

Public Childhoods:

Street Labor, Family, and the Politics of Progress in Peru

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the experiences of children who work the streets of Lima primarily as jugglers, musicians, and candy vendors. I explore how children's everyday lives are marked not only by the hardships typically associated with poverty, but also by their need to respond to the dominant notions of childhood, family roles, and urban order that make them into symbols of underdevelopment. In particular, I argue that transnational discourses about the perniciousness of child labor, articulated through development agencies, NGOs, the Peruvian state, the media, and everyday interpersonal exchanges, perpetuate an idea of childhood that not only fails to correspond to the realities of the children that I came to know, but that reinscribes a view of them and their families as impediments to progress and thus available for diverse forms of moral intervention. I ground my analysis in a notion that I call "public childhoods." This concept draws attention to the ways that subjectivities form through intersecting mechanisms of power, in this sense capturing nuances that common terms such as "street children" and "child laborer" gloss over. Children, I show, are a symbolic site for the articulation of the kinds of classed, raced and gendered differences that characterize Lima's contemporary urban imaginary. As they bear the embodied effects of such discourses, I argue, children who work the streets also participate – if in subtle and seemingly counterintuitive ways – in these everyday ideological struggles into which they are drawn.

My dissertation is based on twenty-two months of fieldwork in Peru, in addition to several one- and two-month periods of preliminary and follow-up research. As an ethnographer, my research consisted primarily of accompanying children as they went

about their daily routines. Beyond “hanging out” in their workspaces, which included a busy traffic intersection in an upper-middle class district and public buses, I also spent a great deal of time with the children’s families, typically in their homes in Lima’s shantytowns and working-class neighborhoods. I also attended meetings and otherwise participated in institutional spaces such as NGOs, social movements, Congressional hearings, and advocacy groups. Finally, in order to gain a more long-term perspective on discussions and policies involving childhood, I conducted research in Lima’s historical archives.

Dedication

Por y para mi familia. You know who you are.

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Introduction

I spent a good part of my fieldwork at a busy intersection in one of the more prosperous zones of Lima, Peru's grey capital city. This intersection in the La Molina district was where the children who became central to my dissertation juggled, sold candy, begged, and otherwise tried to make a living from the car drivers stopped at the traffic lights. As in much of the giant metropolis of almost ten million people, which backs up from the Pacific Coast into the dry foothills of the Andes, the traffic flow there was heavy. Yet unlike many other parts of the city, the traffic lights worked and the avenues were wide, with well-maintained grassy midways. The children who went to work at the intersection came from the nearby working class district or, more commonly, the surrounding shantytowns. In contrast to their neighborhoods, this corner's mix-and-mismatch, typical of Peru's neoliberal order and the cultural globalization of Latin American cities, included a Kentucky Fried Chicken, a Hyundai dealership, a Starbucks, and a Chilean pharmacy chain, along with the newspaper and snack kiosks of an older Lima.¹ In addition to buses, thousands of cars passed through daily on route to the Peruvian Wall Street a few miles down the avenue, the US embassy

¹ During what came to be known as the "Fujishock," Alberto Fujimori, president of Peru from 1990 to 2000, established authoritarian rule and inaugurated neoliberal reforms including mass privatizations, slashing the state's already meager social spending, and severing workers' rights. The subsequent macroeconomic growth exacerbated poverty, and the suspension of democratic institutions eliminated any semblance of civil society that had previously existed. However, his particular brand of populism, which hinged on giving hand-outs to the poor and using his ethnic identity to establishing his "sameness" with the non-white masses gained him favor among Peruvians, particularly in the aftermath of a bloody civil war and after the previous president, Alan García, had landed Peru its the worst economic crisis ever. Even after Fujimori fled the country after a corruption scandal, many Peruvians made him out as a victim of his right-hand-man and head of intelligence, Vladimiro Montesinos. In 2009, however, Fujimori was brought to justice and convicted of human rights abuses and corruption, for which he is currently in prison (Cotler & Grompone 2000; Degregori 2000; Conagham 2005; Murakami 2007; Burt 2010).

in the adjacent district, the various private universities nearby, the US-style mall several blocks away, and the surrounding residential neighborhoods.²

It was the cars, rather than the foot traffic typical of other parts of Lima, that drew the kids I came to know to the intersection. In Peru, having a car is itself the marker of a certain affluence. Most residents move around the city packed into overcrowded buses or vans rigged to carry passengers. The motorists that passed through the intersection often came from the gated suburbs that have emerged in Lima over the last few decades. Some drove modest Toyotas, others more upscale European imports and SUVs. Whether the middle-income family headed for the KFC or the flashy soccer star with reggaeton blaring from his souped up speakers, these Limans owned cars and therefore occupied a privileged category within Peru's notoriously stratified social hierarchy. They were the people who might have those spare coins or maybe even that jackpot \$100 bill about which Mateo, Bryan, Yocelyn and Alfredo fantasized.³

As car culture has become an integral part of planetary urban life (Thrift 2005; Featherstone, et. al. 2005; Paterson 2000; Lutz & Lutz 2010; Miller 2001; Verrips & Meyer 2001), many people take advantage of intersections to beg, perform, and beseech the drivers of the passing cars for a bit of money. Indeed – and as an index of how old assumptions about First World affluence and Third World poverty have been destabilized – it is common to find men and women asked for a bit of money at busy stoplights here in my adopted hometown of Durham, North Carolina. The kids at the intersection in La Molina belonged to Peru's vast poor majority. Most lived in straw and plywood houses; some traveled as far as an hour-and-a-half by bus and van to get there.

² Literary scholar Andreas Huyssen suggests that third world cities demonstrate how “globalization functions in horizontal clusters through and among which global, local, and regional dimensions are ricocheting with varying intensities and breadth” (2008:15).

³ I use pseudonyms to identify all of my research subjects.

Some kids sold candy and washed windshields, while others performed acrobatics, played Andean stringed instruments and flutes (sometimes simultaneously, in a bit of musical virtuosity!) and, most commonly, juggled oranges, old tennis balls, and handmade balls assembled by taping up dirt-filled balloons. The intersection was like dozens of other street corners where poor young Liman children went not to steal, sleep or sniff glue, but rather to *hacer hora* (“hang out,” or more literally “make time” or “pass the hour”), fill their stomachs, and try to make some money from the passing cars.

The traffic light had an indispensable role in the social drama of the intersection. In a city known for chaos and reckless driving, stop lights seem to symbolize the promise of order and rational traffic management. Paradoxically, however, this technology also provided an opportunity for hustling and other informal economic activities. As the lights turned red, vendors hawked their bubble gum and other wares from car to car, while the jugglers and others made the middle of the street into a stage where they performed their varied arts. Thirty seconds or so before the light was to turn green, the performers would follow the route of the car-to-car vendors and the blind beggars, hoping for some remuneration. Many drivers stared straight ahead and ignored the kids; others rolled down their windows to chat or sometimes moralize about the street’s unsuitability for children. A few handed over coins or the occasional crumpled bill. A good workday yielded twenty soles, or about six dollars, although the take-home pay seldom totaled more than four dollars once the kids paid their bus fare and bought lunch from the woman who came around with a handheld basket of cheap homemade meals.

The street corner, clearly, was an intersection of many sorts. Most obviously, it was a point of encounter between Lima’s haves and have-nots. While traveling on a city

bus and taking in the Lima that she had grown up yet been away from for many years, anthropologist Daniella Gandolfo reflected on a different street corner, not so far away:

several worlds converged—that of the (possibly) college-educated, balding guy driving a taxi in his aged Toyota, of a street vendor sitting on a stool dozing off with a blanket on his legs, of a young and good-looking businessman in a suit singing to an English rock tune in his Peugeot, of a recent immigrant from the highlands walking in between the cars, going window to window, asking for money with an infant child wrapped in a *lliclla* on her back – the kid, who peeked out from over the woman’s shoulder, had a glob of green, drying mucus stuck to his upper lip (Gandolfo 2009: 189).

