has always been quick-witted; his response is an example of the ways in which the children have challenged me to think critically about my approaches and amendments to this research project. And, as I think beyond the laughter that ensued after Alex’s clever response, I realize just how right he was.

As the interviews continued, kids, like Tito, Hólger, Jota, and Carmen, became vocal about the racism they felt because of their skin color and because of their poverty. They knew (white, rich) people saw them as being different; and, this was a different worth discriminating against. For many kids, as Tito explained, the first time they realized their race was seen as something negative was when they attended school; in their neighborhoods, they felt the same as everyone else. I saw first-hand how other kids, like Carmen, were actively discriminated against by being asked by security guards to leave shopping centers in Samborondón, echoing Hólger's words that he could walk up to everyone at the food court to demonstrate their racism. People would react to Hólger because he was black, because of his clothes, his walk. Because the kids and I met for interviews and lunches across the city, I felt responsible for the negative feelings they encountered, especially in Samborondón. I felt the kids would have been safer from this injurious interpellation if they had never entered Samborondón. Nevertheless, this is the space the kids most often asked to meet me; they saw me as an entry point into a city sector their neighbors or family were only allowed to enter because of their jobs as domestic servants, chauffeurs, and construction workers.<sup>103</sup>

There are security guards with assault rifles at the entrances of all of Guayaquil's shopping centers and businesses. In the malls, there are guards throughout the building, including the food court. Figure 39, below, for example, shows one of these armed guards patrolling the Mall del Sol parking lot.

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<sup>103</sup> Alex, for example, during our first interview at the Mall del Sol was continually distracted. He had never been there before. He kept pointing to people and asking me how much money that person made. He was incredibly curious and observant, answering questions quickly so that we could get to his: "What is that?" he asked at one point; I told him it was an air conditioning vent. Later on, I interrupted my own question to ask him what he was looking at, as he stared intently beyond me. He pointed to the custodian and asked: "¿Cuánto le pagan aquí por hacer esto?" [How much do they pay him here to do this?] He told me he looked like his neighbor, perhaps finding himself more closely linked to this man than to the other customers at the food court.



**Figure 39** This photograph was taken by my sister outside the Mall del Sol shopping center; this security guard was one of the ones patrolling the outdoor parking lot.

Guayaquil has consistently ranked as one of the most dangerous cities in Latin America, and these security guards are there to protect, which implies that they racially profile, monitoring and expelling potential threats. Kids I work with, girls and boys, were victims of this racial profiling, which led to my confrontation with the guards, reinforcing another hierarchy that places people with my phenotype above “the law” – in this case, the private security company. The security guards are required to police people who fit the profile of their neighbors, friends, and families.

I felt personally responsible when I arrived at an interview and found that Carmen and Tatiana had been kicked out of El Village. They arrived early and sat and waited for me in an outdoor patio that holds some of the mall's coffee shops and restaurants. When I arrived, however, I found them across the street, sitting along the median and motioned for them to come over. Tatiana told me a security guard had kicked them out.

She explained that they were waiting for me at the tables outside of Sweet and Coffee – Guayaqui's Starbucks. Carmen was moving an empty bottle around while a customer was trying to talk on the phone. Tatiana said that the man became angry by the noise Carmen was making and left. At that point, the security guard approached them and asked if they were going to consume anything. They told him that they were waiting for someone who was going to interview them. Unless they were going to purchase something, they could not wait there, he told them – not even on the steps leading to the street. They had to be off the property.

The girls told me nothing like that had ever happened to them; this was Carmen's first time in Samborondón and Tatiana had only gone through by bus to get to her job. Tatiana told me not to worry, that she didn't feel bad. Although Carmen also said she didn't care, I could tell she was upset. She told me that the guard had called them "sospechosas" [suspicious]. She said that they tried to hide and sit on the steps; but, another guard approached them. She told him that there was no reason to be suspicious of them: "Yo le dije al señor que por qué cree eso de nosotras que nosotras no somos ladronas – dice que igualmente las personas que se sientan ahí son sospechosas" [I told the man that why did he think that about us that we weren't thieves – he says that still, people who sit there are suspicious]. She said that she heard one guard tell another "que nos vigile" [to track us]. I asked Carmen why she thought that had happened. The first time, she ignored the question, and the second time, she just said: "¿Qué por qué yo estaba aquí?"

Estamos en las entrevistas” [That why was I here? We were here for interviews]. In other moments, later that year and the next, Carmen and Tatiana spoke more directly about racism and segregation, but during this conversation, just after being a victim of discrimination, Carmen was unable to deconstruct the moment. Her response of why she thought this had happened to her was to justify why she was there: for interviews. In these moments, kids, like Carmen, are confronted with how the city understands them and how they, in turn, understand themselves inside the city. She needed an excuse to be there.

A similar situation occurred with the security guards at El Village the following year. Along with Victoria (my colleague from the non-profit), we took the morning group of students on a field trip on the last day of our pilot program in January 2014. We went to Samborondón, and Victoria parked her car in the parking garage at El Village. Victoria is from Guayaquil’s elite social class. Based on her last name alone, people already place her at the top of the hierarchy. After several hours, we walked from el Parque Histórico back to El Village so the kids could grab their bags from Victoria’s car before taking the bus home. I was walking toward the back with our students’ younger siblings, carrying one of the babies. I was focused on making sure the kids crossed the street at the right time, even though I realized they were more accustomed to being pedestrians than I was. Up front, Victoria witnessed the security guards trailing behind our students. She began to mention this to me as the kids took their bags, and I briefly acknowledged her, not wanting the kids to hear how they were being discriminated against.

As we drove away with six kids from the group crammed in her car, she drove slowly behind the other kids who were still walking toward the exit of the parking garage. A security guard was following them out, as though he were forcing them to exit. She rolled down her

window and proceeded to defend our kids by humiliating the guard. It was an especially uncomfortable interaction, and she appeared to be the only one who was unaffected by the hierarchical dynamic she was reinforcing. She told the guard that she didn't care if another car was behind her; she was going to drive as slowly as she wanted to make sure that he didn't say anything to the kids. She told him that she was going to trail him, too, even though he apparently felt he belonged there. The girls in the car were quiet and Tito and Kaín who were walking alongside us picked up their pace, staring at the ground as they made their exit.

Victoria told the guard that when he wanted to walk around El Village with his family on Sunday afternoons, she was going to be there, and she was going to follow them around to see how he liked it. "Who do you think you are?" She asked him. It was a humiliating moment for all of us. By "protecting" our kids, she was reminding the group that she belonged to this space, and the kids appeared to have permission to be there temporarily, because we were there with them. But, like the guard: who did they think they were? They did not belong there.

In Guayaquil, race is used to define, exclude, and render people invisible. Even the shantytowns that form a perimeter around the city demonstrate a city planning strategy to keep certain groups – poor, dark – out of sight. Nevertheless, the cement and bamboo structures are always jutting through the horizon, reminding Guayaquileños of their presence. In an interview, when I asked Tito what it mean to be black, he responded: "Yo tengo una raza, pero yo no soy mi raza" [I have a race, but I am not my race]. The context of the conversation and his emphasis in this statement implied that his race does not define him; it's one characteristic of who he is, but it is not his essence. Particularly in a city that is deeply racist, it seems important to him that he is not defined by his race, because blackness in many ways implies being confined.

Blackness leads the security guard – someone who may very well live a few blocks from Tito – to trail him.

One's phenotype is ingrained upon him or her the day s/he is born. In Guayaquil, children are born into particular families, like Victoria's or like Tito's, and people's last names reflect whether or not they belong to the historically elite classes, whether they may form part of the *nouveau riche*, or whether they are *cholos*, which, in Guayaquil, is used by higher and middle classes to refer to people and things that are low class, while poor people use this term to refer to lighter skinned individuals, like me. These qualities, among others, are cause for discrimination and are decided upon from the beginning. Difference, as Alex explained it, is evident and acted upon from the day one is born.

During our first fieldtrip to Guayaquil's Parque Histórico, which is located in Samborondón, Jaqui accompanied us as a chaperone. El Parque Histórico is a major tourist attraction that houses a zoo with animals native to Ecuador and replicas of 20<sup>th</sup> century coastal communities of Ecuador (especially downtown Guayaquil and farms and rural areas of the provinces of Manabí and Guayas). As we were waiting for the other children to arrive, she shouted at her sons who were whistling ["chiflando"] to get their friends' attention from the other side of the mall. When all of the children came together, she used her sons' behavior as an example to explain to the group that they could not behave the same ways they behaved in their neighborhoods. Hours later, I wrote as much as I could remember from the brief speech she made to the group: "We, the poor people, are "salvajes" [savages], but the rich people have class. They are sophisticated. You have to try to act like them while you're in their part of the city. Our actions are driven by our ignorance, and they are not ignorant like us." I was taken aback by the dichotomy she drew between the rich and the poor and by how clear her explanation was for



the children: they nodded and agreed with her, accepting these descriptions of being “salvajes” and “ignorantes” [ignorant]. During the day, I would hear them stop each other from doing certain things they were accustomed to doing in their neighborhoods, like throwing trash on the ground or eating with spoons in place of a knife and fork at the food court we went to. In this way, local knowledges are being created and passed down to children who internalize and react to these “lessons” from their mothers. Indeed, the internalization of these colonial discourses (see also Fanon (1967[1952]) on internalized colonial legacies), is evident as children and adults perpetuate these negative stereotypes about themselves by accepting them as truths.

I have observed in many households in Guayaquil where there are maids and other hired workers that these employees use separate eating utensils, plates, and glassware from their employers. When I asked one employer about this, she explained that poor communities are often susceptible to higher rates of illness and disease, like Tuberculosis; purchasing separate kitchen ware served as a health precaution for her and her family. Many houses and apartments in Guayaquil have a separate room for a maid or, at least, a separate bathroom. It is traditional to greet people with a kiss on the cheek, though those from higher social classes typically greet those from lower social classes with a handshake. I have often become uncomfortable when people greet me with a kiss on the cheek and then turn to the person next to me with an outstretched hand. Sheriff (2001) describes the same tendencies in Brazil to have separate showers and eating utensils for the “empleadas” [maids], linking these distinctions to a “fear of racial contamination” (102).

All of these actions solidify and enforce these class differences and designate those who are poor as unworthy and as potentially contaminated. *Bodily hexis* (Bourdieu 1977), and *circularity* (Bakhtin 1984[1965]) are useful in framing the ways in which one’s environment,

lived experience, and those surrounding them influence the ways they learn to act and interact and to think about themselves, their surroundings, and those surrounding them. As Bourdieu (1977) reminds us: “It is because subjects do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing that what they do has more meaning than they know” (79). At the same time, however, habitus is not merely mechanical and, as Bourdieu explains, there is room for individual innovation (1977:95). I do, however, question the possibility for such innovation in Guayaquil. Even with an excellent education (i.e., de la Cadena 1998), for example, last name, phenotype, household, accent and word choice all come together to forcibly delimit class lines.

In Guayaquil, the city’s middle and lower-middle class populations live downtown or in the areas surrounding downtown, some of which end just before the shantytowns begin. The wealthiest sectors are *Via la Costa* [the area people drive through as they leave Guayaquil en route to the beach] and in Samborondón, Guayaquil’s wealthiest township, known for its gated communities with house prices ranging from \$250,000 to a million dollars. Within the wealthier sectors, too, people are judged by the private schools they attend, as some have “better reputations” than others; and these “better reputations” imply that kids from “better families” – that is, members of Guayaquil’s elite – are enrolled there.

While many of the adults from the shantytowns spend their days outside of their neighborhoods, their roles in these other sectors of town are as chauffeurs, domestic workers, nannies, security guards, construction workers, or lower-level employees of local businesses, holding jobs as servers at restaurants, nail technicians, janitors, bag boys at supermarkets. They are not customers or active participants outside of those duties required by their jobs. When one sees a person from the shantytowns in the shopping mall or at a restaurant in the city spaces of higher-income, they are typically there as nannies, feeding the baby of the family while the

adults eat and socialize, or they are accompanying their “jefa” [boss] to help with the grocery shopping. Similarly, Victoria reminded the security guard that although his position was to supervise and monitor the flow of people in and out of the shopping center, he only belonged there as an employee. His social world likely reflected the worlds of those he was trained to profile against.

Within the gated communities of Guayaquil’s wealthiest sectors, nannies are frequently seen supervising the children as they swim or play in the social areas [*áreas sociales*]. In the first apartment I rented in Samborondón, I received a bulletin that was sent to all of the residents stipulating that the social areas were not to be used by chauffeurs, bodyguards, or maids. These individuals could only be in the *áreas sociales* if they were supervising the children; otherwise, they needed to wait inside the home or the family car. Neighbors had complained about the excessive presence of the hired workers who supposedly were not meant to be part of their physical landscape; they were to be present only behind-the-scenes, so as not to disrupt the hierarchical social structure of life in Samborondón.

In the same neighborhood, an American friend moved in with her two young daughters. She took them to the pool with her nanny, so that each of them could swim with one of the girls. A friend of her daughter’s, not yet 5-years-old, told my friend that the nanny could not get in the pool. The pool was not for her. This little girl appeared disgusted by the presence of this woman – this lower-class nanny – in her pool. Her reaction mirrors the traditions within households in Guayaquil to produce separate utensils and bathroom spaces for domestic workers, as they are deemed dirty and contagious. Before the age of 5, these are the lessons she has internalized. As Aviva Sinervo and Michael D. Hill (2011) submit:

Andean notions of race are intimately tied to practices of consumption, even in part to the embodied odors we carry with us; while Indians may be identified by odors marking their

ties to the land and to animals, whites are identified by their sanitized bodies emanating the smell of cosmetic products (Weismantel 2001:263-268); Seligman 2004:157). [Sinervo and Hill 2011:119]

My friend was horrified and ashamed that not fully understanding the social norms of the city had embarrassed the woman who worked for her, as her body was not considered sanitized so as to share the pool water with the wealthy people from that neighborhood. This young girl in Samborondón and many others who I have met who are the children of friends and acquaintances, are conscious of social differences and are socialized to discriminate as young children. Although many of them love the nannies who raise them, these nannies are still employees. And their status as employees symbolizes their inferiority.

In an interview with geographer David Harvey (2014), he answers questions about inequalities by focusing on space and demonstrating the role of capitalism in creating distinctions and exclusions within cities.<sup>104</sup> He explains that building cities is a profitable business with constructions favoring the rich while simultaneously reducing investments in poor sectors. Harvey uses Marxism as a methodology, not as an ideology, and explains that “to articulate a new territorial focus for Marxism is to show how the reproduction of social classes, of segregation, and of ethnic discrimination, are part of the ways in which the city is organized” (my translation). Harvey gives Guayaquil, Ecuador as an example of this spatial segregation, focusing on Samborondón:

Ahí hay un área de la ciudad donde, a los costados de un gran camino principal, solo existen comunidades privadas. No puedes salir del camino principal para entrar a esas comunidades sin un permiso residencial. Entonces te preguntas qué tipo de mundo se construye allí, en que la experiencia urbana de las personas queda secuestrada tras estos muros, tienen un contacto casi nulo con personas de otras clases sociales. Por lo tanto es un hecho que la concentración de capital se transforma en una barrera para el desarrollo urbano, es decir, se opone a lo que debería ser una ciudad. No necesitamos ciudades que

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<sup>104</sup> The interview was led by Simón Espinosa and can be found on the Marxismo Crítico website: <https://marxismocritico.com/2014/11/14/para-erradicar-las-distinciones-de-clase-hay-que-reorganizar-la-ciudad/>.

generen dinero, sino ciudades que sean buenas para vivir. Y ese objetivo no es necesariamente compatible con la acumulación de capital.