If never in a simple way, race and class travel together in Peru. The kids at the intersection tended to be darker-skinned than the motorists, emblematic of the long history of migration to coastal Lima from the Andes and what has been called the *cholofication* of the capital with its brown, poor, street smart majority (Quijano 1980). Indeed, after many years of coding the topic in less explicit language, scholars and activists have recently reopened the critique of racism in Peru (Twanama 2008; Portocarrero 1993; Vich 2004, 2007; Bruce 2007; Matos Mar 1984). Meanwhile, a growing interdisciplinary literature on urban space has drawn attention to racialized and classed inequalities, the fortress mentality, exclusion, and second-class citizenship across the globe (Caldeira 2008; Davis 1992; Stilz 2010; Smith & Low 2006; Low 2003; Mitchell & Staeheli 2006; Staeheli & Thompson 1997; Bickford 2000; Gregory 1999).⁴ The Javier Prado street corner lays bare the dimensions of difference that characterize a country where millions struggle to survive from day to day, and yet also warns against oversimplifying the nature of division and social classification. The kids at the

⁴ I first encountered the use of the word “fortress” in Lima as a Fulbright Scholar in 2000, when I arrived at the U.S. Embassy for the safety briefing required of all employees of the U.S. Government, and was handed a pamphlet whose front cover described the embassy structure as “a fortress without apology.” As for second-class citizenship, in a 2008 dispute between Amazonian natives and the Peruvian government, with regard to the government’s plans to give land concessions to a transnational mining company, President Alan García publically decried the protest, calling the citizens of Bagua “second-class citizens” who threatened to “bring Peruvians back to primitive times” (Peru Noticias 6/5/99).

intersection juggled multiple identities as beggars, workers, performers, students, friends, siblings, sons, daughters, and targets of welfare interventions. Following the call of contemporary Peruvian scholars to go beyond neighborhood-based investigations of the poor and instead study movement and connections within the city (Vega Centeno 2004; Takano & Tokeshi 2007), my dissertation begins by exploring how this intersection is a space where the poor and the wealthy negotiate face-to-face encounters across the prosaic yet symbolically loaded boundary of the driver's seat window. Here, in the seconds it takes a traffic light to change colors, two contrasting Limas must grapple with one another.

The encounters at the intersection can be understood as relationships of exchange that open a window, so to speak, onto how power is negotiated, difference imagined and subjectivity experienced in contemporary Lima.⁵ To many, including those charged with burnishing the city's image, the young street performers' presence signifies disorder and underdevelopment. Hence reactions of middle-class Limans and visiting tourists and businesspeople can range from indifference and annoyance to pity and the desire to save children from a presumably bleak fate. In this way, the momentary yet everyday encounters activated at the intersection – entailing observation, interpellation, and response – become material for moralizing discourses that very often have embodied effects on children. These discourses of pity, annoyance, and reform become the terrain on which children juggle their multiple social identities before their car-driving publics. The street corner thus becomes a place where elaborate

⁵ As Gandolfo noted after describing the people she observed while her bus was stopped at the traffic light, "I could see these and very different and asymmetrical worlds coming together in that same spot but never touching, undoubtedly noticing but rarely acknowledging one another. Briefly, I had the thought, *How does it happen that someone stops caring?*" (Gandolfo 2009: 189). Perhaps this question cannot be answered; I take it, instead as a provocation to explore what happens and what it means when the people who occupy these asymmetrical worlds must notice one another.

social relationships are condensed and where children come to their own views of how power and social hierarchy work in Peru and what it takes to survive.

Everyday Interventions

This dissertation focuses on the experiences of children who worked the streets of Lima.⁶ As I found during my time in the city, these kids made their lives within and against the strictures of mainstream discourses about childhood in general and child labor in particular. What follows shows how their everyday struggles for survival and recognition demand engaged, if subtle, responses to the dominant understandings of childhood, family roles, and urban order that produce them as stigmatized subjects in the first place. Whether at the intersection or in other sites where I conducted fieldwork – including buses, homes, public institutions and NGOs – I found that childhood operated as a unique object in discourses of development and progress.

One sunny Saturday towards the end of summer, in fact, I stepped off the public bus that brought me to the intersection to find the area strangely desolate. It was March, and with vacation drawing to a close, children flocked to the intersection day after day in order to make enough money to help their families pay for their school supplies, uniforms, shoes, and registration fees – all costs associated with attending public school. Perplexed by the intersection's emptiness, I made my way over to Julia, the owner of the kiosk located just beyond the KFC driveway; she always seemed to know the kids'

⁶ It has always been challenging for me to figure out what to call the children on whom my research focused. I agree with the argument put forth by many academics and activists that the blanket category "street kids" obscures the nuanced experiences of Latin American children who work in or otherwise occupy public spaces (Scheper-Hughes & Hoffman 1998). Yet "street workers" often comes across as vague and sometimes seems to imply prostitution. Alternative terms that have been suggested include "working children" (Schibotto & Cussianovich 1994) and "home children" (Hecht 1998).

whereabouts. “They came early today,” she informed me, “but a couple of *camiones* (trucks) passed by and everyone ran away to avoid the *batida* (round-up).”⁷

Unfortunately, I had come to learn that this was not uncommon.

On the off-chance that someone had decided to risk it and stick around anyway, I walked to the less populated intersection on the other end of the strip mall and found that a new poster had gone up on a light post: “This zone prohibits street vending, begging, and the public sale of services. Beginning Monday, March 17 [2008], the Municipal Police will eradicate, seize the goods of, and fine all individuals who fail to comply with this law.” The warning was part of an effort to create a façade of urban order in preparation for an international summit on, of all things, development and poverty. Most of the children I knew, fearful of the repercussions, refrained from going to work during the summit. Ironically, then, it was the poorest Peruvians who were forced to sacrifice their livelihoods so that foreign visitors would not have to directly encounter the reality that the event sought to address. Indeed, Lima’s few wealthy, overwhelmingly white enclaves were always making efforts to restrict the influx of the sorts of poor brown Peruvians that worked at the intersection, unless they arrived as maids, gardeners, or security guards.

But the warning was also part of an assemblage of prohibitions, warnings and regulations around childhood and the ideals of national order and development. The Peruvian government, in collaboration with transnational development agencies and local NGOs, had been working to reform beggary laws and legislation restricting child labor. In the past few years, several affluent municipalities launched similar poster campaigns that explicitly singled out children. “Behind every child who works on the

⁷ *Batida*, connoting “round-up,” comes from the verb *batir*, which means not only “to comb” or “to search” (as in a policing situation), but also “to beat,” as in “to mix” or “to defeat.”

street,” warned one such poster, “is an exploitative adult.” Other signs, in both English and Spanish, proclaimed, “Society with values, society without working kids. Together we can stop the work of children in the streets. Collectively, local government, enterprises, and community CAN DO IT.” The following year, yet another campaign emerged in the tourist district of Miraflores: “Your alms are of no use. They don’t resolve the problem,” the English-language poster stated, next to a picture of a begging child.

Of course, any socially-conscious Lonely Planet-toting tourist would concur that giving a child some spare coins will not “resolve” poverty, the root cause of child labor. But the poster was unclear about what exactly “the problem” was, much less how it might be best addressed. Such ambiguity, combined with the clear message that tourists should avoid interacting with poor children, diverted attention from the structural causes of child poverty; instead, it made individuals responsible for not *furthering* “the problem,” while casting children who ask for money as a blight upon the city. The poster campaign invoked a “we” that excluded the poor and, in the process, produced a kind of difference that made the behavior of underclass young mestizo Limans into a drag on order and progress. If children often figure into discourses of progress and development as the proverbial hope for the future, they were pathologized here as the tokens of a Peru still mired in backwardness and the “dirt” and “lack of civilization” that the racialized language of the privileged classes so often seemed to deploy (Douglas 2002).

The campaigns also drew an implicit division between the well-off, who were free to move around as they liked, and poor working children, whose movements had to be policed with the weight of the law. Insofar as this way of thinking linked child poverty and ideas about social order, it recalled scholarship on the cultural politics of

childhood that draws attention to the ways that children's lives function as battlegrounds for competing political agendas (Scheper-Hughes & Sargent 1998; James & James 2004; Stephens 1995). In Peru, as we shall see, this battleground has its own particular contours in the era of neoliberal globalization, when NGOs, transnational corporations, English-speaking tourists, and car owners become drawn into the moralizing discourse around eradicating child labor.

An article in Peru's main newspaper in June 2011 draws attention to these intersections.⁸ "Over two-million children work on the streets in Peru," the headline reads, above a picture of a lone young boy in old clothes pushing a popsicle cart past a public bus and a crowd of people, perhaps trying to catch up to the other bus that he is eyeing. It is the day before Global Anti-Child Labor Day, the piece begins, and yet this is the face of child labor in Peru. The article goes on to discuss how the Spanish-owned telephone company, through its philanthropic campaign to eradicate child labor,⁹ sent celebrities out to the street to distribute candy and flyers containing the message, "Men Working, Children Studying." According to the company's president, the purpose of the campaign was to "raise the consciousness" of pedestrians, drivers, and passengers in private vehicles and public buses; to get them to realize that child labor is not a "normal" thing and that its eradication depends on the participation of civil society. The reporter goes on to quote two other authorities: the Minister of Labor, who promises to intensify the monitoring of companies, and the Minister of Women and Social

⁸ Reports about child street work periodically appear in the media. In February of the previous year, for example, the same newspaper published an article with the headline, "We are an economy with more than two million child workers" (Comercio 2/16/10).

⁹ The Spanish company, Telefónica, entered Peru in 1994, establishing a virtual monopoly over the country's telecommunications industry. In 2002, Peruvian workers went on strike to protest labor readjustments. The company's philanthropic foundation, Fundación Telefónica, in existence since 1998, works with the International Labor Organization to eradicate child labor.

Development, who clarifies that even if sanctions are employed against companies, the real problem lies with parents “who consider it normal or necessary for their children to work.” She appeals to parents to “prioritize their children’s education,” implying, like the corporate-sponsored campaign, that work and education are mutually exclusive.

These public campaigns point to some of the ways that the Peruvian state and transnational development institutions frame child labor as a social problem. This dissertation analyzes various vectors through which dominant understandings of child labor and child poverty travel and explores the effects that such discourses have on the daily lives of children who must work to survive. I ground my analysis in the notion of what I call “public childhoods.” This concept draws attention to the ways that subjectivities form through intersecting mechanisms of power, in this sense capturing nuances that common terms such as “street children” and “child laborer” gloss over. More specifically, “public childhoods” simultaneously encapsulates three interrelated ways of knowing and experiencing childhood: *being in public*, *being a public*, and *being public*.¹⁰

Public Childhoods, Public Families

To speak of a child *being in public* refers to the occupation of public space, most notably the street. While scholars have correctly argued that public and private constitute more than a simple dichotomy, the terms nevertheless continue to have great power over cultural and political imagination, certainly in Peru. In the case of the La Molina intersection, being on the street functions in contrast to being inside the private spaces of the car or the KFC. In Peru, such private spaces function as mechanisms of

¹⁰ Literary scholar Michael Warner very thoroughly addresses the difficulty of concisely defining “public,” given the term’s diverse uses (Warner 2005).

protection and mark those who have access to them as privileged. In contrast, public space becomes the territory of those city-dwellers who do not have the power of money or the privacy of the car and the gated enclave house it buys, marking them as transgressive emblems of marginality. This spatial structure has special implications for children. Insofar as they function as symbols of the future and the objects of social reproduction in common discourse, children figure as especially needing of protection from the dangers of the public world. The municipal and corporate-sponsored campaigns reflect this ideology that marks the contained spaces of the private family and the school, as opposed to the public arena of the street, as the proper place for children.¹¹

To be sure, not all children in public are considered out-of-place. Like the adult celebrities who took to the streets the day before Global Anti-Child Labor Day to spread the “Men Working, Children Studying” message, occasionally a group of clean-cut teenagers from a neighborhood youth group would arrive at the intersection on Saturdays to collect donations for different charities, including Project Smile, an organization that sends American doctors to operate on children with cleft palate in poor countries like Peru. The campaign logo printed on their t-shirts, along with the specially-labeled sealed cans they used to collect money and the stickers they handed to donors. These more privileged children, in other words, had a legitimacy that their displaced counterparts lacked, even though they were seeking much the same thing, namely a few coins. This example of belonging to the private and the public at once draws attention to the ways that class and age intersect in producing and managing difference. For people who enjoy the privileges of the private – and these children came

¹¹ For a discussion of Brazilian street children’s use of public space, see Hecht 1998; Scheper-Hughes & Hoffman 1998.

not from the ramshackle shared spaces of Lima's shantytowns, but rather from high-walled prosperous homes – the occupation of public space has a completely different meaning than for those who are there, above all, because of the imperative to get by.

The second sense in which I use “public children,” namely child laborers *being a public*, grows out of cultural theorist Michael Warner's notion of “counterpublics.” He describes these groups as forms of association and imagination “defined by their tension with a larger public” (Turner 2004: 56).¹² Hence the category of counterpublics, for example queer communities in the U.S., challenges “our understanding of how private life can be made publicly relevant,” by appealing to “visceral reactions” and the affects of “shame and disgust” (62-3). But where does Warner's theory of counterpublics leave children who work on the street?¹³ Indeed, such children draw critical attention to the public life of bodies that are meant to belong to the private realm. Yet Warner's counterpublic, I suggest, is defined by an intention to subvert that does not characterize the children at the center of my research. Second-class citizens in terms of both their age and class status, these children went to the intersection in order to be able to participate in the forms of consumption linked to contemporary citizenship. However, if being a public, or a member of the collapsed public-private, is increasingly defined in relation to capitalist consumption, then children who work on the street in order to consume draw attention to the contradictions inherent in conceptions of normative childhood through which children are only imagined as publics insofar as they consume in private.¹⁴

¹² Turning to Habermas's genealogy of the public sphere, Warner explains that insofar as “the public is composed of private persons exercising rational-critical discourse in relation to the state and power,” the notion of public is “no longer opposed to the private. It [is] private. As the self-consciousness of civil society, it [is] opposed to the state” (Turner 2004: 46-7).

¹³ Warner includes “youth culture” in his list of counterpublics.

¹⁴ Many scholars have noted the ways that the toy and clothing industries hail rich and poor children alike as consumers of their products. In a poor country like Peru, the quintessential “public” disciplinary

Finally, *being public* refers to a condition of permanent availability. In this sense, public children are those targeted for interventions by state institutions and, in the contemporary moment, NGOs, and the discourses of activism, concern, and prohibitions and injunctions. Public children are children to whom adult strangers, such as the drivers that pass through the intersection, offer unsolicited advice, as the drivers that I observed in La Molina often did in the form of loud assertions and rhetorical questions.¹⁵ Public children are children whose parents, not necessarily on the scene, are imagined to be morally corrupt or, at best, ignorant. Public children are children whose stories are presumed to be known as opposed to be investigated. They are the children whose images are linked to abjection, and thus circulated by charities; they are emblems of underdevelopment, the ones that tourists take pictures of to illustrate the plight of Peru back home. Public children, in this framework, represent the supposed failings of Peru's poor to raise its children properly, and of the nation at large to successfully fashion itself into the shiny, prosperous place that ideologies of modernity and progress imagine.

Clearly, however, the very concept that certain kinds of children are publicly available is part of a scapegoating narrative that fails to account for the uneven construction and accessibility of the private. Although dominant representations of child labor frame *being public* as a result of being *in public* and lacking the (bourgeois) values

institution of the school has been progressively privatized, transforming itself into a commodity for which individual families must pay. Poor children thus find themselves becoming not only consumers but also workers who must produce the money necessary to buy their education. In other words, in order to achieve the bourgeois imperative of education (promoted, for example, by anti-child labor campaigns), poor children must engage in spatial practices that transgress bourgeois understandings of childhood. Rather than showing the transformative potential that Warner attributes to counterpublics, children's work on the street further entrenches the structures of power that keep them marginalized. Whatever momentary power they elicit by commanding the attention of adults and blurring the boundary between patron and client in their public activities is therefore not to be celebrated as a form of resistance.

¹⁵ As I will discuss in Chapter 1, the advice often involved phrases and questions such as, "You should be studying" and "Where is your mother?"

required to constitute *a public*, I seek to challenge this chain of assumptions by drawing attention to how the state has historically constituted the poor family as public, denying the poor the power over their own (private) life in an impoverished country where the great mass of people have little power to buy houses, ride in private cars, go away on vacation, or enjoy other bourgeois domestic privileges so taken for granted in the global north. A dysfunctional private family, the poor public family emerged as a category of intervention in tandem with the production of the bourgeois private family. Poor children, the object of exchange between the family and the state, have always been public because of the unique threat that they pose to social reproduction. As the state has consistently rendered children's bodies available in order to police the future of the nation, newer, nominally private bureaucratic institutions, such as NGOs, have taken up a similar project on a transnational scale.

As feminist scholars have argued, the idea of an autonomous bourgeois nuclear family is itself largely a myth, given its central role in political debate and entanglement in ideologies of gender, sexuality, race, and other vectors of history and power. Yet as the effort to privatize bourgeois childhood intensifies in neoliberal times, the ongoing publicness of poor children takes on specific contours. Early on in my fieldwork, I met a well-known soap opera actress whose interest and knowledge about child welfare issues surprised me. Soon after we began chatting at an academic book presentation about childhood, she shared an anecdote. Stopped at a traffic light where a young boy was juggling and selling candy, her own ten-year-old son, strapped into the back seat of the family car, asked her a deceptively simple question. "Are those kids happy, mom?" Rather than commenting on the injustice of children having to go out and work on the street, another politically correct impulse, one that attempted to recognize the agency of all children, prompted her to teach her son a lesson in cultural relativism: "They

probably are happy too. But different things make them and you happy.” She had been unable to stop reflecting on the exchange for several weeks. Her son’s question not only revealed the deep links between class and notions of childhood happiness, but also showed how children themselves identify and come to terms with difference. This was an encounter not only between rich and poor, but also between two families, one private and one public.