[Here is a city where, alongside the main road, there only exist private communities. You cannot leave the main road to enter these communities without permission. Then you ask yourself what kind of world is being built there, in which the urban experiences of people are sequestered behind those walls, with barely any contact with people from other social classes. Essentially, it is a fact that the concentration of capital transforms into a barrier for urban development; that is to say, it opposes what a city should be. We don't need cities that generate money, but cities that are good ones to live in. And that objective is not necessarily compatible with the accumulation of capital].

The world that has been built in Guayaquil and that continues being built – with increased security measures to protect the city's elite classes, for example, by keeping the poor (and dangerous) out – is one in which people from different social classes are sequestered within their own sectors. Local knowledges are formed within these sequestered spaces and practiced and internalized across them. The children and families with whom I work change when they enter Samborondón; they become self-conscious, tentative, and overly aware and concerned with how they are being perceived. This self-consciousness and the surveillance they experience in El Village, for example, situate Samborondón as an injurious landscape whose exclusivity cements the deep racial and class divides that foment “barely any contact with people from other social classes.”

I have found it useful to think of the circulation of children in the Andes in relation to childhood poverty, versus the more traditional discussions of informal parenting, with children moving from rural communities to cities (e.g., Fonseca 2004; Leinaweaver 2008). More specifically, Sinervo's (2013) work with child vendors in Cusco, Peru has led her to focus “on the circulation of ideas about childhood poverty – rather than the circulation of physical children – to show how the currency of stereotypes and expectations can affect children's everyday lives” (2013:410). Carmen and Tatiana's dismissal from El Village, for instance, demonstrates how

stereotypes negatively affect children's lives, labeling them as "sospechosas." Jaqui's speech to the children underscores their understanding of these stereotypes and how they inform their actions. In the following section, I discuss how "street childhood" takes shape in Samborondón, excluding those children who don't belong – that is, those who are poor and darker skinned.

### ***"Street" Childhood***

In Guayaquil, the circulation of ideas about childhood poverty distinguish poor children as dangerous, delinquent, and lazy; they also inspire the extremes of both pity and distrust. Sinervo and Hill (2011), for example, say that tourists in Cusco are concerned that children are insincere, acting poor as a strategy to make money. They say that the performance and the reality cannot be separated and, instead, the focus should be on the fact that "their 'acts' and motives are both part of the commodified exchange (cf. Frank 2002)" (2011:127). Sinervo and Hill present some of the strategies child vendors use in their fieldsite, which are the same ones kids have used with me in Guayaquil: "Sometimes child vendors directly draw attention to unmet needs, asking a tourist to buy so they can have money to eat, or emphasizing how many siblings they help support" (Sinervo and Hill 2011:133). There is one boy who I always see at the gas station, as I enter Samborondón. He has told me that he travels to Guayaquil from a nearby town on the weekends to make money to help his mother and little brother who are ill. We know each other at this point, and he was surprised at first when I engaged in a conversation with him. During our first conversation, his sad eyes and mouth perked up; this was not necessarily because he was lying about his family, but because his goal in that moment – to inspire pity from those getting gas to give him money for food – changed. Children who work on the streets are smart and employ strategies to encourage passersby to give or buy: "so-called poor Andean children – do 'gaze back' at tourists and at themselves as they exercise complex

forms of agency to co-determine the course of Andean visual culture, markets, and ideas about childhood and poverty” (Sinervo and Hill 2011:137). Like Sinervo and Hill, I have observed kids’ realities and their performances. Even with me, after years of knowing each other, I am aware of moments in which they are performing because they want more KFC or they want extra bus fare, which is really a way to buy candy at the Terminal.

I learned not to offer bus fare while I worked at Fundación Crecer. During my preliminary fieldwork in 2011, Milton always asked me to help him. The first time he asked, I gave him a dollar. After that, it became a daily request. I stopped the day I watched him in action: he kicked the ground and pouted until he was approached by the group of exchange students who were visiting the Fundación that day. He earned \$5 from them plus \$1 more from me a few minutes earlier. The next day, I told him to find some change from the \$6 he had received the day before. He attempted to act shocked, but failed and started laughing instead. He put his hand out for me to shake it, as though we were concluding a business relationship. Then, he ran to tell his friends that I’d caught him. Throughout the week, several kids approached me to ask how I knew.

Milton, like his cousin Carmen, worked at Transportes Ecuador, which is one of the bus terminals that takes travelers across Ecuador. Milton spoke briefly about his work on the street, but Carmen was more open about discussing it. Working at Transportes Ecuador, she explained, meant that she worked on that street corner. Located across from Guayaquil’s airport, it was a convenient place to work for Fundación Crecer’s students. She worked there from the time she was eight until she was 11: “Hacía malavares – no era tan buena, hacía de dos. Ya me están enseñando de tres también” [I juggled – I wasn’t very good, I only did it with two. Now they’re

teaching me with three, too]. Many of the kids who work on the streets actually work on the city's buses, getting on and off at different stops to sell or beg passengers for money.

Carmen, for example, circulated between the street and the buses: “A veces me trepaba a los buses para vender cocada” [Sometimes would get on buses to sell coconut sweets]. These sweets are typical of Esmeraldas where her grandmother is from. She told me that to make it, you need “juguito del coco y panela – queda riiiiico; ahí lo hacíamos una bolita, lo enfundábamos, y lo vendíamos. La fundita de cuatro vale 25 centavos y cada una valía 10 centavos” [the juice from the coconut and sugar – it is so goooood; then we made it into little balls, we put it in bags, and we sold it. The little bag of four cost 25 cents and each one individually cost 10 cents]. The route she took on the buses was short, from the Terminal to the Comisariato, which is the grocery store across the street from Fundación Crecer – a quick ride on and off, back and forth. She was scared because of the DINAPEN and the metropolitan police; if they caught you, they took your money, she said. Other people working on the streets could steal from you, too: “uno tiene que esconder bastante para que no le quiten las cosas – escondía por un huequito del Comisariato” [one has to hide a lot so that they don't take your things – I hid my stuff in a little hole by the Comisariato]. Every now and then, they still stole from her. When she waited at the traffic lights to get on the next bus, she met Janice, Génesis, and the other girls from the Fundación who did acrobatics and washed windshields: “como ellas son abiertas...quebradas” [since they're flexible].

Janice still worked on the street when I met her. She said that she made the most money around Christmas time. People would stop and give her money for food. During her time working on the streets, she was hit by a car and beaten by a man with a cane, she told us. She would steal the money he left under some rocks – this was further North, by the Alborada sector.



When he realized that she was the one stealing from his hiding place, he beat her. It must have been severe, because she had to write left-handed for a while; she couldn't remember when this happened. She knew, though, that this was before she was hit by a car, and the car hit her when she was 11. She was 13 now. She got stuck under the car while she was dancing at the intersection. The lady who ran her over took care of all the bills and the medicines, she told us. Janice washed windshields, too, but she said you make more money dancing. She showed me where her leg was messed up from the accident. Charo ran her finger along Janice's scars. As we looked at her leg, I noticed another wound and asked if that was from one of those incidents. "¿Este?" [This one?], she asked me, pointing to the mark along her shin. "No," she smiled; that was from the time she fell "jugando las cogidas" [playing freeze tag]. She had to get stitches, "y me cosieron sin anestesia" [and they sewed me up without anesthesia].

Janice, Charo, Elsitá, Kerly, and I sat around the table Janice and Charo shared in the Módulo 2 classroom. This was one of my favorite mornings of fieldwork at Fundación Crecer. The teacher had to take the boys to a course at the church for their First Communion, and she left the five of us behind to complete busy work. The girls worked quickly, and we spent the majority of the time talking. I was starting my second month of fieldwork, and they were curious to learn more about why I was there. When I told them that one of my interests was to learn about the experiences of kids who worked on the streets, Janice took the lead. As she described the dancing, in particular, she mentioned the names of three other girls from the Módulo 3 classroom who also danced with her on the streets. Charo accompanied them from time to time, though she became embarrassed when Janice told me this.

Charo said her mom wouldn't let her work. She told her that her dad worked so that she didn't have to. Janice's dad worked as a trash collector, and he saw her working on the streets

during one of his shifts. She lived with her mother, so instead of becoming angry with her, he became angry with her mom. Kerly's mother told her that working on the streets corrupts you. Both she and Charo said that their mothers warned them that they would "quemar las patas" [burn their feet] if they ever caught them working on the streets.<sup>105</sup> Elsitá told us that she was going to leave home one day to work, and her mom hammered down her hand so that she would know never to do it.

Fundación Crecer's mission statement used the term "street workers" [*niños trabajadores*] to refer to its population of students; the term that was also employed by staff from the Fundación was "street children" [*niños de la calle*], and most people who know about Fundación Crecer, associate it with the term *niños de la calle*. The cohort at this school when I arrived was mostly comprised of siblings of former street workers; or, they were former street workers themselves, like Carmen. A small group, like Janice and her friends from Módulo 3, continued working after school. Although the realities of the children they worked with changed, Fundación Crecer still used the same mission statement and language centered around the *niños trabajadores* to secure funding from international organizations and local donors. "Street childhood" and "child workers" was a marketing and funding strategy of this organization. As I started working with the kids outside of the non-profit and across the city, I came to think of "street childhood" as an imagined role largely created out of the stereotypes and fears that accompany social inequalities.

I was interested in the ways in which street children engaged with city spaces, sometimes playfully, sometimes angrily, and sometimes with embarrassment or fear of a social injury, perhaps, as much as a physical one (Brown 1995; Butler 1993). Our fieldtrips and our interviews

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<sup>105</sup> In my notebook, next to this quotation, I wrote a question to myself: "is this figurative?" Knowing what I know now about the families with whom I work, I realize it's probably a strategy they actually do employ in their homes. It's not, in other words, an empty threat.

across the city, led to moments, like the one with Victoria, in which the children were judged and excluded because of their bodily hexis: their physical appearance, the ways they spoke, and the ways they carried themselves – that is, the positioning of their heads, their eye contact, their clothes, and other mannerisms. Children from Guayaquil’s shantytowns are informed by the city landscapes, especially as they move from their neighborhoods through the wealthier sectors, like Samborondón. Children shared stories of their experiences across Guayaquil, and many of the moments they described demonstrated how they internalized their movement across the city. Poor children are aware of their changing social positions as their surroundings change, and they react accordingly, demonstrating the depth with which their social class and its accompanying stereotypes are imprinted upon them and even accepted by them.

As Hólger shared during a group interview in relation to moving across the city: “Uno a veces pasa por un lado con buena voluntad, y lo miran mal” [Sometimes you go by a place with the best of intentions, but people still give you dirty looks]. That afternoon during the interview, Hólger and his friends were especially lively; but after he made this comment, they grew serious and the tone of the interview changed. When I describe my research to people from Guayaquil’s more affluent sectors, they inform me that the divisions in the city are not about race, but rather about money. Hólger and the other children with whom I work, however, describe their experiences and interpretations of how they are received and perceived as they move between different city spaces, and their lived experiences are extremely racialized. Social class divisions in Guayaquil are profound, and their divisiveness is illustrated not just by the levels of inequality in people’s resources and opportunities, but by their interpretation and analysis of these inequalities and how these structure their day-to-day life.

Although the children with whom I work were often not street workers or beggars, within the city landscapes of higher socioeconomic classes they seemed to belong only on the streets: the carefree ways they moved through the traffic, racing each other and laughing as they dodged cars and buses, lie in stark contrast to their self-consciousness when walking into a restaurant or into a store at a shopping center. Moreover, those around them appeared more comfortable seeing these children on the streets instead of seated next to them at the food court, which Hólger and Jota both recognized. In this way, then, “street childhood” speaks not to the lack of a home or to forced street work, but to societal exclusions in Guayaquil that render poverty and blackness as inferior and unworthy of entrance into the wealthy city spaces of high-end shopping malls, restaurants, and plazas. While there are, of course, “street children” who work on the city streets, I envision “street childhood” in Guayaquil as a concept that goes beyond street work and encompasses all children who are marked by poverty and blackness and whose embodiment of class and race informs, regulates, and limits their movement beyond the city’s shantytowns. Segregation in the city attempts to keep people from the barrios contained within them; that is, unless they are going to work as domestic servants, bodyguards, and chauffeurs.

De Certeau (1984) and Bourdieu (1977) are useful here in thinking of the city and the elements that comprise its *mise en scène* (1977:133). Guayaquil, depending on the person and that person’s *habitus*, may be a “stage of concrete, steel and glass” (de Certeau 1984:91); some seek out steel and security points for protection, others are surrounded by glass, always feeling observed and judged or by concrete, feeling imprisoned and excluded. The (re)actions of those who move across this “stage” continually transform these spaces as they move through them: “A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions” (Bourdieu 1977:117). Walking through the city, each person’s social position alters the *mise en scène*, and as much as they may

try, people are unable to truly protagonize their actions, as they are always necessarily interpellated by those around them (Althusser 1994, Butler 1993), like Carmen and Tatiana at El Village. Althusser (1994) reminds us that “you and I are *always already* subjects” (117), and this rigid categorization and social positioning holds true socially and spatially in Guayaquil.

### ***Children and their Neighborhoods***

Andeanist scholars have discussed strategies people employ to gain access to higher (and whiter) social settings, such as consumption, education, and migration (e.g., de la Cadena 1998; Roberts 2012; Weismantel 2001). In Guayaquil, the depths of social stratification render possibilities for “whitening” and “belonging” to other social sectors improbable. Moreover, people from the shantytowns do not strive to leave their neighborhoods or to imitate the styles of their white, upper-class peers.<sup>106</sup> Instead, their goals and aspirations revolve around their family and their neighborhoods. In addition to the power of segregation and inequality, this attachment to their neighborhoods lies in their personal connection to their *barrio*’s history and their families’ continued struggles and efforts to improve their community, as discussed, for example, in Chapter 3. Neighbors’ descriptions of their community are a paradoxical fusion of desperation and pride. They are frustrated by the structural challenges of having water tanks versus running water, living along streets lined with trash and sewage, and witnessing and sometimes becoming victims of theft and violence; but, they are proud of the ways in which their neighborhoods have changed, often on account of their own efforts. The history of their neighborhoods – their history – is one characterized by hard work and sacrifice, which results in a deep sense of pride in the progress they have made and continue to fight for.