The Figure of the Child

A large scholarly literature has established childhood as a modern social construction linked to the invention of the bourgeois nuclear family. During the Middle Ages, as the French historian Philippe Aries famously argued a half century ago, childhood did not exist (Aries 1996). Undifferentiated from the rest of the population, so-called children learned about social roles through their integration into everyday life. With the rise of capitalist modernity, childhood was separated off as a life-stage and confined to special institutions such as the school.¹⁶ Michel Foucault brought the child to the center of his analysis of the ways power works through the modern nuclear family. In particular, he cites the invention of childhood as the event that enabled the generalization of psychiatry, the science that understood abnormal adulthood as “behavioral and structural infantilism” (Foucault 2004: 307). This new imperative to

¹⁶ Concerned more with the development of capitalism than with the category of childhood, Marx and Engels focused on how the individual nuclear family functioned as the basic economic unit of society, reproducing itself through a gendered division of labor whereby women represented the proletariat and men the propertied class (Marx 1978; Engels 1978). Second-wave feminists, in turn, critiqued the ways that the family kept women in a structurally oppressed position (Chodorow & Contratto 1982; Collier, Fishburne, Yanagisako 1987). In 1973, Shulamith Firestone extended this argument to the category of childhood, arguing for the elimination not simply of the conditions of production at the level of Marx’s economic infrastructure, but of the “conditions of femininity and childhood” (Firestone 102). As with Firestone, postmodern feminists’ interest in childhood was mostly instrumental insofar as children’s oppression is structurally linked to that of women. Their concern with the effects of discourses about pregnancy and new reproductive technologies on women reflects a Foucauldian influence. (Davis-Floyd 1998; Ginsburg & Rapp 1995)

know childhood resulted in the elaboration of an institutional network through which the child's body was the unit of exchange between the family (responsible for the child's natural education) and the State (in charge of the child's formal education). In opposition to theories of infantile innocence, childhood was thus inaugurated as a dangerous state, something that must be controlled during its normal trajectory and pathologized if manifested during adulthood.

Based in Europe, these histories have been extended to colonial and post-colonial contexts, particularly by scholars concerned with the circulation of Western ideas. Ann Laura Stoler, for example, applies Foucault's theories to questions of race in colonial Indonesia. Here, she argues, the intimate sphere of the family became a major site of surveillance once mixed-race children were born out of unions between Dutch men and Indonesian women (Stoler 2002). In Peru, art historian Carolyn Dean analyzes paintings from the early colonial period in Cuzco, the Incan capital, to argue that an "interpretive chasm" existed between Spanish and native Andean understandings of childhood. Europeans defined childhood on the basis of mental inferiority and irrationality, she shows, whereas pre-Hispanic Andean differentiated children based on their physiology and the degree to which they were able to contribute physical labor to the family and community (Dean 2002: 21).¹⁷

As a historian, Aries showed how childhood was a historical invention. Yet it was a foremother of my own discipline of anthropology who insisted, in the first place, that childhood was a relative concept as opposed to a universal stage of human development determined purely through biology (Mead 1928). Margaret Mead's

¹⁷ Pointing to another effect of the transplantation of European notions of childhood to the New World, Dean shows that the use of Spanish standards of rationality to determine whether an individual was a child or an adult justified the infantilization of indigenous adults who, from the colonists' point-of-view, were ignorant and lacked propriety.

canonical and later controversial (Freeman 1999; Shankman 2009) research in Samoa in the early 20th century sought to teach preoccupied Americans that stress and strain were not universal features of adolescence, but rather a product of society. Samoans, she asserted, pass through adolescence, and life in general, with ease because of the absence of major conflict in a relatively simple and homogeneous society. If Mead's study was based on a false binary between "simple" and "complex" societies, her ideas nevertheless invited scholars in the United States and Europe to reconsider their own assumptions about childhood and adolescence, and to think differently about the many experiences encompassed within these taken-for-granted categories.

Of course, Mead and the anthropologists of her generation would be much criticized for failing to recognize the influence of outside forces, such as colonialism and Christian evangelization, on the "primitive" societies they depicted as pristine and untouched. In contrast, contemporary anthropologists and historians tend to approach societies as cultural hybrids. As historian Bianca Premo underlines, the question of childhood in Peru or anywhere can only be understood within the larger sweep of history (Premo 2005). Premo focuses on the legal structures that Spanish colonial authorities developed starting in mid-17th century Lima to regulate the concept of childhood (or, minor) and thereby stabilize their system of governance. Since colonial times, she argues, understandings of childhood have been central to projects of urban ordering and population management in the capital city. Specifically, Premo highlights the link between childhood, family, and the social body; "the ideal relationship between adults and children in Lima," she shows, "enacted and refracted the broader political relationship between king and colony" (2). Children who did not conform to dominant visions of social order – usually fatherless street loiterers – met their fate in residential

institutions where they were forced to labor under the supervision of “surrogate patriarchs.”¹⁸

In the Lima that Premo describes, child labor was linked to transforming undisciplined bodies into useful and productive subjects in the service of a social order that insisted on a clear public-private divide. Here child labor was regarded as a legitimate practice insofar as it was determined and controlled by authorized adults. Latin American historiography suggests that up through the early industrial period in Peru and elsewhere, child labor was generally considered favorable to national economic development and the attainment of public order (Portocarrero 1998; Garcia Londaño 1999; Rojas Flores 1996). However, as countries in the northern hemisphere began to take steps to end the practice in the decades following Peru’s independence, the Peruvian elite, concerned with the nation’s image on a global scale, began to see even carefully contained child labor as an index of backwardness that threatened the country’s modernization.

Peru achieved independence from Spain in 1821 only to suffer a disastrous defeat in the War of the Pacific with neighboring Chile a half-century later, leaving the country in a state of disarray. The lack of national solidarity following independence was a constant source of anxiety for the elites, who were particularly concerned with the “Indian problem” – the question of how to integrate the “backward” Indian masses into the imagined national community (García 2005: 67; de la Cadena 2000: 108). Scholarly debates around this question, insofar as they have pivoted on the link between race, reproduction, and the national future, implicitly concern (poor, non-white) children, yet, with few exceptions (Mannarelli 2002), scholars have paid little attention to the process

¹⁸ The gaze of the “surrogate patriarch” was always linked to the idea of the dysfunctional poor family, a trope that remains central to discourses about and interventions into child labor today.

by which children became a central concern for authorities. By the turn of the 20th century, political authorities had begun to entertain new perspectives on the link between childhood and national development; the children of the masses of brown-skinned rural-urban migrants were at the center of such discussions. Throughout the continent, an explosion of conferences, commissions and other institutions gave way to different sorts of interventions into the lives of poor children and their families (Hecht, ed. 2002).

Eager to reverse Peru's apparently bleak fate, authorities created a series of bureaucratic institutions devoted to the development of the child, the "natural" inheritor of the nation's destiny and the embodiment of both the threat to and promise of modernity.¹⁹ Utilizing putatively scientific theories that linked biological to national development and citing the eugenics movement of the more "civilized" countries to the north, Peru's elite core of politicians, doctors and philanthropists convened to create a nomenclature whereby children were differentiated and disciplined according to their presumed value – and potential threat – to society.²⁰ Inherent to these new discourses about and interventions into childhood was the institutionalization of other intersecting forms of difference, such as race, gender, and class.

Useful here for thinking about Peru is historian Irene Rizzini's argument about the two "nations" of children in late 19th and early 20th century Brazil: children of the elite; and "minors," defined as "poor and potentially dangerous" to society (Rizzini

¹⁹ For primary source material documenting Peruvian efforts to institutionally regulate childhood, see *Construcción del Orfanato 1922*; *Exposición de la Sociedad de Beneficencia Pública 1922*; *I Conferencia sobre el Niño Peruano 1922*; *Liga Peruana de Higiene Mental 1933*; *Anteproyecto Código de Menores 1935*; *Proyecto de Código de Menores 1939, 1945, 1955*; Paz Soldán 1944.

²⁰ For primary source material, see Castillo 1967; *Liga Peruana de Higiene Mental 1933*; Paz Soldán 1944. For a discussion of the development of science in Peru, see Cueto 1989. On the question of hygiene, see Mannarelli 1999. For an analysis of the particularities of eugenics in Latin America more generally, see Stepan 1991; Nelson 1999; Briggs 2002.

2002). Modernization, she demonstrates, aimed not to foster socioeconomic equality between these two groups, but rather to control poor children just enough to avoid the reproduction of disorder. This did not mean simply rounding up and institutionalizing street children, but also included the identification of “morally abandoned kids” living in “neglectful” homes. Assuming “guardian” status over poor children, the state entered the family domain for the first time.²¹ Such classificatory systems have endured, as anthropologists Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Daniel Hoffman suggest in reference to the “two childhoods” that constitute what they call contemporary “Brazilian apartheid” in a country that, while much wealthier than Peru, displays some of the same enormous gaps between its rich, mostly white elite and its poor brown-skinned majority (Scheper-Hughes & Hoffman 1998: 381).