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<sup>106</sup> I would argue that aspirations for belonging to higher social classes form part of middle-class and upper-middle-class priorities. Those from the shantytowns who are the poorest in the city do not aspire to change social classes, even if their economic possibilities improve. The cultures from the elite and the poor social classes are inherently different; legacies of colonialism are ingrained upon them, and the poor take on roles and personas of servitude upon interacting with those from elite social classes.

The media, police, and Guayaquileños from across the city, including people from these same neighborhoods, characterize the *barrios* based on their extreme poverty, danger, and violence. In recent years, government-sponsored projects have provided running water within households and paved streets, though these services have not yet reached all of these communities. On the North Side, the dirt roads in the Flor de Bastión are steep and always flood with heavy rains; the rainwater mixes with the waste from the septic tanks, leaving a green outline as you walk along the street and leaving many children with skin infections. Although the poverty and the danger in these communities are very real with frequent murders, shootings, drug deals, and varying levels of abuse both inside and outside of children's homes, it is also important to emphasize that these communities are described by many children and families as a family; when mothers and children tell me stories of having nothing to eat, they always turn to their neighbors for food, for money, for support; as Hólger stated: "Let's say you are poor and you don't have salt, you go to your neighbor's house (intentional pause) – she'll give you some; you go to another neighbor's house (intentional pause) – he'll give you some." Similarly, families work together – women, in particular – to pressure the police and the Municipality to fight for services that they deserve. These efforts, described in Chapter 3, have led to infrastructural changes for their communities.

Some people, of course, speak more optimistically about their neighborhoods than others and they all acknowledge the problems, which are often quite severe; but it is important that these descriptions do not overshadow the happiness that also characterizes these communities. On a Sunday afternoon, for instance, walking along Block 6 of the Flor de Bastión where I have worked the most, there are young men playing soccer on a dirt field as people from neighboring

houses watch from their windows and front doors. There is always a group gathered outside a neighbor's house playing Bingo. Kids run up and down the road chasing one another.

As part of this research project, several children served as research assistants and conducted interviews in their neighborhoods, which I present at length in Chapter 2. In our meetings to organize and analyze our data, several of the research assistants told me that their favorite question was the one about the lottery, in which they asked their neighbors three things they would do with their money if they won the lottery. Kaín said that he thought it was really interesting to hear these responses and that he learned a lot from them: he learned how good poor people are. His younger brother agreed and added that he felt happy that each of his neighbors said they would invest in helping those who were less fortunate. They read examples from their notes: helping sick people at SOLCA (the Cancer Institute), creating a center for street children, building a support center in their neighborhood for children and families with nothing to eat.

For the flea markets we hold in the Flor de Bastión, my house is always full of donations, and people frequently ask me about them; I have been struck, in conversations with plumbers, electricians, pest control employees, gardeners, and others, to hear them say they do the same thing. That is, from their own neighbors who are also poor, they collect clothing and toys they no longer use and donate them to churches or to children from a rural community in Manabí, as one man told me, that support people who live in deeper states of poverty. Certainly, generalized reflections on poor neighborhood communities overlook not only the tight-knit culture among neighbors, but also the concern of the poor for others who are also poor and who struggle more than they do. The kids noted this sense of care and compassion. “They would never forget about us or become too good for us,” Sarita said, in reference to the interviews she had conducted in her own neighborhood with Hólger. She also added that the only person who said she would

only use the lottery money to buy things for herself was Nancy, the most hated neighbor on her block.

Erin Taylor (2013) argues that using the label “poor” does a great disservice to the communities being described as it often overlooks the ways in which “poor” people actually envision their realities. For the people I work with in Guayaquil, I often hear them use *pobre* [poor] as a source of pride. In interviews, women and children often say they would rather be *pobre* than be rich, as they link the snobbishness of rich people with thoughtlessness and heartlessness; Sarita, for example, emphasized that the neighbors would never “become too good for us.” In an interview, Petra and her daughter, Mayra, criticized their neighbors who were making and selling drugs from their home; they told me that they would rather be *pobre* than resort to criminal activity like drug dealing or stealing. They might not have much materially-speaking, they emphasized, but they had their pride and honor. For them and for other families I work with, *pobre* moves beyond economics and speaks to values. Ultimately, as one group of children explained to me, *un pobre* [a poor person] is the real *rico* [rich person] in character and integrity.

***¿Cuáles son las diferencias entre la niñez de niños de distintos sectores de la ciudad? Por ejemplo, entre los niños que vemos aquí [food court in Samborondón] y los niños de las Malvinas [their neighborhood]:***

*Hólger: Ninguna*

Jota nods as Alysa repeats “Ninguna.”

*Hólger: “El tiene play, nosotros tenemos la máquina de pelea.”*

Both boys laugh. I ask what a máquina de pelea is; Jota explains: “Se le mete 5 centavos pues y se juega.”

*Hólger: “Ellos juegan fútbol en cancha de césped, nosotros jugamos fútbol en la calle o en una cancha de arena...hasta mejor nosotros tenemos, nos divertimos, ellos ni se divierten, son aburridos, amargados.”*

***What are the differences between the childhood of children from different city sectors? For example, between the kids we see here [at the food court in Samborondón] and the kids from las Malvinas [their neighborhood].***

*Hólger: None.*



Jota nods as Alysa repeats “None.”

*Hólger: “He has play [station], we have the fighting machine.”*

Both boys laugh. I ask what a “fighting machine” is; Jota explains: “Well, you put in five cents and you play.”

*Hólger: “They play soccer on a field of grass, and we play soccer on the street or on a dirt court...we have it even better, we have fun, they don’t have fun, they’re boring, bitter.”*

The “bitter millionaires” that emerged in Hólger and Jota’s discussion of inequality at the beginning of this chapter are also present here in the form of kids, like them. Although the kids I work with are conscious of material differences, such as having a Play Station versus paying five cents for a machine, Hólger and Jota conclude that there are no differences between their childhoods; the difference is in the attitude, not the material possession. Hólger’s statement reflects a sentiment that those who are rich are not the ones who come out winning – they are not the better people. Because those from more economically privileged backgrounds are the “winners” on a day-to-day basis on account of their access and the ways in which they are perceived and received, Hólger, like many of the kids and mothers with whom I work, intends to change that perception by emphasizing the negative elements of “los ricos.” The rich are boring, bitter millionaires who depend on material things to create their spaces for fun. And, even with those props of Play Station and synthetic playing fields, they still don’t enjoy themselves. They are never satisfied.

Appadurai (2004) explains that:

Poor people have a deeply ambivalent relationship to the dominant norms of the societies in which they live. Even when they are not obviously hostile to these norms, they often show forms of irony, distance, and cynicism about these norms. This sense of irony, which allows the poor to maintain some dignity in the worst conditions of oppression and inequality, is one side of their involvement in the dominant cultural norms. The other side is compliance, not mere surface compliance but fairly deep moral attachment to norms and beliefs that directly support their own degradation. [65]

Irony, distance, and cynicism are present throughout kids’ discussions of Guayaquil’s wealthy.

In my case, they emphasize my social position as a “millonaria humilde” [humble millionaire],

distancing me from the oppressive dominant cultural norms that reinforce their own social positions as the city's poor. Their social positioning as "pobres" mirrors Taylor's (2013) critique of the term. While people from the barrios refer to themselves as poor as a source of pride, it is used against them as a means of generalizing and discriminating. My own use mirrors theirs and works against the dominant stereotypes by demonstrating the ways in which people from these communities are proud, careful, conscious, and intelligent of their actions and the decisions they make for themselves, their families, and (in spite of) their community at large.

Certainly, there is an awareness across social classes of socio-cultural differences. One of the dangers is an unconscious awareness of these differences, bolstered by a history of degradation and oppression that has accompanied poor, black, and indigenous communities in Ecuador. Appadurai warns of the moral attachment to beliefs that support poor people's own degradation, echoing Jaqui's warning to the children: "Our actions are driven by our ignorance, and they are not ignorant like us." Across Guayaquil's social classes, reinforced by poor people's employment as servants of the wealthy, there appears to be a shared understanding of Jaqui's words. And it is this shared understanding that leads to different types of dreams and ambitions for one's future.

Unlike inner-city discourses in the U.S. in which families strive for their children to "get out" of their neighborhoods, in Guayaquil, there is a long-term investment in one's neighborhood. What is the point of aspiring to live in a different sector when the stringent barriers between social classes are impossible to penetrate? Although, as described throughout this dissertation, families and children envision "different" futures from those surrounding them, they seek out these futures within the same spaces. This contrast with shantytown culture in the U.S., which I base on my own teaching experiences in the inner-city community of Englewood,

Chicago from 2007-2009, is centered around the opportunities offered through education. In the Englewood high school where I taught, children and families looked to education as a permanent way out of that neighborhood, away from the toxic environment of everyday life: gang violence, drugs, poverty, police brutality (see also Bourgois 1996). Education, however, in Guayaquil, does not allow for such mobility. As Alex's reflection of the doctor reminds us, people are born into their social class and any social movement beyond becomes impossible. Indeed, even physical movement is sometimes impossible. Hecht's (1998) work in Brazil also demonstrates how poverty and belonging to a shantytown define one's social position and, in the process, define the limits of one's movement:

In contemporary Brazil, the identity of poor children is most often marked by their place of residence and is quickly transformed from a descriptive marker of temporary physical location to an ascriptive sign of a child's ontology. This means that, in stating what kind of dwelling or which neighborhood he lives in, a boy is not merely describing his living quarters, he is also defining his social position and providing evidence of his character (Hecht 1998). [*cited in Drybread 2013:214*]

In this way, the social positions of the children are already marked within an understood social hierarchy that denies possibilities for change.

In the literature on race and the body in the Andes, anthropologists have discussed the malleability of race and how consumption and education, for example, grant people the possibility to manipulate their race and to change (e.g., de la Cadena 1998, 2001, 2006; Roberts 2012; Weismantel 2001). The communities I have worked with, however, do not strive to learn and to earn as a means of "fitting in" to life in Samborondón, for example, or as a means of hiring a household maid. They want enough money to improve their quality of life: to replace a house made of bamboo with cement; to replace a dirt floor with tile; to purchase a mattress so that fewer kids share a bed; to move their bathroom from the yard to the inside of their home; to provide their children with school supplies and a nightly meal. The children and adults want to

buy a tablet or a cell phone, not as part of a discourse of *blanqueamiento* [whitening] or to “belong” to the elite classes, but because they have seen them, they like them, and they want one, too. This is the world of capital and consumption which has become a universal way of life, albeit with local particularities. In effect, capital and consumerism permeate all landscapes as they create the illusion of “ownership.”

Eight-year-old Santos made me laugh before the Christmas party in his neighborhood when he asked if Santa Claus was going to bring him a tablet: “Consúltele” [Consult with him], he told me, even though he was sure that I was Santa. The teens I work with save so they can purchase the trendy necklace from *el Cincuentazo* (the 50-cent store) or the new headphones from *la Bahía* [the contraband market downtown] that their friends have, not that the private school kids have. The segregation of spaces in Guayaquil is so deep that these ideas of “belonging” and “fitting in” to other sectors of society outside of the shantytowns do not form part of their discussion of the futures they describe for themselves. Their world is their neighborhood, and these “status items” that they seek earn them bragging rights on their street and with their friends at school – social hierarchies exist within their schools and their blocks, too. Similarly, Taylor (2013) describes the ways in which residents from shantytown communities use materiality to create their identities and to judge their neighbors. She argues that their relationships with material goods are more complex precisely because their resources are limited.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> For the kids I work with, their ideas of success are connected to money and having lots of it. Before mentioning a career, the majority would say: “I’m going to make money.” And I would respond by asking them “how?” As discussed in Chapter 4, the boys, in particular, would tell me that they were going to run their own business (auto-repair shop was a common answer); and the girls who aspired to be business owners said they would own a restaurant or a seamstress shop. When I asked how much is “a lot,” on average, they said \$800 per month. Although this is double what most of their households bring in each month, the average business man in Guayaquil averages around \$4,000 per month, the more affluent ones \$7,000, and the owners over \$20,000. When the kids discuss their future and their future wealth, they emphasize that although they will have money, they will never become like the other rich people who they describe as racist, classist, and cruel.

The rate of crime—muggings, break-ins—in their neighborhoods, for instance, is certainly a deterrent from bragging about one’s purchases. From a young age, children learn to navigate the fine line between boastfulness and secrecy. During the Christmas season of 2013, I delivered donated gifts to children and families in seven different barrios. While they were all extremely grateful, they were concerned that others – sometimes even others from their same household – would see their gifts; many did not want to open them in front of other people and some kept their gifts in bags and hid them (beneath a mattress, in a mini-fridge, etc.). The adults were more likely to do this than the children. Although, during the daytime, many doors are open and neighbors walk in and out of each other’s homes, during gift-giving-time, people seek out more privacy and the level of distrust overshadows the familial ties they speak about in relation to their neighbors. The shantytowns and the relationships formed in these neighborhoods are often contradictory as trust and distrust along with love, hate, support, and jealousy structure the bonds between neighbors; the root of these contradictory feelings is each family’s need to “superarse” [improve oneself] and “salir adelante” [make headway, get out (of problems) and move forward], which is too often a competition. Although they are like family, the family in their household must come first.

#### **Part IV: ¿A Humble Millionaire? – Reflections From the Barrios, the Fundación, the Food Courts, and Samborondón**

As my first month of dissertation fieldwork came to a close, Hólger came up to me that Friday during recess, and told me that the kids were talking about me. “It’s not bad, though,” he said. “¿Quiere saber lo que están diciendo?” [Do you want to know what they’re saying?] I told him that if he wanted to tell me, he could. Apparently, the kids had decided that I was a rich person who did not think she was better than them. “¿Ve? Es bueno” [See? It’s good].

My presence at the non-profit was strange. The kids were used to volunteers coming and going, usually English-speaking, but they weren't used to them coming back and being a constant presence in their school day. They also weren't used to the foreigners speaking Spanish like me. In my fieldnotes, I wrote: "Kids keep asking why I know how to speak Spanish like I do – they are surprised when I say I'm gringa. One kid yesterday explained to a girl that I was gringa, but now I was living in Ecuador." By living in Ecuador, then, it was as though I had suddenly become Ecuadorian in her eyes, linguistically at least.

The kids were eager to ask and learn about my skin and my hair by touching my arms and trying to make small braids. Carmen braided my hair one afternoon with tiny "ligas" [rubber bands] she had brought to school; she often braided her friends' hair. A group of us sat in the Módulo 4 classroom where we talked and they played music for me to listen to, as they tried to discover what I liked best. As she braided it, she would call her friends over to touch strands of my hair to look at the blonde streak you could see if you held it toward the light from the window; she told them to feel how soft and thin it was. Precisely because of how thin it was, I urged her not to pull so tightly. Carmen, Charo, Joffret, Elsitá, Chabela, and I often spent recess inside a classroom. They liked talking, and it was easier to talk indoors. Other friends of theirs would sometimes join us.

In my fieldnotes, I also described how the kids greeted me when I arrived one morning in the Módulo 2 classroom; I had been delayed because I was meeting with the principal. They had apparently been discussing me, and three of the boys quickly approached my spot in the back of the room asking to see my forearm. "Mira" [Look], Darwin said, "sus venas son azules" [her veins are blue]. Darwin and Frickson began comparing their black arms and Leo's mestizo arm, and they were shocked. They pressed down on my arm and veins and were "very engrossed," as

I wrote in my fieldnotes after this interaction. They were the first three to do this, but during the first two months, word had gotten around that I had blue veins. Even the teacher from Módulo 4 asked to see my forearm.

Charo grabbed my hand on the day Janice told us the story of her street work and said: “Mira – una mano negra y una blanca” [Look – a black hand and a white one]. Janice replied: “Va a hacer un mestizo” [It’s going to make a mestizo]. We laughed at this conclusion. Charo always liked holding my hand and looking down at our intertwined fingers.<sup>108</sup> Carmen was also very attached to me. She called me “madrina” [godmother], even though I was unable to attend her First Communion. Because our interviews at El Village were a short walk from my apartment, she figured out where I lived and began showing up on Saturday mornings. Danilo and I would spend the day with her. During her October vacation from school in 2013, her step-grandfather (her biological father) called me one evening to say that they were going to send Carmen to my house the next day. He said: “There’s no problem, we want her to stay with you the entire vacation. She’s better off with you. Teach her English and help her in school.” I was shocked and told him that would not be possible, but that I was going to coordinate an activity for all of the kids during their vacation. Kids often told me that they wanted to see my house or that they wanted to live with me, but the principal had strictly forbidden this when I began meeting with the kids off campus. Their parents, however, wanted their kids to have these experiences in new places – especially since this new place was Samborondón.

When my mother-in-law donated the chicken for the students’ lunch during my first year of fieldwork, the children began asking questions about my supposedly rich family. Lourdes

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<sup>108</sup> When her sister, Cristi (see Chapter 3), joined the Fundación months later, she would become jealous when Charo was with me. She told me that I was hers and only hers, and that she wanted me to be her mother. When new students entered the Fundación, she was especially jealous of the girls who greeted me with hugs and who wanted me to sit with them at lunch. It was a struggle to convince her to work with a tutor. She only wanted me to be her tutor.

asked me if my husband made a lot of money. I told her he did okay; she followed-up, then, by assuming he made around \$300 per month, saying that maids made around \$250 and he probably made more than a maid. She asked me directly if I lived with the “pelucones,” which is the name derogatorily used in reference to Guayaquil’s wealthiest residents, especially those from Samborondón. The children became curious about Samborondón and wanted to know what it was like in my apartment: if I had air conditioning, if I knew how to cook, what kind of television I had. Just as, through them, I was accessing a new part of the city, through me, they were doing the same. We were mutually curious about each other’s lives.

When the Fundación officially closed in January 2014, I continued meeting with the children and their families. On some occasions, they asked me to call the schools on their behalf to help pressure their children to be good students and to demonstrate good behavior. I told them not to say that I was from Fundación Crecer, since it no longer existed. “¿Entonces?” [Then what?] Marcia asked. I told her and the other mothers to explain that I was a former coordinator who still worked with their kids through interviews and workshops. Norma said that she always said the same thing whenever we were going to meet and she had to leave work or an event early: “Yo les digo: hay una extranjera de otro país y ahora me tengo que ver con ella” [I tell them: there’s a foreigner from another country and now I have to go meet with her]. Aracely agreed and said that just that morning she was at a meeting with her church and, “Yo les digo: hay una señorita extranjera y tengo cita con ella” [I tell them: there’s a young foreign lady and I have a meeting with her]. I laughed, especially at the “foreigner from another country,” and realized they had their own strategic ways and rationales for explaining who I was to different people.



Just as my relationships with them granted me access to their neighborhoods and homes, their relationships with me also granted them access to new spaces and exposed them to new experiences. Fundación Crecer had a central location next to the bus terminal and Guayaquil's International Airport, and when I started working at the non-profit, the children and I would take trips to this airport after school. These were truly eye-opening experiences for them. They loved accompanying me there, and they would ask me to pretend we were going on a trip so that I would tell them the steps we would take before boarding. This was an opportunity to think of the world outside of their neighborhood and city, and an opportunity to imagine traveling and getting to know other people, other cultures, and other worlds. Space and access to new city spaces are powerful and important, especially as these children's social positions within the city landscape are often controversial and painful because of the racism and classism that exist in Guayaquil *vis-à-vis* Afro-descendants and the poor.

Emperatriz approached me after the final Fundación Crecer Christmas show, and asked if she could join us at the airport that afternoon. As we walked over and approached the entrance, she gripped my hand much tighter, and I could feel that she was trembling. Her daughters looked up at her, nervously, unsure of how to react when she began to cry. She told us that as a child, she and her mother would ask for charity near the bus terminal, and she would always stare at the airport and wonder what it was like inside and what it was like to fly. She said her mother never allowed her to go near the airport and told her that those spaces were not intended for them. On this day, by walking inside the airport, she told us, one of her dreams was coming true. We walked around for about an hour, and she beamed, asking questions, and pointing out people who she said looked like movie stars. Other mothers joined us, too, asking what happens when the passengers go through the check-point and what a plane looks like on the inside.

I enjoyed being on the receiving end of their questions about airports and travel that afternoon, as they were often on the receiving end of mine, telling me about their neighborhoods, discussing crime bosses, running water and septic tanks, and the legalization of lands. Our collaborative relationships allowed us to depend on one another and to learn from one another, accessing each other's spaces and experiences. We inhabit very different spaces within the city, as the barrios and Samborondón represent extremes of poverty and wealth. But our journeys toward one another and alongside each other have influenced the ways we think about the city and our positions within it.

Certainly, the children and their mothers and grandmothers who engaged as critical thinkers and collaborators are the ones who motivated and inspired me to move forward with this project and to tell the stories I have chosen to share in the ways I have chosen to share them. That is, I have been very thoughtful and critical of the ways in which I present and analyze their experiences to preserve the sincerity of their stories and our interactions. Because they have been involved in the feedback process of dissertation writing, they have also partnered in this endeavor. While they trusted me with personal and, many times, painful stories and confessions, I believe part of that trust is to share their experiences in ways that help us understand their realities and the realities of poverty, racism, and exclusions in Guayaquil.

Experiences of the children and women overlap, but they are also diverse and conceived of differently by them, pushing against the essentialization that accompanies generics in ethnographic writing (Abu-Lughod's 1991; Leslie 2008). I am hesitant to trust ethnographies that have such well-defined "conclusions" about the lives of groups of people; I am, thus, more inclined to look toward ethnography as a means of creating "openings rather than absolute

truths” (Biehl 2013:575). Undoubtedly, the collaborative intervention of the children and families throughout the process has been essential in guiding me toward these openings.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Collaboration Beyond a Dissertation

While Hale (2006b) warns that attempts to create how-to manuals for ethnography tend to result in “applied anthropology” (108), I am not interested in the labels, but in the methods and methodologies that structure research projects. When ethnographies work toward decolonizing anthropology and demonstrate fieldwork that is reflexive, reflective, respectful, and responsible, I believe anthropologists can learn from such projects, regardless of whether they are called “activist,” “militant,” “applied,” or “engaged.” While my previous work in schools and in service learning has driven me to work toward action-oriented research, such “actions” should be defined in collaboration with the communities. Since the Fundación where I volunteered closed in January of 2014, I have continued working with the families and, in particular, the children. This work has been in both a research capacity and as an extension of the work I was doing at the Fundación, organizing fieldtrips and workshops. With the families, we hope to establish a *Centro* in which they will assume leading roles. Some of the mothers, for example, might facilitate and lead workshops for girls on teen pregnancy, parenting, and their experiences with domestic violence, among other topics. There are several teenagers who frequently (and successfully) help the younger children with their homework and organize games and activities for them. Hólger says that he wants to work at the *Centro* to have a source of income for college; he could lead a daycare component of the project. Workshops for the parents, which Fundación Crecer used to hold bimonthly, are essential. Many of the mothers

who had children in the Fundación have said that it saved their lives and that it was through this organization that they learned *how* to be parents.

Open and constant communication with the children and families is essential for the *Centro* to remain relevant, useful, and important to its community members. In my conversations with families, their first priority is for their children to have a space for homework assistance, emotional support, recreation, and for food. At the same time, the families emphasize their desire for parent workshops. Others have expressed interest in career services, which would help them attain a job and offer them guidance to ensure that they receive the benefits and salaries as stipulated by the law. In my visits to their homes, they often tell me of the ways in which their house has changed over the years – going from wooden homes of *caña* to cement; covering dirt floors with tile; replacing an outside bathroom with an indoor one; and they tell me of their plans for moving forward. There has been a great deal of enthusiasm from mothers for the *Centro* to also be a place that could support these home renovation projects in some way.

An alumni network would be especially important, and the alumni and older children in the project could lead the Christmas programming and fundraising initiatives; they could return to the *Centro* to mentor and motivate younger students. In turn, this role as alumni would motivate them to move forward and to succeed personally and professionally.

I continue working with the children and their families, and I am committed to the relationships we have formed. I intend to honor this commitment beyond weekly fieldtrips, beyond focus groups and interviews, and beyond publications. Indeed, Fals-Borda reminds us of the importance of devolution in his Participatory Action Research paradigm: “the devolution of knowledge and techniques cannot be reduced to publishing books or booklets, but must adopt

many other forms, including diverse communicational forms and other communal projects and activities” (Fals-Borda 1986:114 cited in Mato 2000:496).