Scholars critical of how childhood is currently regulated on a global scale have suggested that today’s transnational system reproduces precisely this notion of two kinds of childhood (Korbin 2003; John 1995; Goldstein 1998). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified in 1989, is the primary legal apparatus that defines childhood and puts forth universal standards to achieve children’s wellbeing. Although the UNCRC leaves some room for culturally-specific interpretations, critics have argued that it nevertheless operates according to a paternalistic moral framework reflective of bourgeois notions of childhood (Rosen 2007; Ennew 1998).²² As I will show, the national policies that signatory states such as Peru

²¹ An important question that came up in these debates was how far to go educating these children, for over-education could equalize children, when it was necessary to keep a portion of the population submissive (Rizzini 2002). Donna Guy offers a similar history, charting the link between the child and the rise of the welfare state in Latin America in the 1920s. She draws attention to how, with the rise of education, children were gendered, citing military service as a preferred form of education for boys (Guy 2002). Yet even this was not readily accepted by all; some argued that orphans, for example, were not appropriate representatives of the nation.

²²Some authors have shown that such policies are so focused on pointing the finger at poor countries that they ignore the ways in which children from wealthy families and wealthy countries are also exploited.

have adopted in order to comply with the Convention reveal a classed and often racialized logic that largely ignores the realities and concerns of the people that they target.²³ Many anthropologists, in fact, have problematized the assumptions behind the institutionalized understandings of child labor circulated by transnational institutions, among them UNICEF as well as the International Program on the Eradication of Child Labor (IPEC), a branch of the International Labor Organization (ILO) whose regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean is located in Lima. Olga Nieuwenhuys and Karen Sykes, for example, argue that such universalizing legal standards ignore the continually growing numbers of children who work in situations that are, in Sykes's words, "harder to define" (Sykes 2003: 5; Nieuwenhuys 1996) Christine Ward Gailey argues that the imperative to outlaw child labor overlooks the particular meanings and importance that children and their families give to work (Gailey 1999). She proposes a reframing in the valuation of child labor, such that exploitation is defined not by the type of labor being performed – for example, formal versus informal, or factory versus domestic – but by the absence of "education for social authority" (117). This change in orientation opens up the field of what might be considered exploitative child labor in ways that are more suited to what both authors call the "age of capitalist restructuring" (Gailey 1999:115; Sykes 2003: 5). In addition to challenging the universalizing

Anthropologist Norma Field argues that the academic labor that Japanese children are expected to perform is a form of exploitative child labor (Field 1995). Sociologists Peter Donnelly and Leanne Petherick make a similar argument with regard to high-performance child athletes (Donnelly & Petherick 2004).

²³ For a discussion of cultural conflicts around ideas about child circulation, see Leinaweaver 2008. The tensions that emerge when competing standards for childhood intersect are central to what different authors have called "the cultural politics of childhood," which has been defined as the "significance of culturally determined and accepted customs and practices in shaping the social order in any given society, the social space of childhood, and the reflexive relationship between structure and agency in that construction" (James & James 2004: 91). The topic of child labor provides a powerful example of "the cultural politics of childhood" at work.

frameworks put forth by the transnational legal apparatus, this approach can also point to the limits of cultural relativism when used to romanticize local practices without engaging in a critique of power.

In an age of capitalist restructuring, the most ubiquitous form of money-generating child labor in Peru is street-based vending and performing.²⁴ As a result, it is not a third-party boss in the archetypal model of *Oliver Twist*'s Fagan, but rather parents, who are imagined as the primary agents of child exploitation. Publicly available, these poor families encompass the kind of childhood that the UNCRRC and its corresponding Peruvian institutions mark as abnormal, in need of outside intervention. In this way, child labor represents one category of knowledge within what critics have called the "development discourse." Understanding development as a discourse, anthropologist Arturo Escobar argued two decades ago, exposes "the Third World in need of development" as a historical construction and a technology of Western power rooted in the post-World War II moment (Escobar 1995).²⁵ Although Escobar, James Ferguson and other influential critics of development in a Foucauldian and Saidian vein have themselves been subject to criticism, their scholarship was crucial in showing how development discourse perpetuates a false binary between a "developed" First World and a Third World in need of saving, as well as the establishment of a whole panoply of institutions, bureaucracies, and techniques of intervention and surveillance in the name of rescuing the poor (Ferguson 1990; Foucault 1979, 2008; Said 1979).

Following a two-decade internal war between the Shining Path insurgency and the state, Peru became a prime site for foreign-funded development initiatives, resulting

²⁴ Statistics, however, suggest that agriculture in rural areas continues to be the most prevalent form of children's work (van den Berge 2009).

²⁵ Other scholars have dated the development discourse back to colonialism (Watts 1995) and the beginnings of industrial capitalism in Europe (Cowen & Shenton 1995).

in an NGO boom. Beyond infrastructural and educational projects, the solidification of a human rights discourse was central to this process. This resulted in important victories such as the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address the wartime atrocities and the recent imprisonment of former president Alberto Fujimori for corruption and human rights violations. In this context, and with the recently ratified UNCRC, children's rights emerged as a particular area of concern. With financing and technical support from transnational institutions such as UNICEF and the ILO, many Peruvian NGOs began to undertake child labor eradication projects. Prior to this, however, Peru had established itself as the regional organizing point for a network of institutions (also funded by transnational agencies, such as Save the Children Sweden) that insist on the right of children to work under "dignified" conditions.

Ideas about social development have historically been linked not only to institutions that mark subjects according to raced, classed and gendered hierarchies, but moreover to the imperative of these institutions' elite constituents to normalize the poor by acting on behalf of what they imagine to be children's proper development. Child discipline has been a key strategy for achieving social domination; likewise, containment within specialized institutions has been a primary mode for controlling poor children's spatial practices. As Premo describes for the colonial period, authorities created such institutions as models for a mode of governmentality whereby children could only become properly functioning members of society through relationships with surrogate patriarchs (Premo 2005). This promotion of family as the basic unit of social order also propelled the Catholic wives of Peru's early 20th century elite to establish centers for teaching impoverished and working mothers to properly care for their children.²⁶

²⁶ Popularly known as the "*abuela de los niños*" (grandmother of the children), Juana Alarco de Dammert pioneered this movement at the turn of the 20th century. See Dammert [1947]. For debates about wet-nursing, see Mannarelli 1999.

Contemporary approaches to child welfare, I contend, whether articulated through institutions or through more spontaneous social exchanges like those at the intersection in La Molina, draw on these deeply rooted imaginaries about development, urban order and child poverty. In this way, if institutions such as aid agencies and NGOs are the most obvious channel through which development ideology is put into practice, the city itself (and the daily encounters between strangers that give the city its meaning) operates as an important site for the implementation of progress narratives.

Historicizing Lima

The interactions at the street corner take place in a city that, half a millennium ago, was an empty coastal desert. The Incas, a mountain empire, had built their capital in Cusco, in the heart of the Andes, but the seafaring Spanish wanted a capital city that would more easily connect it to the rest of its empire. Francisco Pizarro chose a spot next to the Rimac River and founded the city in 1535, developing an urban layout that followed the familiar Iberian grid with church and municipal buildings around a main Plaza de Armas. Nostalgia for colonial Lima recalls it as a place of quaint legends and romantic balconies, yet the historiography of the city shows it to have been rife with social tensions of many kinds (Gandolfo 2009). Colonial Lima was a multiracial polyglot city from the start, with a large Indian and black slave population that the elite sought to manage in different ways. The twentieth century witnessed the ballooning of the city, driven by massive migration from the countryside and a pattern of outsized, unplanned urbanization typical of the era across Latin America. Lima's population grew from 828 thousand in 1940 to eight-and-a-half million – a third of Peru's total population – when I began my dissertation fieldwork in 2008 (INEI).

The Liman elite had long since abandoned the city center as a residential, commercial, and recreational zone. In the early twentieth century, they began moving southward to establish what rapidly grew into the city's most exclusive districts. In the 1960s, as uncontrollable traffic and informal street activities started to spread even to these areas, well-off families sought peace and protection in eastern Lima's newly forming suburbs. Soon, however, the first- and second-generation Andean immigrants living in the rapidly growing shantytowns identified a market for their street labor in these supposedly segregated zones.²⁷ Affluent municipalities have grown increasingly concerned with this spatial invasion. As a municipal policeman lamented as he randomly surveyed the intersection one day to make sure that the children were not causing trouble, "If they keep coming here, La Molina is going to turn into El Agustino." Distinguishing the wealthy suburb from the traditionally working class district where he very likely could have lived, the law enforcer drew attention to the spatial dimensions of the policing of difference.

In a neoliberal context of post-civil war "reconstruction" and foreign investment, historically-rooted responses to this unremitting practice combine with new schemes for social control and urban development. Although the violence took its toll mostly in Peru's highlands, the nation's capital, and particularly its shantytowns, was also a significant battleground, particularly in the final stages of the war. After the war officially ended in 1992, Lima's mayor Alberto Andrade adopted what urban scholar Neil Smith has called a revanchist model of urban restructuring, inspired by New York

²⁷ Social geographer Mike Davis uses the term "horizontalization" to refer to the pattern of urban growth spurred by the development of slums in many third-world cities (Davis 2006). For studies of the development of Lima's squatter settlements, see Driant 1991; Riofrío 1991; Calderón 2005; Lloyd 1980.

City Mayor Rudy Giuliani (Smith 1996).²⁸ Concerned with restoring the city's center to its colonial splendor, he focused on refurbishing historic buildings and removing the informal vendors that had come to make the streets impassable to traffic. Despite downtown Lima's reputation as dangerous and chaotic, the government buildings, ornate churches, hotels, and museums that managed to survive amidst informal markets, vacated apartment buildings, and honking horns drew enough affluent Peruvians and tourists to make it worthy of investment.

In contrast to Brazil, where police are known for opening fire on and brutally murdering street children, the street-based violence to which Peruvian children are subjected is more subtle. Yet as today's NGOs and state agencies attempt to "respect" children's rights and "promote their development" through updated methods such as deploying "street educators" to "offer them an alternative in their own space," more traditionally-structured *hogares* (residential homes) also endure despite their reputation as sites of physical violence (INABIF 1993).²⁹ The coexistence of seemingly contradictory approaches to child welfare and urban space is ubiquitous. Nowhere was it more evident than at the culminating event for the multi-institutional *Adios al Castigo* (Goodbye to Childhood Punishment) campaign, where invited speakers ranged from a fifteen-year-old child labor activist who praised his parents for teaching him the value of hard work to the president of the Congressmen's Wives Committee who spoke of an

²⁸ Gandolfo also discusses the 1996 visit of "consultant" William Bratton, New York City's first police commissioner under Giulianani, "to give Mayor Andrade a hand in strategizing against the waves of assaults, robberies, kidnappings, and rapes that are once again sweeping through the city" (Gandolfo 2009: 25). She notes that various Latin American municipal governments had hired the Bratton's security consulting firm (225). For a similar phenomenon in Quito, Ecuador, see Swanson 2001. Interestingly, during the 2011 presidential elections in Peru, candidate Keiko Fujimori, the daughter of the corrupt president, hired Giuliani as a security consultant. Ironically, this was done in an effort to distance her image from that of her father (Wade & Aquino 2011) and also happened right after Giuliani's daughter had made the headlines after being arrested for shoplifting in New York City (Marikar & Prokucecz 2010)!

²⁹ This has been widely documented for other countries as well, such as Romania, where families from the United States went to "save" orphans from such institutions (Cartwright 2005).

annual clothing drive that she organized in order to help the pitiful children whose often violent parents send them to the streets to work (Smith 1996; Swanson 2007a). It is these varied and contradictory ways of framing child labor and children's spatial practices that intersect with one another everyday at the street corner in La Molina.

Being a Public Child

The everyday lives of the children who worked under the traffic light involved negotiating the assumptions that passersby made about them. As I got to know them beyond the space of the intersection, I learned that, even in seemingly more controlled spaces such as the neighborhood and the school, these children and their families were constantly faced with the burden of having to respond to their misrecognition in discourses about childhood and poverty. Sometimes this entailed performing family in unexpected ways, and sometimes it meant having to remain silent before representatives of the state. In this way, this dissertation elucidates the tensions between institutional efforts to produce and manage children as disciplined bearers of an imagined future and working children's attempts to survive and make their lives meaningful. In other words, in keeping with an anthropology of childhood that privileges the lived experiences of young people, I explore the ways in which children who work at the intersection and in other settings experience "public childhood" in its varied senses.

Prior to the work of the British Birmingham School in the 1970s, scholars had generally ignored children and youth as social actors. Although not trained as anthropologists, this group of cultural critics conducted ethnographic studies of youth primarily in urban, industrializing England (Hall & Jefferson 2006; Hebdige 1979; Mungham & Pearson 1976; Willis 1977). Specifically, they were concerned with understanding class struggle and the process – and limits – of social change from the

point-of-view of youth subcultures. Departing from a strictly materialist Marxism, they focused on the role of culture and individual (and group) agency in the ascription of meaning to working class socioeconomic conditions.³⁰

Cultural anthropologists, influenced by the Birmingham scholars, have increasingly explored the role of global children and youth as social agents who are able to think, act, and produce meaning in unexpected yet significant ways (Bluebond-Langner 1980; Amit-Talai 1995; Wulff 1995; Chin 2001; Bucholtz 2002; Miranda 2003; Cole 2004; Katz 2004; Fong 2004; Maira & Soep 2005; Ashcraft 2006; Shaw 2007; Thorne 2008; Gershon 2008; Luvaas 2009). Yet this belated concern with demonstrating that children and youth exercise agency in response to their marginal condition has, in some cases, led to what anthropologist Deborah Durham calls the “romance of agency and youth.” Drawing on her research in Botswana, she argues that “to state that youth have agency is not enough, especially if that agency is theorized as a function of an autonomous selfhood opposed to others or a social-cultural system” (Durham 2008: 176). In other words, in their haste to prove that youth are capable of acting autonomously and even challenging societal norms, anthropologists have defaulted to a universalizing (or Western) understanding of agency and youth, rather than considering the particular meanings that their research subjects give to these concepts.

Following Durham, I warn against celebrating child labor as a form of agency or resistance just as I critique monolithic representations of child labor. I approach working

³⁰ Clarke, et. al. and Hebdige argue that the way youth challenge culture is not revolutionary or even counter-hegemonic, but rather consists in slow changes that occur as they attach new meanings to the objects that they appropriate. Negotiating between the “parent culture” and the “dominant culture” the class struggle that they inherit takes place on a new terrain (for Hebdige, this terrain is style). The limits of youth’s actions can be when subcultures subvert signs that they appropriate from the market, only to have these signs incorporated back into the market. The potential of their actions, however, is to show society that youth has a political (not just biological) meaning. The anxieties that this produces among the general social body has productive potential in terms of disturbing the dominant order, but, conversely, can also be used in developing mechanisms of control.

children in Peru as complex subjects whose diverse practices of self-representation respond to material, discursive, and cultural forces that have made them into the site and stake of struggles over development on multiple scales. In examining their forms of producing and enacting identity, I seek to complicate notions of modern childhood and draw attention to the particularities of young people's experiences in the Peruvian context. Recent anthropological scholarship on Peru has drawn attention to how poor Peruvians creatively respond to the pressures and inequalities of the world in which they live (Starn 1999; Weismantel 2001; Garcia 2005; Leinaweaver 2008; Greene [s/d]). Yet these studies have not brought the voices of youth into a critical light. Although research on youth in Peru has tended to favor what some have defined as a "problem-oriented approach" (Bucholtz 2002; Lipsitz 2005) and has neglected to engage ethnographically with youth, scholars are increasingly focusing their ethnographies on youth (Panfichi & Valcárcel, eds. 1999; Portocarrero 2005).³¹ Few have focused on children as laborers.³² In line with historian Bianca Premo's study of Peruvian youth during the colonial period as well as scholars of other regions (Lavander 2006; Cheney 2007, Anagnost 2008), my work sees children as constitutive symbols of the national imaginary. At the same time, by building on the anthropology of youth, feminist scholarship, and critiques of development, I suggest new ways of thinking about children's everyday experiences in relation to questions of national belonging, the transnational politics of progress, and the reproduction of difference.

³¹ Anthropological studies that solicit the voices of Peruvian children have concentrated primarily on the topics of education (Ames 2002; Hornberger 1987; Portocarerro and Oliart 1989; Trinidad 2002) and violence (Castro 1994; León 2001; Santos 2002).

³² Exceptions include Galvez & Jaramillo 2002; Schibotto & Cussianovich 1994.

Research Methodology

My fieldwork mainly involved “hanging out” with children as they went about their daily routines and, in many cases, integrating myself into the intricacies of their lives beyond their workplaces. This enabled me to trace how public discourse, material needs, educational aspirations, family patterns, and urban imaginaries converge in shaping the subjectivities of those who have been made into the poster children for disorder, underdevelopment, pity, and paternalism. Beyond my ethnographic research, some of Lima’s historical archives provided me with information about the emergence of childhood as a category of intervention beginning in the late 19th century.³³ In addition to the twenty-two months that my dissertation research lasted, I spent several one- and two-month periods conducting preliminary and follow-up research.