Appendix 2. Sarita's Book with translation

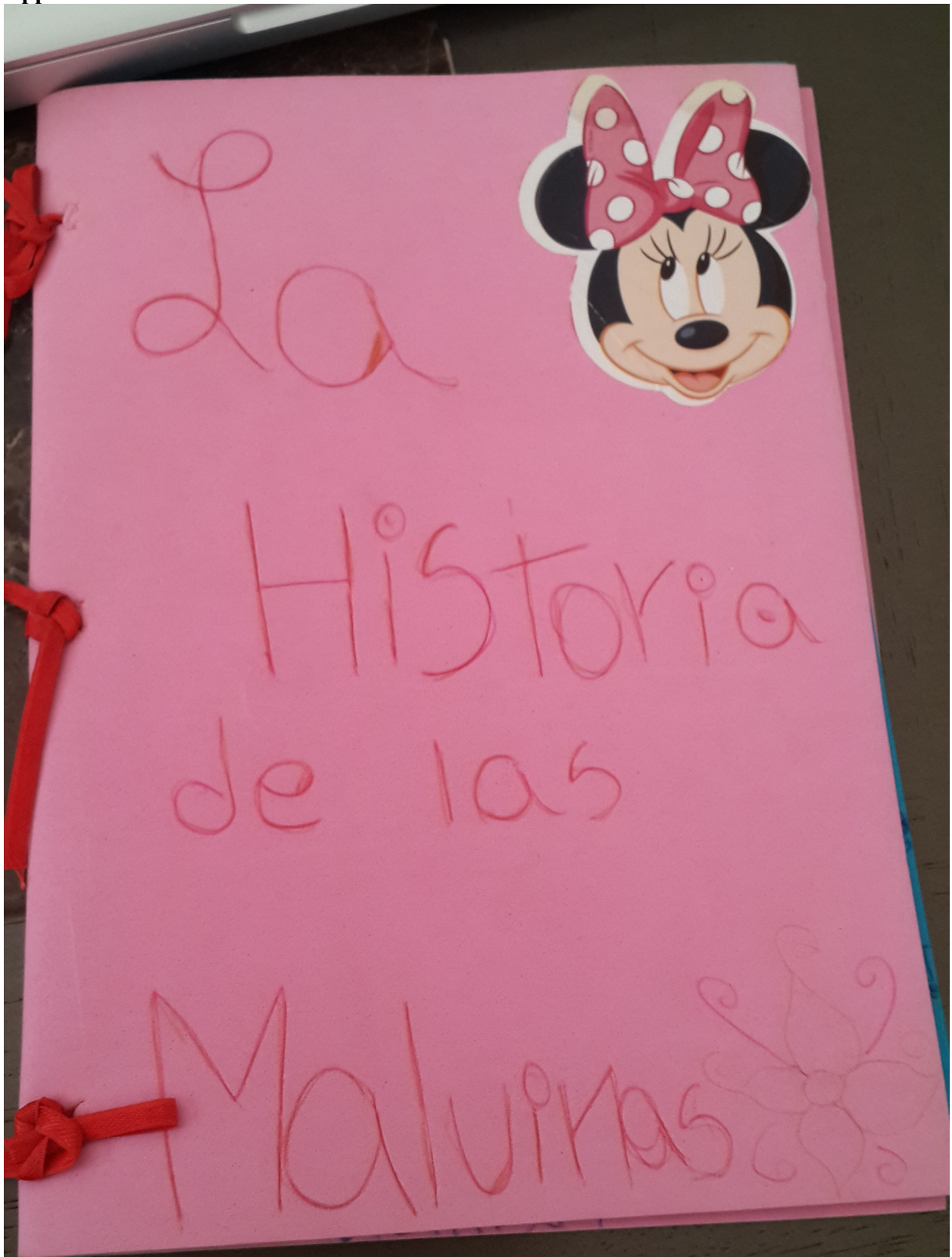


Figure 40 Cover of Sarita's Book

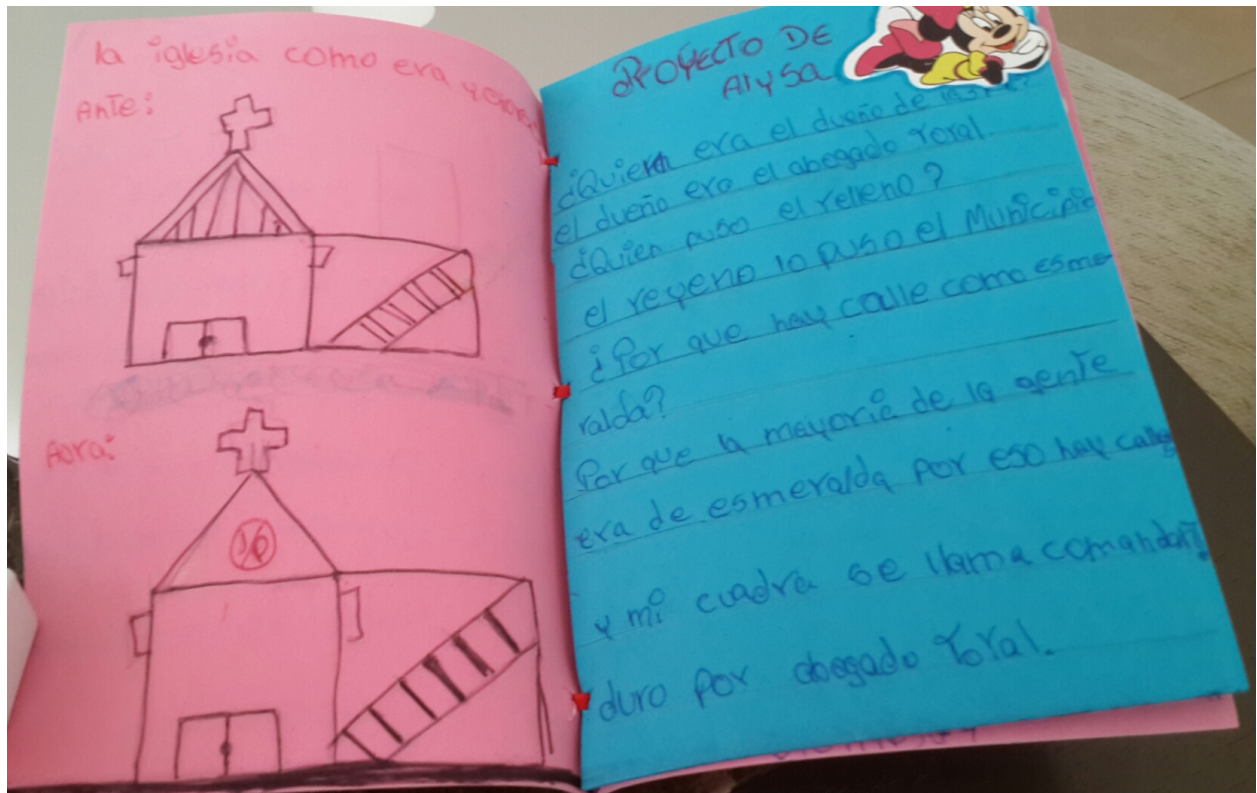


Figure 41 The first part of Sarita's Book

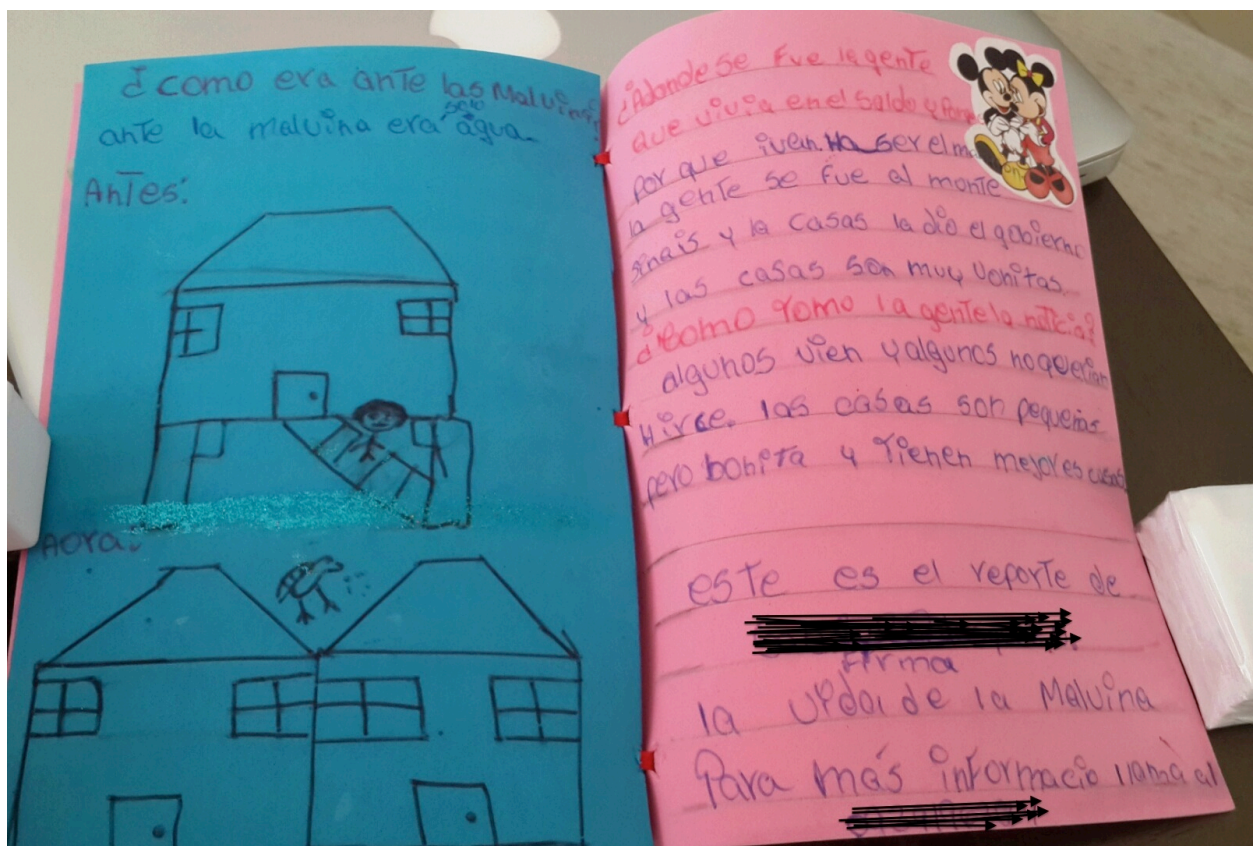


Figure 42 The last part of Sarita's Book



In Sarita's history of the Malvinas neighborhood, she began by drawing a before and after picture of one of the neighborhood churches where we interviewed a priest and a nun who had lived there for decades. Because she was working as my research assistant – taking notes and recording – she titled the first page “Alysa's Project.” She wrote that Toral was the owner of the Malvinas and that the Municipality paved their roads. She wrote that there were streets with the name “Esmeraldas,” because a majority of the people there were from Esmeraldas. She gave the name of her own block, too. On the final pages, she drew a before and after picture of the homes; she included a ladder in the “before” picture to emphasize that the houses used to be propped up on sticks. She added blue glitter beneath the ladder to demonstrate that these houses were also built above water. In 2013 when we worked on the neighborhood history of the Malvinas, many of the neighbors had lost their homes because of the boardwalk project. Sarita wrote that the people who lived along the waterfront moved to the Monte Sinaí neighborhood to very pretty homes the government provided. She concluded that some of her neighbors who were forced to move took the news well, while others did not want to leave; the new houses, she described, were small, but pretty and better than the ones in the Malvinas. She concluded by explaining this was her report, providing her signature, stating it was about life in las Malvinas, and providing a cell phone number in case more information was requested.

### **Appendix 3: Neighborhood Interview Questions with Children's Notes and Illustrations**

The following pages include the questions the children asked when they interviewed their neighbors. I have included some of the children's drawings of their neighbors' homes, some of the children's notes during the interviews, and some of the questions Tito wrote and asked in addition to the ones we came up with together.

#### ***Interview Questions***

La persona quién está contestando sus preguntas es \_\_\_\_\_ (hombre/mujer) y tiene \_\_\_\_\_ años. ¿Usted es casado, unido, divorciado, separado?

#### **Parte 1: Preguntas sobre su casa y su barrio →**

- 1) ¿En qué barrio y bloque está ubicada la casa?
- 2) ¿Cuántos años tiene viviendo en esta casa?
- 3) ¿Cómo era el barrio cuándo usted se mudó aquí y en qué formas ha cambiado en el transcurso de los años?
- 4) ¿Es casa propia o es alquilada? ¿A quién se la compró y cuánto le costó? (¿o a quién y por cuánto se la alquila?) ¿Usted se construyó su propia casa?  
  
¿Es de caña o de cemento o es una combinación de los 2? ¿Si es de cemento, hace cuánto tiempo la hizo de cemento?
- 5) ¿Cuántas personas viven en su casa? (Escriban quiénes son, sus edades, y en qué trabajan o dónde estudian)
- 6) En total, con los trabajos de todos los de su casa, ¿cuál es el **ingreso mensual** de su hogar? ¿Usted o alguien en su hogar recibe el bono?  
  
¿Con las lluvias, se le inunda su casa o su barrio? ¿Las calles por su casa están pavimentadas? ¿Hace cuánto tiempo las pavimentaron? Si no las han pavimentado, ¿el Municipio les ha dado alguna fecha para la cuál se debe realizar ese trabajo?
- 7) Pregunta sobre servicios básicos y cosas básicas sobre su casa:
  - En su casa ¿tienen agua potable? ¿Hace cuánto tiempo tienen agua potable? ¿A veces se le corta el agua – cuántas veces por semana?
  - ¿Siempre han pagado por su electricidad?
  - ¿Llegan a recoger la basura por su casa? ¿Dónde botan la basura?

- ¿Cuántos baños tiene en su casa? ¿Están ubicados adentro o afuera? Si están adentro, hace cuánto tiempo han tenido el baño adentro de la casa?
- ¿Cuántos dormitorios y cuántas camas tiene en su casa?
- ¿Cuántas personas duermen en los cuartos y en las camas?
- ¿Tiene.....
  - ...televisor? (¿cuántos?)
  - ...nevera? (¿cuántas?)
  - ...cocina? (¿cuántas?)
  - ...lavadora / secadora? (¿cuántas?)
- ¿Le debe dinero a alguna empresa o distribuidora por algún electrodoméstico? ¿Cuánto?
- Si necesita un préstamo para algún gasto o para alguna emergencia, ¿a quién se lo pediría?

8) Más o menos, ¿cuánto dinero gastan cada mes en su casa en las siguientes cosas? →

- a) Comida: \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Transporte: \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Electricidad: \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Agua: \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Teléfono (convencional y/o celular): \_\_\_\_\_
- f) cable / internet / cyber: \_\_\_\_\_
- e) ¿Qué otros gastos suele tener cada mes?

9) Normalmente, ¿qué desayunan en su casa?

\_\_\_\_\_

¿Qué almuerzan?

\_\_\_\_\_

¿Qué meriendan?

10) ¿Algunas veces les falta dinero para comer? Si no tienen qué comer, ¿a quién le piden ayuda?

11) ¿Alguna vez se le ha metido un ladrón a su casa? ¿Qué le robaron?

¿Si usted ve que alguien le está robando a su vecino, hace bulla o se queda callado? ¿Por qué?

12) ¿Le gusta el barrio y el bloque dónde vive? ¿Cómo se lleva con sus vecinos? Algunas personas dicen que su barrio es como una familia – ¿así es por su casa también? ¿Diga lo que más le gusta y lo que menos le gusta de su barrio? ¿Usted piensa que su barrio es un buen lugar para tener a su familia y para criar a sus hijos? ¿Por qué?

13) ¿Por qué candidato votó para la alcaldía en las elecciones de febrero?

Si pudiera hablar directamente con el Alcalde por 10 minutos, diga 3 cosas que le pediría:

14) ¿Usted se considera Correista? ¿Cuáles son las cosas que más le ha gusta que ha hecho Correa desde el 2007?

### **Parte 2: Preguntas demográficas →**

1) ¿Dónde nació usted y en qué lugares ha vivido antes de mudarse a esta casa?

\_\_\_\_\_

2) ¿De dónde son sus padres? \_\_\_\_\_ / ¿Sus abuelos?

\_\_\_\_\_

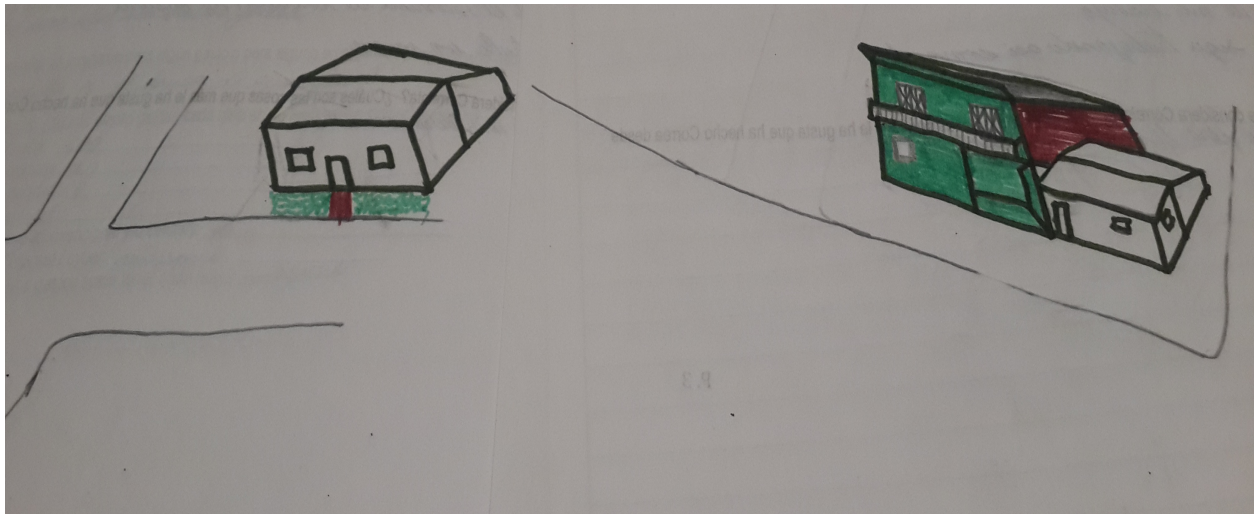
3) ¿De qué raza se considera usted? -- ¿Por qué?

4) ¿Usted en que trabaja? ¿Cuánto tiempo tiene en ese trabajo? ¿Le gusta su trabajo? ¿Le dan de comer en su trabajo? ¿Le regalan cosas en su trabajo? ¿Qué cosas le regalan?

5) ¿Cuáles son las primeras 3 cosas que haría con su dinero si se fuera a ganar la lotería?