I refrained from conducting tape-recorded conversations until I knew children, and sometimes their families, very well. This was partly because of my research style and in part because the children with whom I worked were used to being portrayed by reporters and interviewers in a negative light. In fact, when a friend who lived nearby first introduced me to the kids at the intersection, they expressed concern that I was a reporter. After a few awkward visits, they asked if I had a camera and if they could borrow it. As it turned out, entrusting them with my camera, a particularly symbolic instrument given my research subjects’ tendency to be on the other side of the photographic gaze, became our primary mode of building trust.³⁴

³³ I found most of this material at the National Library and some at the Beneficencia Pública, Lima’s oldest state-run social services institution.

³⁴ While sometimes kids did take pictures of their street performances and in their homes, providing a unique vision into their lives, I was surprised at the number of pictures they took of each other posed in front of car dealerships, chain restaurants, and sitting on deliverymen’s motorcycles. In this way, their photographs were not straightforward documentations of “their real lives” in the ways that so many photographic projects aimed at youth empowerment imagine, but rather enactments of their fantasies. When they took the cameras beyond the intersection, photographs were typically posed, rather than candid,

In addition to spending at least every Saturday at the intersection, where Chapter 1 dwells, I followed the work, family, and other social networks of the children who worked there. In Chapter 2, I move into these other spaces. My research took me to all corners of Lima, a city of almost nine-million people, where it can take up to three hours to get from one end to another by bus. Over time, the long bus rides became a fieldsite of sorts, as I found myself mesmerized not only by the variety of vendors who made their way on and off the bus, but also by their strategies for convincing their publics to reach into their pockets and give them change. I discuss this in Chapter 3. After coincidentally meeting Paco, a boy who worked making music with his sister on a bus route, I developed a very close relationship with his mother and siblings and eventually became his godmother. Their public and private lives, particularly tragic in comparison to other children with whom I worked, are at the center of Chapters 3 and 4.

In focusing on the complex ways my research subjects negotiate everyday survival in contemporary Lima, my dissertation reveals how institutions, often in diffuse and indirect ways, constitute the everyday lives of working children. Particularly in its early stages, my fieldwork brought me to NGOs devoted to children's issues, where I read institutional publications in addition to meeting with staff and accompanying them on field visits. The institution to which I devoted most of my time, however, was not a child labor eradication NGO, but rather a child- and adult-run social movement that has,

and usually took place inside the home or the school; indeed, it was a treat for family members and peers to have access to a camera! With some notable exceptions, the children produced few photographs of what might be called "everyday life" in their neighborhoods. When I asked about this, the kids said that it would "da roche" (be a little awkward) because everyone would wonder where they got the camera. Some children indicated that if word got out that they had a camera, someone would surely try to rob them. Indeed, this happened in one case. Distaught, soft-spoken and hard-working Rodrigo did not show up at the intersection on the day he was supposed to return the camera. I was surprised, given that he was one of the most responsible and dependable children. The following Saturday, he finally showed up, head bowed in embarrassment, but camera in hand. After a physical fight involving several neighbors, his mother and older brother were able to locate the thief and, subsequently, the person to whom he had sold the camera.

since the 1970s, insisted on the right of children to work under dignified conditions. MANTHOC (The National Movement of Child and Adolescent Workers – Children of Christian Laborers³⁵), its institutional network, and its individual members, are the focus of Chapter 5.

By addressing MANTHOC in the final chapter, my dissertation ends where my interest in child labor began. In January 2001, before I was a graduate student, I took an overnight bus to Lima to participate in a week-long training workshop with the NGO staff I was working with in Peru's south-central highlands. A Fulbright fellow just out of college, I was shadowing a foreign-funded NGO that ran an adolescent sexual and reproductive health project in post-war Ayacucho. I expected the workshop to put me in contact with the transnational agencies that provided the project's financial and technical support; however, what ended up changing the trajectory of my academic life that week was meeting three representatives from the MANTHOC network. A critique of development discourse had driven my interest in the workings of NGOs, but I had never considered child labor to be a category that needed to be problematized. Yet the self-identified working children and highly-educated adult activist representing the movement argued that the injustice to be combated was not child labor itself, but rather the systemic, "adultocentrist" disregard for children as agential subjects. When I moved to Lima in 2002 to work collecting ephemera for the Princeton University library, I further acquainted myself with MANTHOC and discovered that I wanted to be an anthropologist.

It was not, however, until I began my dissertation fieldwork in 2006 that I broadened my focus to include public spaces like the street. MANTHOC members, for

³⁵ *Movimiento Nacional de Niños y Adolescentes Trabajadores-Hijos de Obreros Cristianos.*

the most part, worked in other capacities, and my exclusive focus thus far on institutional ethnography had precluded me from seeing children who perform on the street and in buses as possible research interlocutors. It was not that I had not seen or communicated with such children: from the first day I arrived in Lima, during an inter-semester break while studying abroad in Chile in 1999, I had faced the uncomfortable obligation to evaluate and respond to kids' ubiquitous requests for money as I traveled in taxi, by bus, and on foot. Fellow tourists and, over time, professional contacts and friends from a range of class positions readily offered me their "rules" for when to give or not give; these were always linked to their respective opinions about how to best address poverty and promote national development. Indeed, this was a favorite topic of everyday philosophizing, which would later help me situate drivers' responses in terms of the relationship between development discourse, the national future, and ideologies of childhood.

During my initial trip to Lima, I also noticed that Lima's changing social geography was a favorite topic of conversation amongst Peruvians eager to help situate a foreigner like me. Whether walking around downtown Lima with friends from shantytowns, passing through in a taxi with NGO contacts, or driving by in the private cars of wealthier friends, everyone consistently remarked on how "it wasn't always like this; before you couldn't even walk through the crowd, let alone get through in a vehicle. You see where we're driving right now? Before the street itself was filled with vendors!" Chaotic enough by my standards, I found it hard to imagine what it must have been like before. In any case, their comments introduced me to the ways that the restructuring of Lima's public space had affected the lives of the informal workers I would eventually come to know so well.

Identifying as an anthropologist of childhood by the time I began my dissertation research in 2006, I was also a privileged foreigner who had, for years, struggled with how to respond to the anonymous children who called on me to “*colaborar*” (collaborate) as I made my way through a city marked by extreme socioeconomic disparity. Having grown up near New York City and having lived in Durham, North Carolina, I was not wholly unaccustomed to the presence of beggars when I first arrived in Peru; however, the sheer scale of it and the proportion of beggars who were children distinguished Lima from anywhere I had been before. Furthermore, I was used to the culture of institutionally-mediated donations and volunteer work in the United States, which made it possible for the privileged public to address (or ignore) questions of difference from a distance.³⁶ During a discussion with a self-identified “liberal activist” friend in New York, she argued that “all homeless people know that there are institutions that can help them get on their feet, so even when I see homeless people out there with jars, I don’t trust them, I know it must be a front for something else.” Although Lima is not New York, I suggest that Maxine’s trust in institutions reflects the privileged public’s more general desire – at times grounded in fear and at times in pity – to maintain social distance from systemic problems.³⁷ Furthermore, such responses make it the personal responsibility of the individuals in need (or their parents, in the case of the children on whom my research focused) to seek out institutional intervention.

The small bodies that characterize Lima’s urban landscape are perhaps the most ubiquitous visual representation of the ways in which global capitalism and Peru’s pseudo-welfare state have systemically failed the poor. And yet, as I will show, children

³⁶ In Peru, as opposed to in the United States, there are no individual tax incentives to give money to charitable institutions.

³⁷ Although, as I noted earlier, Giuliani’s model for removing the homeless from New York’s streets has served as a model for Lima’s urban restructuring.

and their families face the everyday burden of having to respond to the moral interventions, structured and unstructured, of public institutions, private organizations, and individual strangers. Whether through reassigning blame or other means, this constant assertion of distance diverts the causes of “underdevelopment” to a racialized, classed, and gendered Other. In this way, approaches to poor children who engage in “unsuitable activities” such as street labor represent a contemporary, urban iteration of the historic tension between what scholars have called “deep Peru” and “official Peru.”³⁸ More crucially, even, this continual reproduction of difference leaves poor, working children in a particularly ambivalent and ambiguous structural position. In contrast to the normative model for childhood, public children are always *both* endangered and dangerous (Foucault 2004; Stoler 1995), subjects *both* to be protected and from whom to seek protection. It is for this reason that public children become both the site and stake in the struggles over development that materialize within public and private institutions and at the level of everyday social relationships.

³⁸ Historian Jorge Basadre coined the Two Peru trope to discuss the difficulties of achieving national unity during the period following independence from Spain (Basadre 1962). The idea was taken up again in the aftermath of the Uchuraccay massacre, when Andean peasants opened fire on a group of journalists sent to the village to investigate another murder. According to the renowned writer and one-time presidential candidate Mario Vargas Llosa, who led the commission that investigated the second murder, the peasants’ distance from modernity had led them to mistake the journalists’ cameras for weapons (Mayer 1991).