*\*\*\*Al Encuestador: dibuje una foto de la casa y/o descríbala en sus propias palabras (¿Cómo están distribuidos los cuartos y los espacios de la casa? ¿Cómo es la calle, el barrio?). Incluya también cualquier apunte adicional sobre su conversación con esta familia. Y pueden incluir sus propias preguntas también. Adjunte páginas adicionales de su cuaderno para incluir más detalles que no le entraron en este espacio.*

### ***Children's Drawings of the Homes where they Conducted Interviews***



**Figure 43** Houses in Las Malvinas

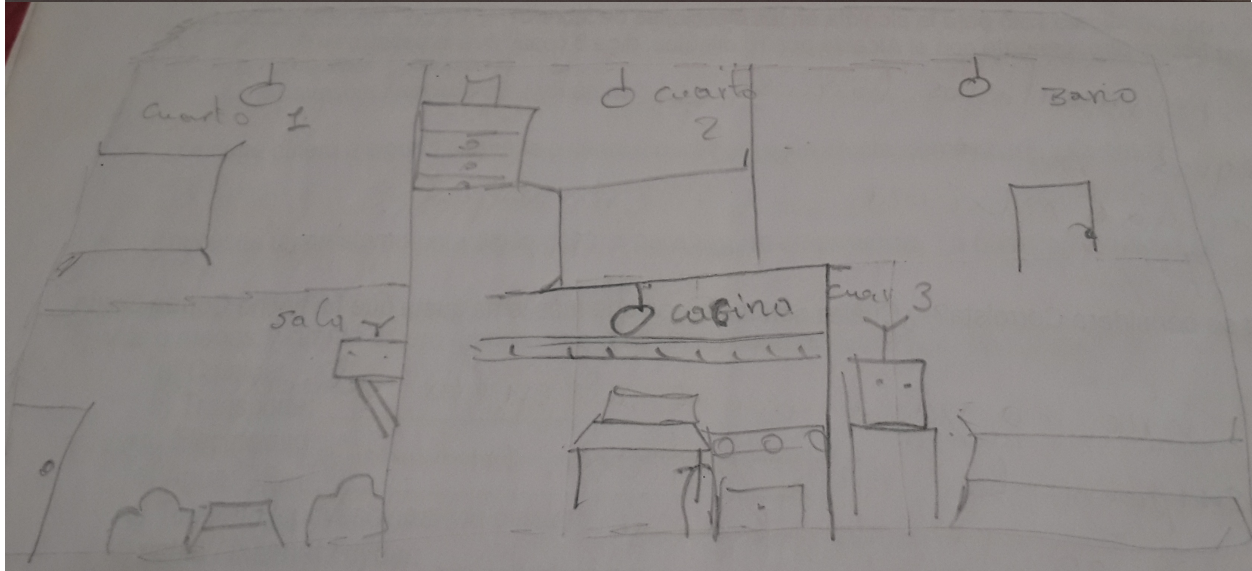
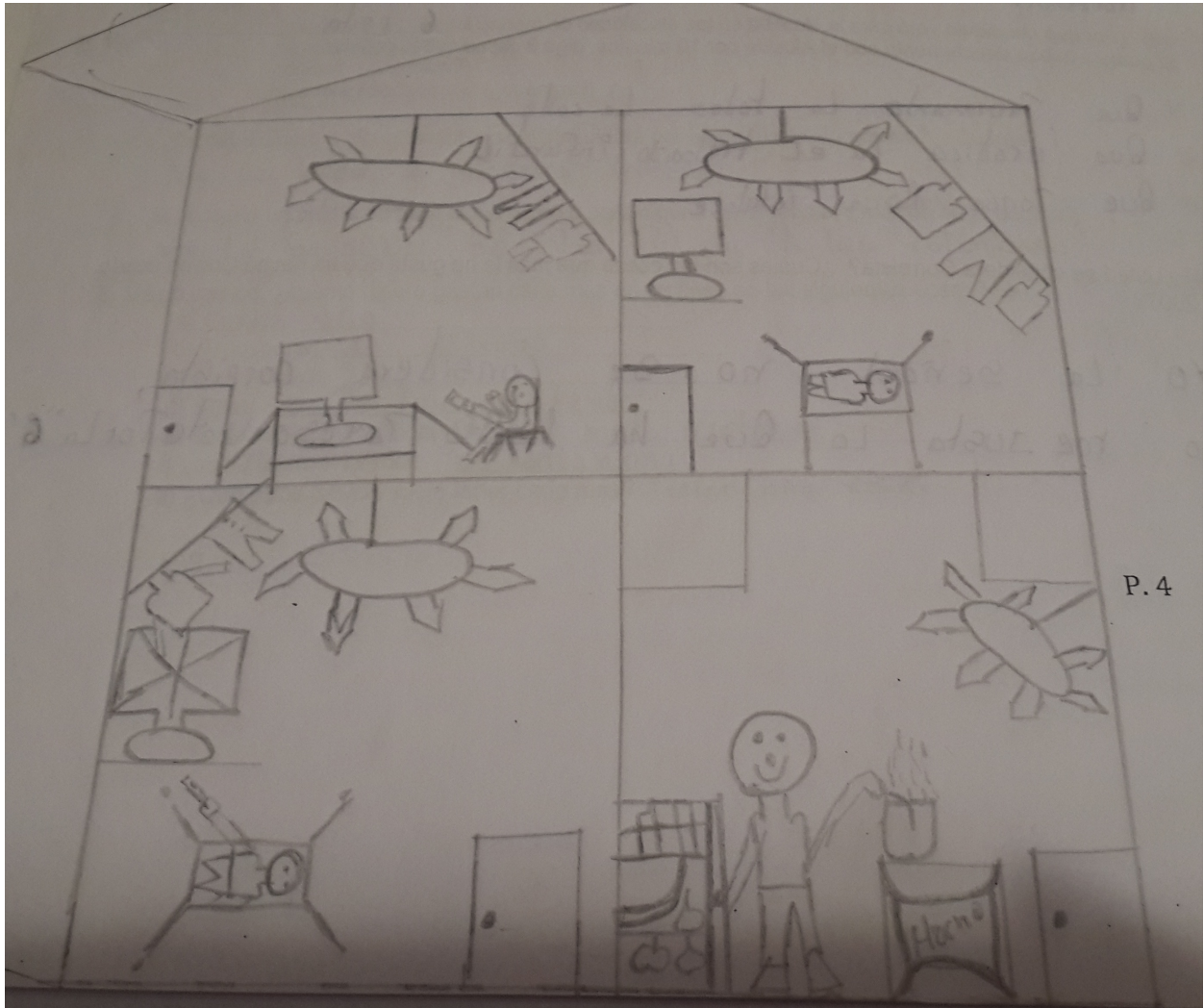


Figure 44 The inside of neighbors' homes



**Figure 45** The house with the CNT meter

Certainly, the children have different styles as they draw pictures of the homes where they conducted interviews. While some were more descriptive of the outside of the homes, the streets, and the surrounding areas, others focused on the inside of the house and the distribution of rooms and material objects. The picture (above) notates “CNT,” which is the name of the national electric company, demonstrating that the family pays for electricity, which is not something all families in the neighborhood do. The following picture showcases the clothing hanging from the ceiling and includes a written caption, explaining that this person has few possessions because he was recently robbed.

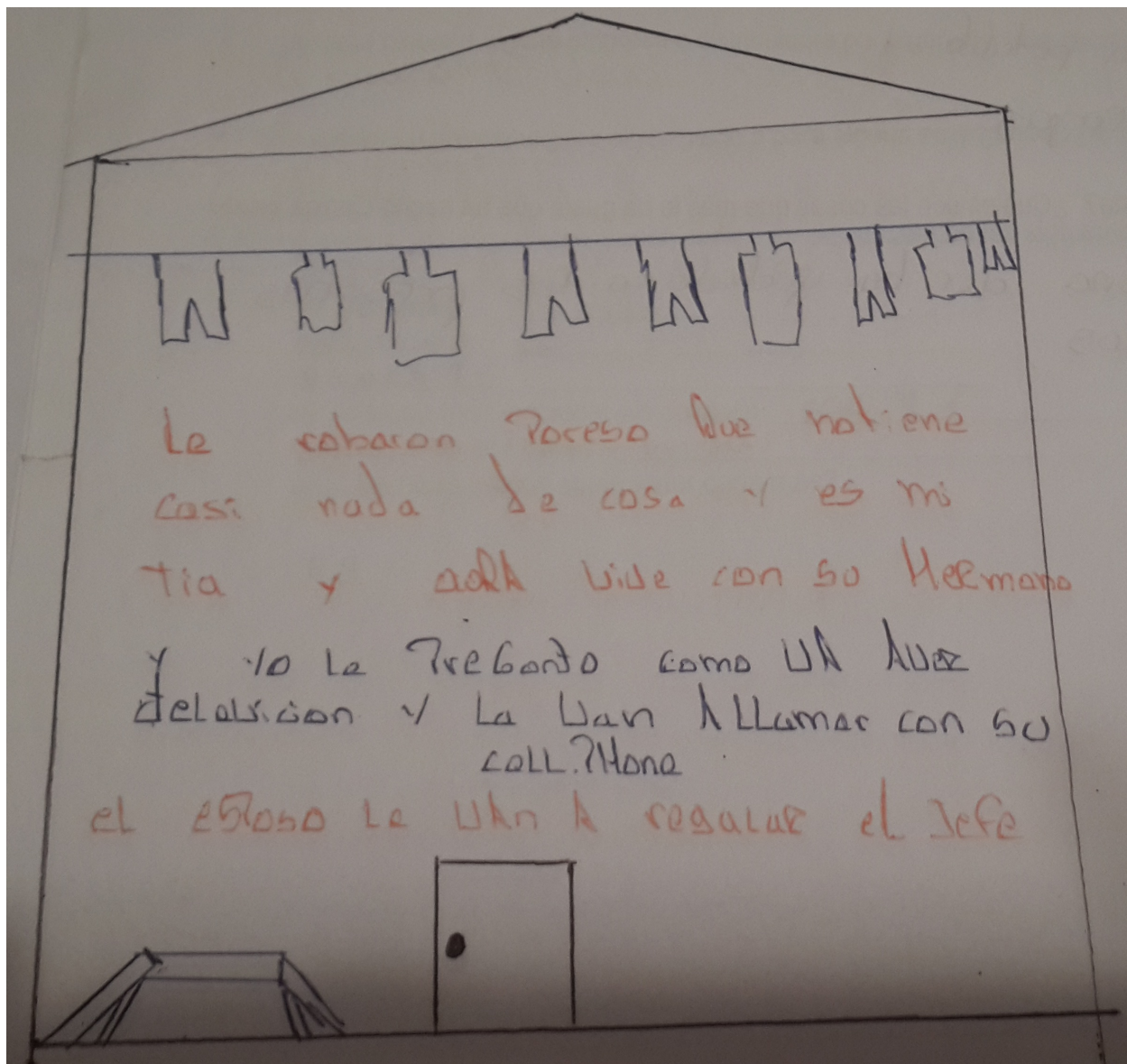


Figure 46 The House that was robbed

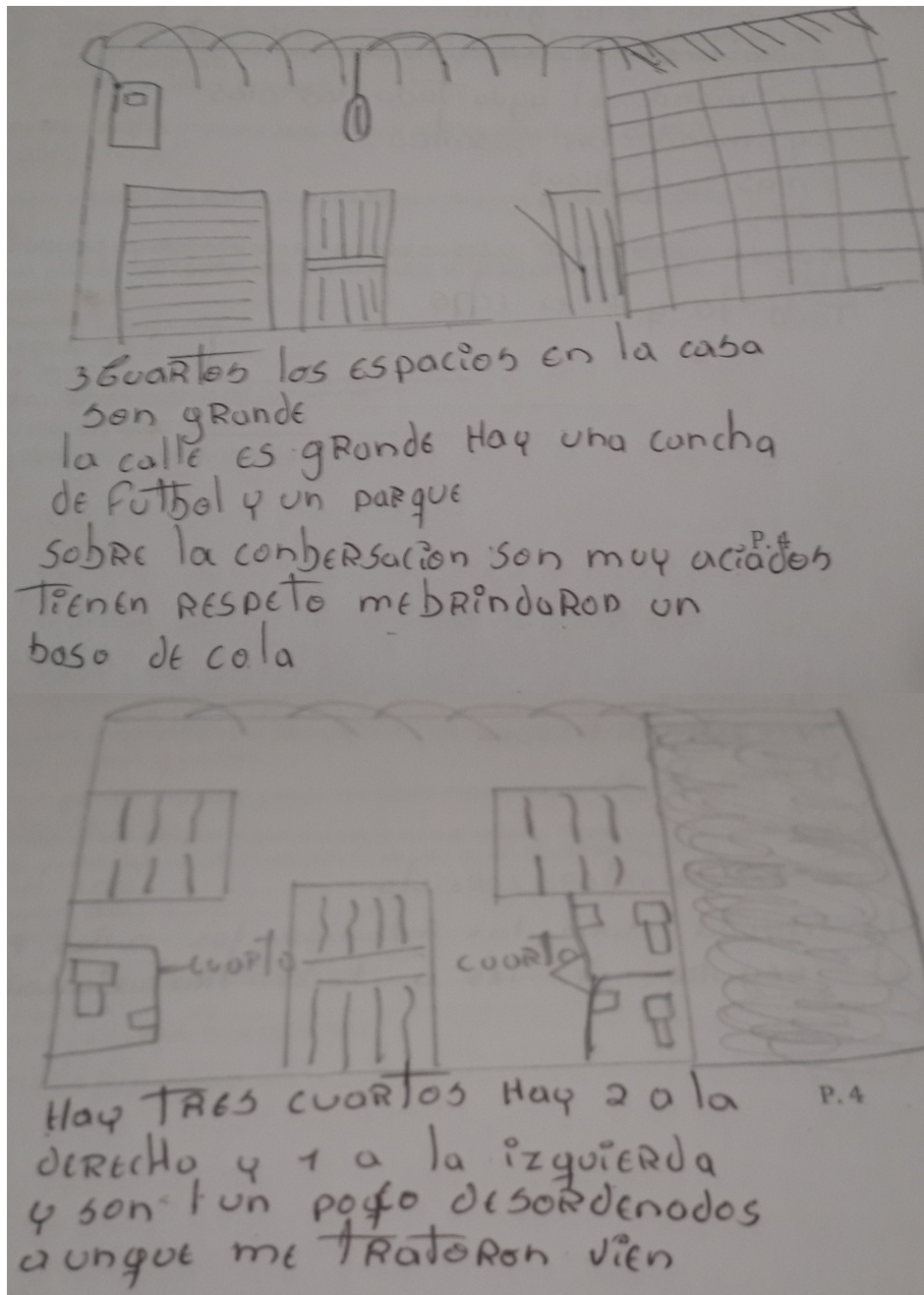


Figure 47 Kain's Drawings

In Kain's drawings, he adds written descriptions to further illustrate these homes. In the first one, for example, he states that there are three rooms and that the house is spacious; the road the house is located on is big and there is a soccer field and a park nearby. He adds that the people were very clean and respectful and that they gave him a glass of coca-cola. In the description of the next house, he states that there are three rooms, two to the right and one to the left and that



the people are a bit unorganized, but they treated him well. In each of these, Kaín personalized the drawings by including something about his personal interaction with the family.

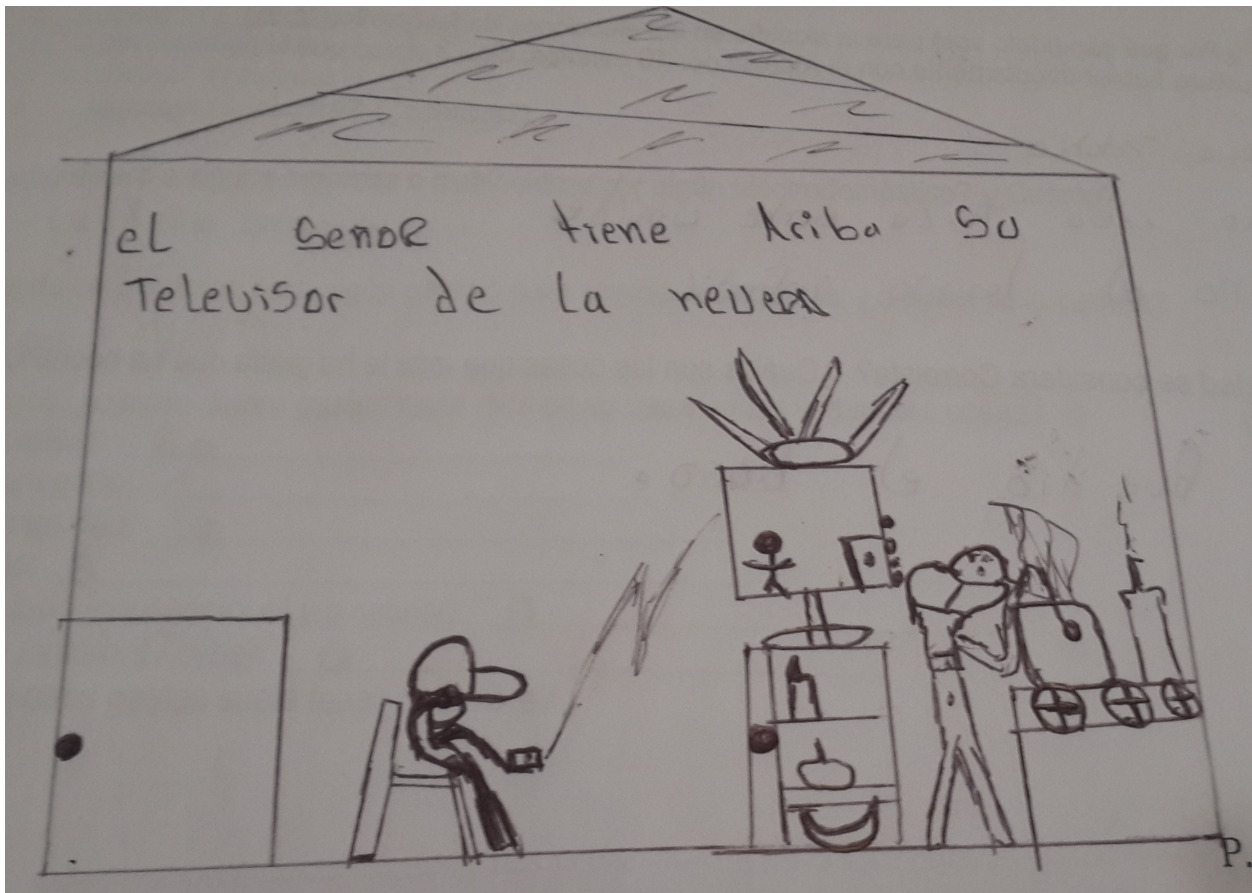


Figure 48 "The man has a television on top of his fridge."

### Children's Interview Notes and Additional Questions

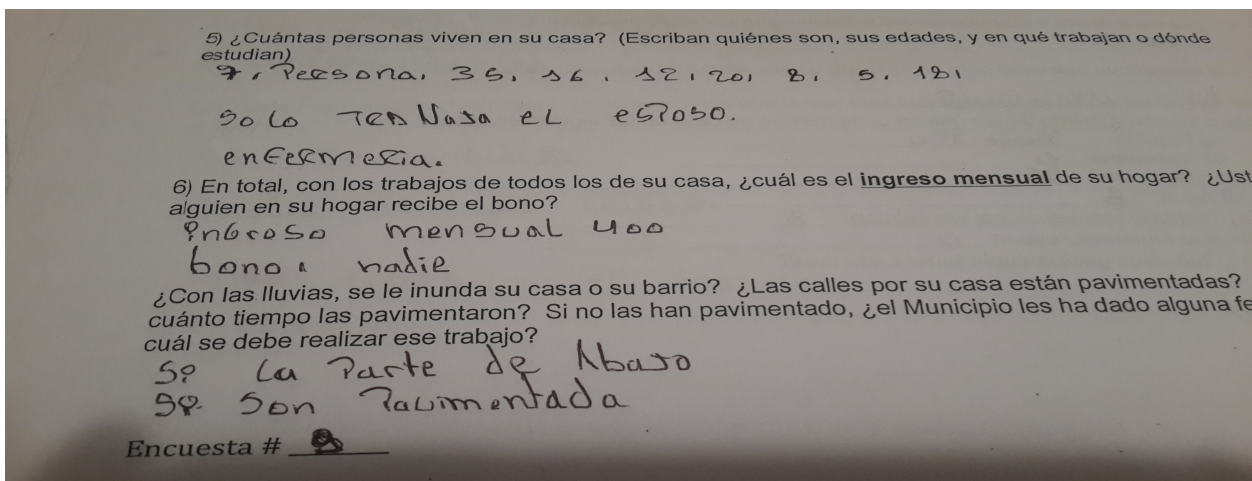


Figure 49 Interview Sheet: Only the husband works, \$400 monthly income, the lower part of the house floods in Winter

5) ¿Cuántas personas viven en su casa? (Escriban quiénes son, sus edades, y en qué trabajan o dónde estudian)

6 personas

[Redacted]	= Recaudadora	= 40 años
[Redacted]	=	= 24 años
[Redacted]	=	= 19 años
[Redacted]	= estudiante	= 18 años
[Redacted]	= estudiante	= 16 años

6) En total, con los trabajos de todos los de su casa, ¿cuál es el ingreso mensual de su hogar? ¿Usted o alguien en su hogar recibe el bono?

el ingreso no es fijo.  
Nadie cobra el Bono.

¿Con las lluvias, se le inunda su casa o su barrio? ¿Las calles por su casa están pavimentadas? ¿Hace cuánto tiempo las pavimentaron? Si no las han pavimentado, ¿el Municipio les ha dado alguna fecha para la cuál se debe realizar ese trabajo?

se nos inunda la casa o techo está en mal estado. las calles no están pavimentadas que yo sepa no.

P.1

Figure 50 Interview Sheet: 6 people live in the home, no one receives the monthly bonus, house floods

4) ¿Usted en qué trabaja? ¿Cuánto tiempo tiene en ese trabajo? ¿Le gusta su trabajo? ¿Le dan de comer en su trabajo? ¿Le regalan cosas en su trabajo? ¿Qué cosas le regalan? ¿Le dan de comer?

SEVIDOR PEU CO / 6 años, SI MUCHO, COM MIPU  
ADME REGALAN NADA

5) ¿Cuáles son las primeras 3 cosas que haría con su dinero si se fuera a ganar la lotería?

a. ME COMPRARÍA UN CARRO  
b. REMODELAR MI CASA  
c. Y MANTENER MUY BIEN HA MI FAMILIA

parte 2: Preguntas demográficas →

1) ¿Dónde nació usted y en qué lugares ha vivido antes de mudarse a esta casa? Dorba

2) ¿De dónde son sus padres? Esmeraldas / ¿Sus abuelos? Quito

3) ¿De qué raza se considera usted? - ¿Por qué? Afro ecuatoriana

4) ¿Usted en qué trabaja? ¿Cuánto tiempo tiene en ese trabajo? ¿Le gusta su trabajo? ¿Le dan de comer en su trabajo? ¿Le regalan cosas en su trabajo? ¿Qué cosas le regalan?

en una casa, 4 años, Si, Si le dan de comer, Si, ropa

5) ¿Cuáles son las primeras 3 cosas que haría con su dinero si se fuera a ganar la lotería?

a. ACE UNA CASA  
b. CONSTRUYA UN COMEDOR  
c. Y UN JUEGO DE MOBLE

Figure 51 Interview Sheet: Parents from Esmeraldas, identifies as Afro-Ecuadorian; upon winning the lottery: would build a house, buy a dining table, buy living room furniture

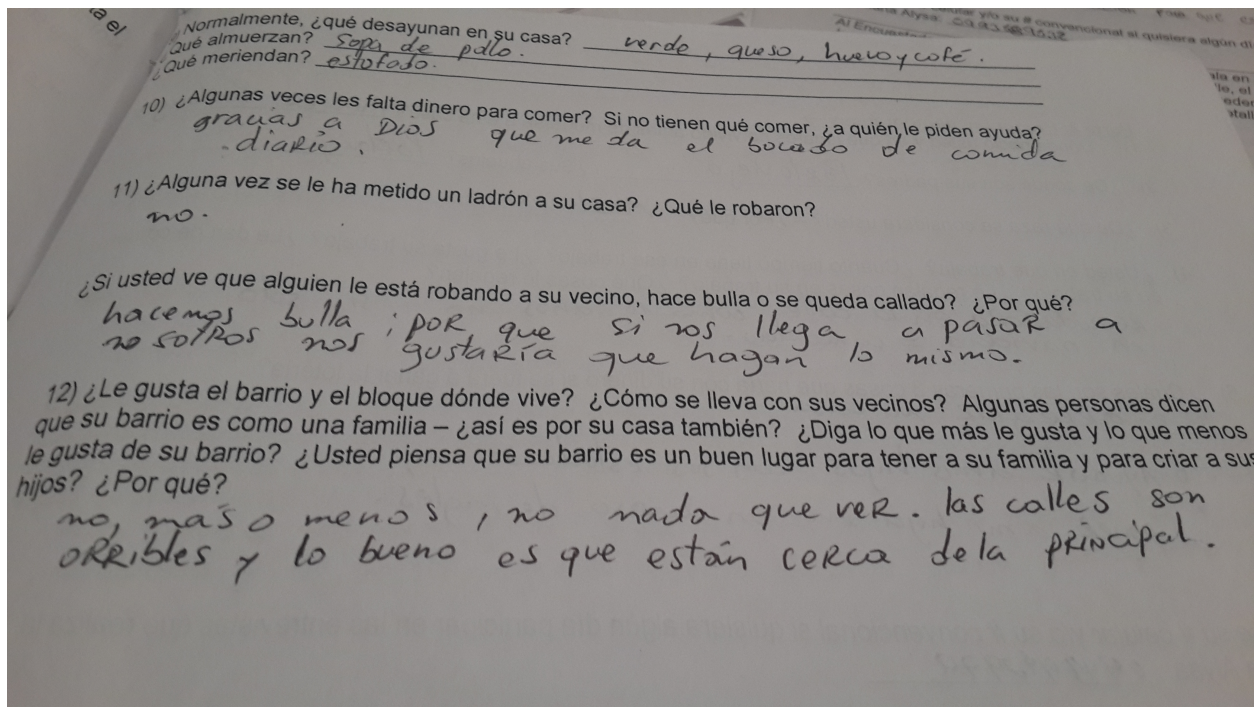


Figure 52 Interview Sheet: "The roads are terrible."

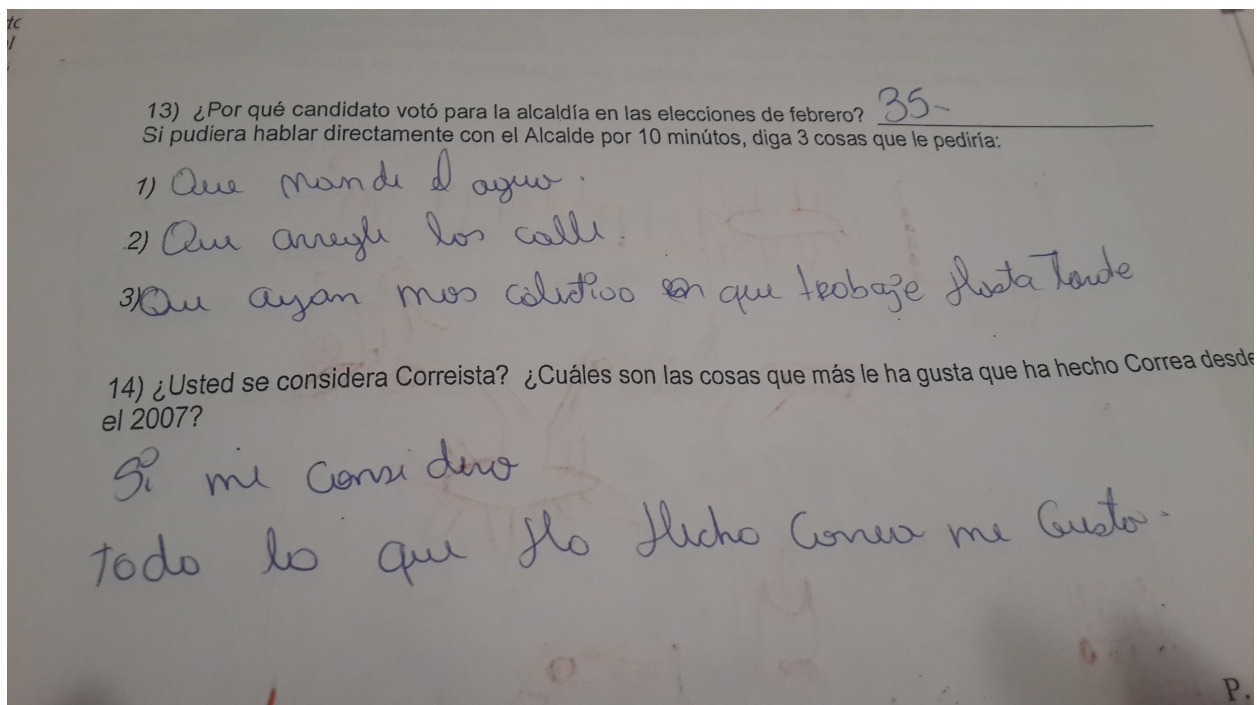


Figure 53 Interview Sheet: "I would tell the mayor to bring water to our sector, pave the roads, and to have more buses that run late into the evening."

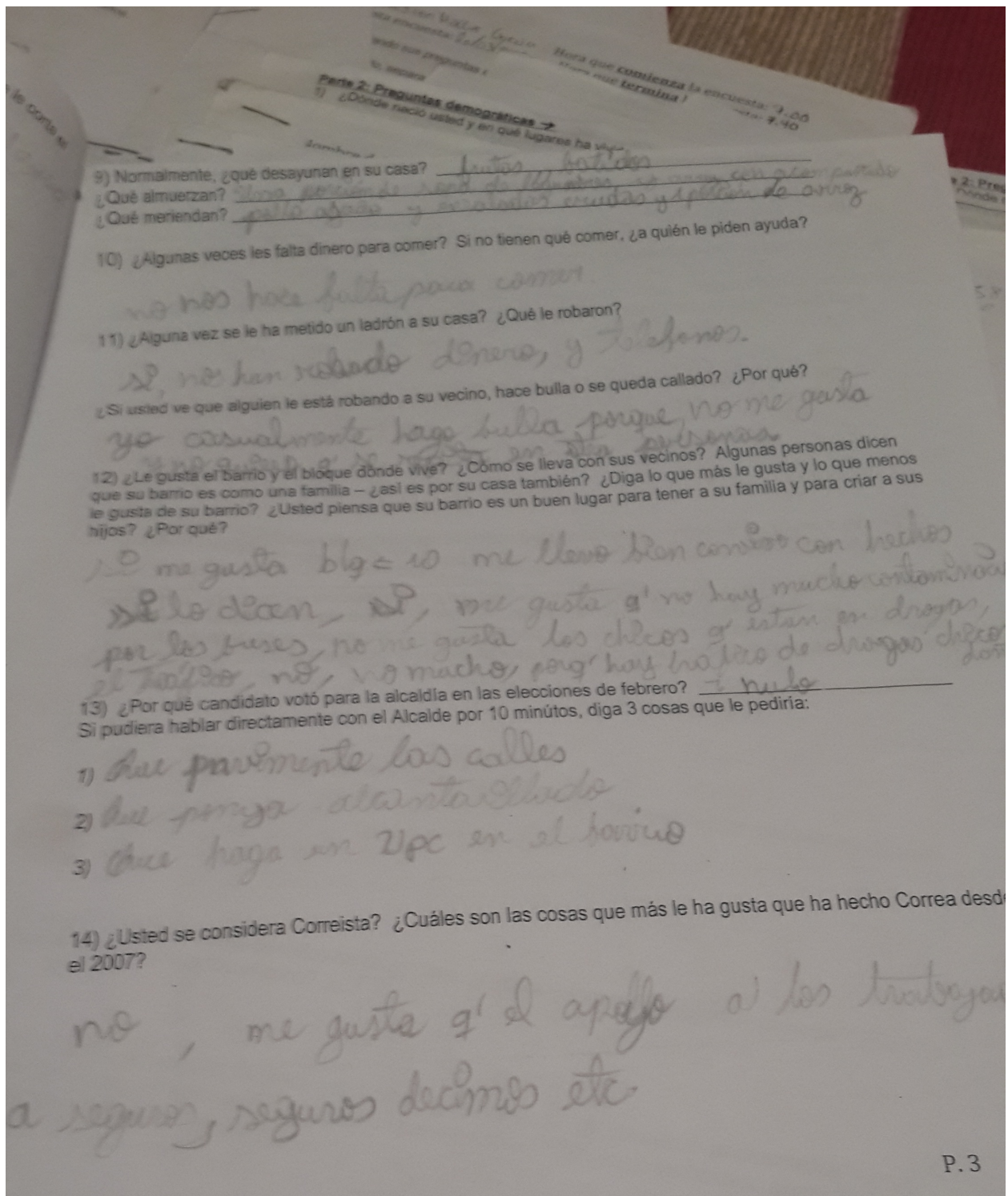


Figure 54 Interview Sheet: "I like that the president supports workers."

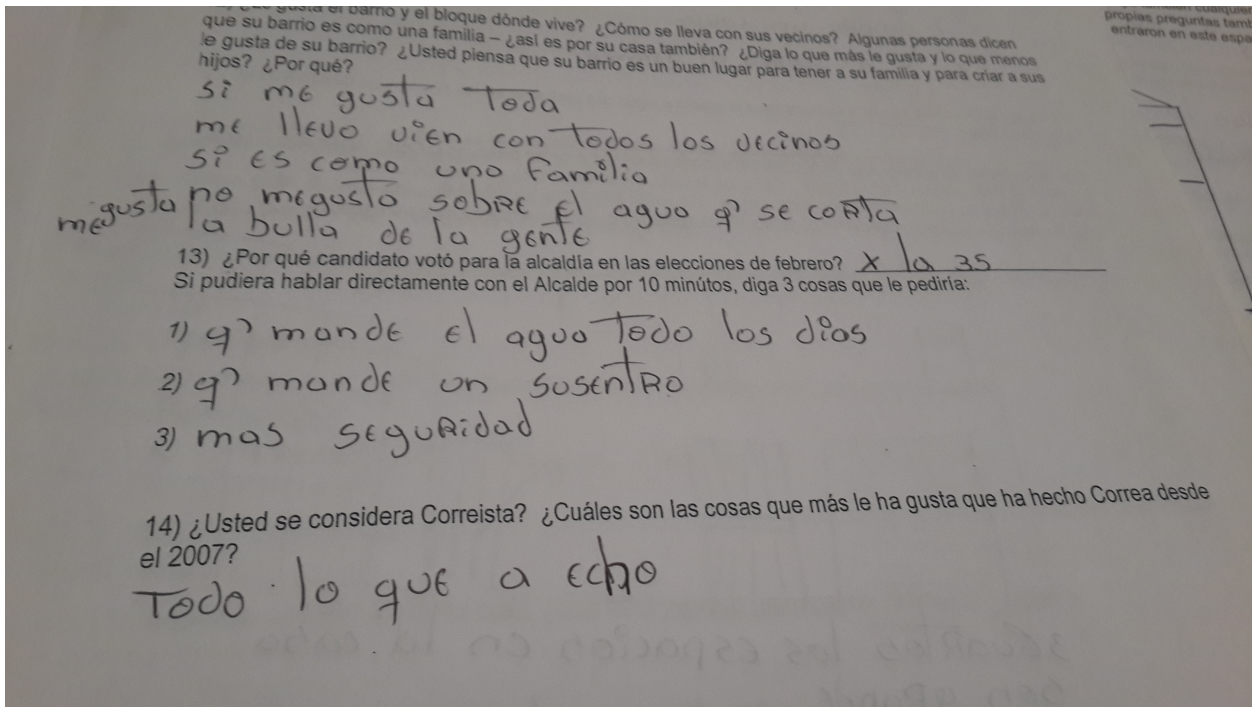


Figure 55 Interview Sheet: "I would tell the mayor to bring a health clinic to our neighborhood."

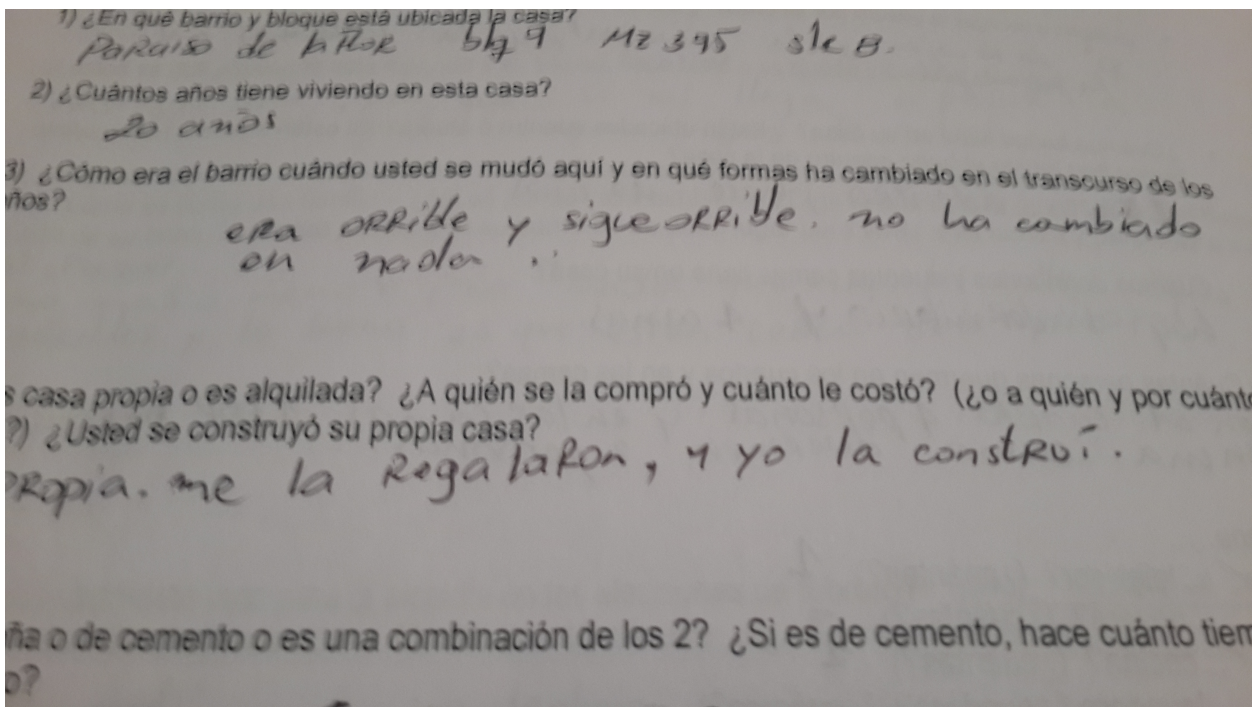


Figure 56 Interview Sheet: "When I moved here the neighborhood was awful and it's still awful; it hasn't changed at all."

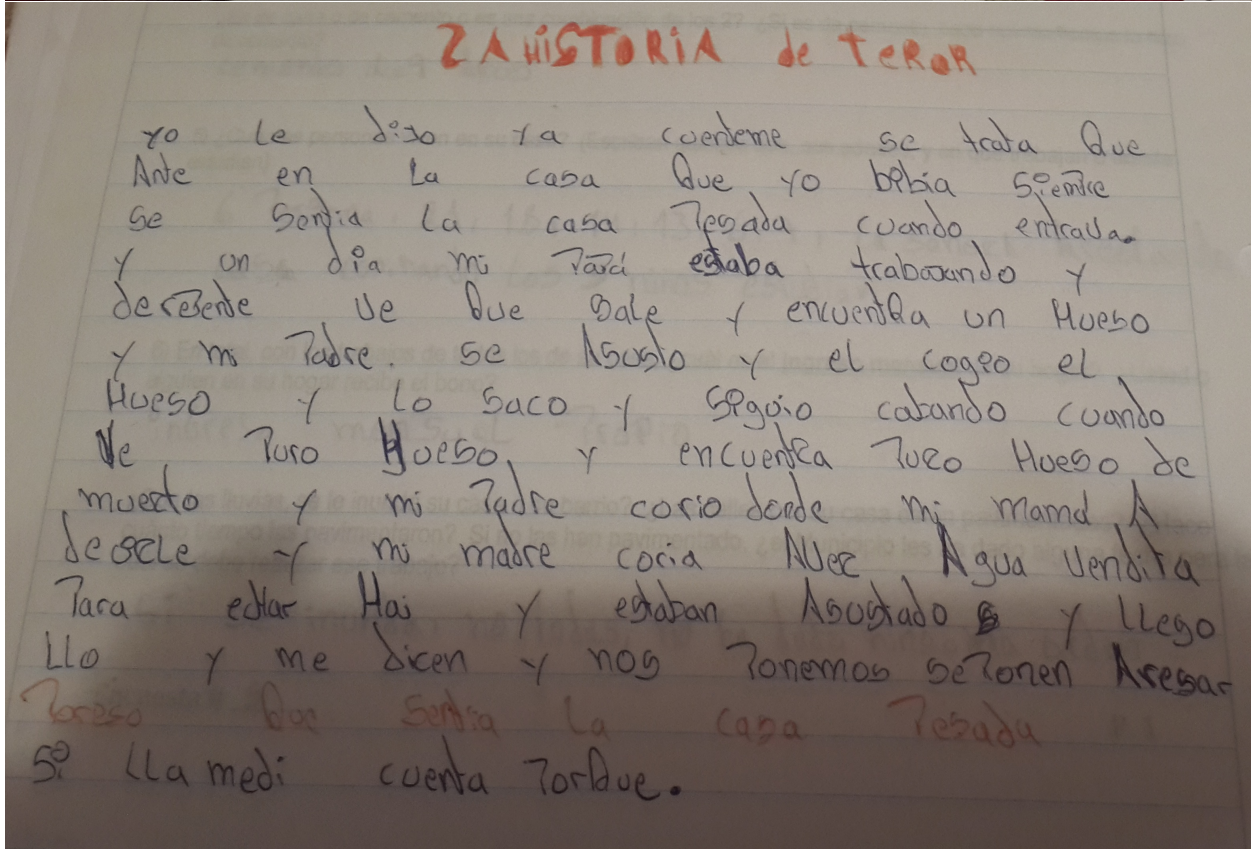
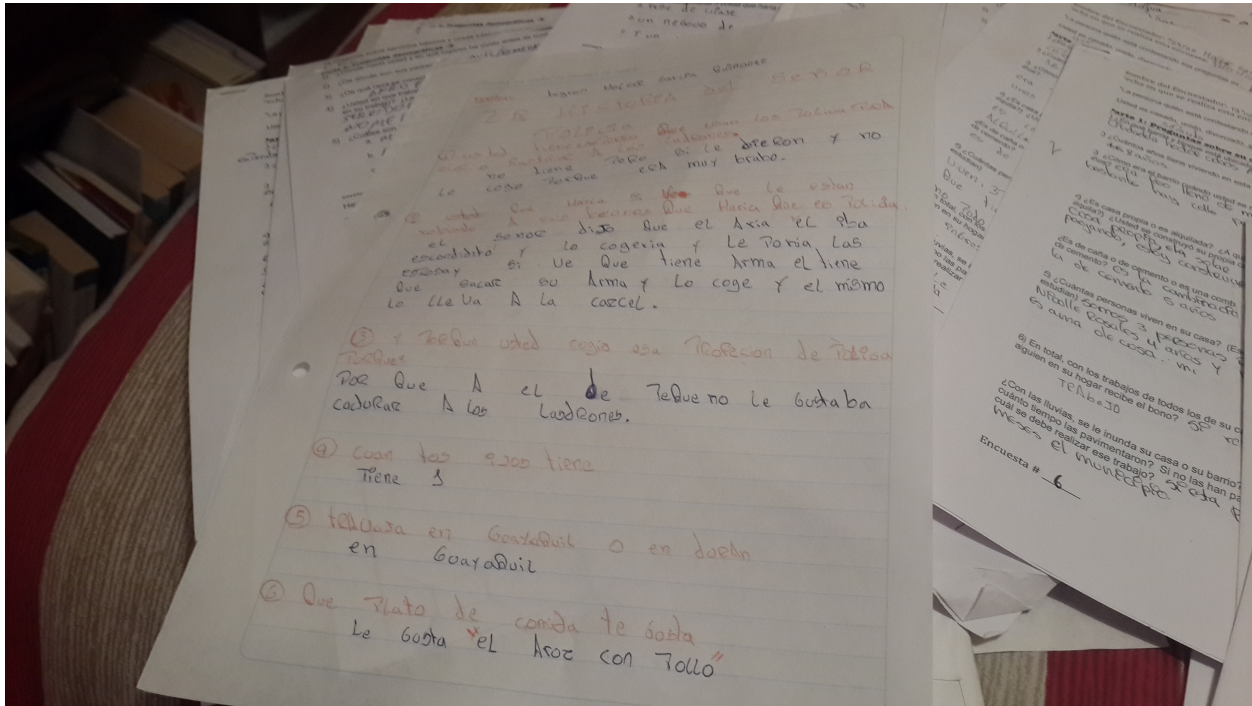


Figure 57 Tito's Additional Questions and "Horror Story"

Tito interviewed a police officer and asked him specific questions about his profession, including why he chose it and what he liked about it. He also asked him his favorite food. When I began

interviewing the children, we discussed more basic topics, including their favorite foods. I liked that Tito employed strategies he had seen me use and that we discussed in our workshops – that is, asking basic questions to make the person feel more comfortable. Above, Tito also included “La Historio de Terror” [“The Horror Story”]. Here, he explained that when he walked into one of the homes, he felt the house was “pesada” [heavy]. When he asked the woman about it, she told him a story about human bones they had found in the house.

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