Chapter 1. Vehicles of Exchange: Public Responsibility at a Busy Intersection

Mateo, one of my favorite regulars at the La Molina intersection, was an affectionate and easy-going eleven-year-old. He was born in Cusco but had been juggling beneath the traffic light since he and his mother moved to Lima several years earlier. His buddy, Bryan, was a cheerful and focused ten-year-old who had left the Andes when he was too young to remember and, with the help of his clown marionette, worked primarily as a comedian on Lima's public buses. He also went to the intersection to wash windshields, juggle, and hang out with Mateo. They were a perfect match: Mateo's soft, deliberate, and consistent way of speaking complemented the fast and loud spurts of speech that emanated not only through Bryan's thin lips, but, even more notably, through the wide eyes that gave a distinctive flair to his skinny body. Together, the boys liked to contemplate the social dynamics of the intersection and offer insights for what they envisioned as my book about the lives of working children.

One afternoon, during a break in the shade cast by a magazine stand, I commented on how they always seemed so jovial, and asked if there was anything they *didn't* like about their work. After a moment of pondering, Mateo responded in a surprisingly serious tone. In fact, he sounded hurt: "What really bothers me is when the people inside the cars roll up their windows because they think we're going to rob them. They don't understand that we're working; we're not thieves!" Honing in on his friend's concern with this particularly insulting misperception, Bryan added that "the real problems are with the gangs in our neighborhoods."

I recalled having asked Bryan about the people in the cars several months earlier. "When they give you money, do they just give it to you or do they also say something to

you?" Bryan had responded tersely: "They say, 'Here you go,' and I say, 'Thank you.'" By then, however, I had spent almost a year at the intersection and it was clear to me that while the ten-year-old had described a common form of exchange, often the interactions involved more words than these. So I prodded: "Do they ever say anything beyond just, 'Here you go?'" Bryan bowed his head slightly and adopted a woeful tone. "They say, 'You should study instead of doing this; you should study to have a career.' Or sometimes they think we're going to take something from them." Bryan, in fact, was a fourth-grader whose mother encouraged him both to stay in school and to work *afuera* (away from the house) precisely so that he would avoid becoming a thief or beggar. "But who are they to judge us?" a contemplative Bryan concluded as he lifted his gaze in a gesture of self-assurance. "They don't know who we are."

Most drivers that I observed did their best to avoid engaging with the kids who approached their cars. Some avoided eye contact by staring blankly ahead or glaring impatiently at the traffic light, while others expressed themselves through pitying smiles or aggressive stares. Yet it was not facial expressions on which kids like Mateo and Bryan focused when discussing drivers' gestures of refusal, but rather the false, unfair, and sometimes contradictory assumptions connoted through drivers' verbal communication as well as the act of rolling up the car window. Mateo and Bryan revealed the fleeting yet intimate exchanges below the traffic light to be powerful experiences of subjectivization. In this chapter, I posit that these unavoidable stopping points prompted drivers to articulate their often contradictory positions within a set of historically-rooted narratives about children, poverty, urban order, and the management of difference. Following anthropologist Carmen Martínez's argument that the self-representations of indigenous beggars in the Mexican border city of Tijuana are always responses to dominant representations (Martínez 2003), I show how the children in my

study, in their daily encounters across difference, learned what it meant to grapple with the specific forms of misrecognition that face Peruvians who occupy the wrong side of an enduring, if refigured, public-private dichotomy.

* * *

Street paupers and poor children have always existed in Peru, but now that technologies of privacy such as cars and gated neighborhoods increasingly work to shield people from this reality, I suggest, the unsolicited encounters at the traffic light take on a new relevance. In this way, cars serve as vehicles for unintended forms of social exchange, drawing attention to what anthropologist Daniel Miller calls “the humanity of the car” (Miller 2001: 1). Similar to what social theorist Michel de Certeau describes for the train, “the machine... not only divides spectators and beings, but also connects them; it is a mobile symbol between them, a tireless shifter, producing changes in the relationships between immobile elements” (de Certeau 1984: 113). As Lima’s drivers travel to their destinations in moving capsules of privateness, they know that the promise of symbolic and physical protection offered by their automobiles will inevitably be disrupted by visual signs of public disorder and personal requests for “*colaboración*” by the children who personify this state of things. While the automobile, like the train car, may be a “bubble of panoptic and classifying power, a module of imprisonment that makes possible the production of an order, a closed and autonomous insularity” (de Certeau 1984: 111), the power of the gaze is complicated by the obligation of response that drivers experience as they stop at traffic lights and come into direct contact with difference.

If the children who went to make a livelihood at the intersection personify Peru’s poverty, the owners of the private vehicles that passed under the traffic light represent the opposite end of the socioeconomic spectrum. The proximity of the US Embassy and

the North American-style mall led the children to imagine the motorists as dollar-bearing gringos or rich Peruvians. Furthermore, many drivers had just crossed the hill that bridged La Molina's heavily transited area with its more exclusive zone characterized by gated streets, country clubs, private high schools and expensive shops.

The street corner was a place of extremes, yet it was also a space where the powerful ambiguities of Peru's social and economic structure intertwined. On the westernmost and highly commercial edge of the district, the intersection elucidates how Lima's changing social geography upsets conventional notions of center and periphery. In recent years, La Molina has developed to accommodate not only the traditionally elite but also the upwardly mobile and *nuevo rico* (new rich) who sought to differentiate themselves from the city's *cholo* majority (Bruce 2007; Arellano & Burgos [s/d]). Though unable to access the privilege that white skin conferred, brown-skinned families passing through the intersection in private cars occupied a markedly different position on Peru's social hierarchy from those families who rode the public bus through the intersection on the way to the shantytowns where most of the children who worked under the traffic lights lived and went to school. The intersection's KFC was another example of how class and the ability to consume can mute certain racial differences. Having sucked the vitality from the mostly-abandoned strip mall that extended down the block, the transnational food chain was a Sunday outing destination for brown-skinned car-owning families hungry for US-style chicken and the social status conferred by consuming it. One cost of this privilege, however, was having to contend with the mass of small bodies begging for leftovers at the KFC exit.

In addition to the strangers for whom the intersection was primarily a place of transit or consumption, the children interfaced on a daily basis with a mix of adults who, like themselves, commuted regularly to the intersection to make money. This cast of

characters included adult street vendors and beggars, municipal policemen and female traffic police, the three kiosk owners, the gas station attendants (cashiers and tank-fillers), and the KFC workers (delivery men, security guards, custodians, and cashiers). Occupying various rungs on the internal hierarchy of Peru's poor majority, their status as adults nevertheless put them in a position of power in relation to the children—one that they, like the more economically privileged adults who passed through the intersection, articulated in different ways.¹

Karen, the kiosk owner, communicated her sense of authority at the intersection not only by proudly proclaiming to have been the first business owner at the corner and through her nostalgic recollections of when she was “the only one here and everything else was an open expanse,” but also through her tough love towards the children. In return for storing their tennis balls and backpacks in her kiosk, she routinely chastised the kids for their “*falta de cultura*” (lack of “culture,” or manners) and loudly told me, as she put away the coins the same kids had handed her in exchange for whatever snack they had bought that day, “I’d just like to give their parents a piece of my mind!” Her more compassionate cousin and assistant, Marcia, expressed a different kind of moral superiority towards the children by imagining me as a godsend and constantly praising me for my commitment to these “good souls who simply need guidance.”

If these entrepreneurial women and state employees like the municipal policeman exercised a relaxed sort of authority towards the children who came to work at the intersection, so too did the adults who came to the corner as corporate employees.

¹ The adults whose labor was legally sanctioned, even if they too commuted from shantytowns and working class districts, enjoyed more social privilege than informal vendors like Sabina, who, along with her husband, sold home-made popsicles to bus drivers who passed through the intersection. I was surprised to learn that Sabina had given up a career as a nurse technician. Street-vending “embarrassed” her at first, but, as I was shocked to learn, proved more lucrative and allowed her more flexibility and control, in addition to other benefits that her professional career had lacked. Political scientist Francisco Durand has discussed this pattern in the Peruvian economy in terms of intersecting horizontal and vertical hierarchies (Durand 2007).

The KFC workers' jobs required that, in addition to delivering a product, they provide consumers with a private dining experience by keeping transgressors away. Like the police officer employed by the state to ensure, through the regulation of public space, that La Molina not turn into El Agustino, these corporate employees, charged with protecting private space, represented yet another vector in the project of social control that included subtle forms of child discipline. Although the KFC workers were more likely to permit the children access to the establishment's bathroom when accompanied by the gringa anthropologist, they occasionally let the kids in on their own. And while perhaps not smiling with pleasure like the deliveryman whenever he caught the children playing around on his motorcycle, the doorman generally remained quiet when Bryan, Mateo, or one of their counterparts dared to take a turn at the establishment's indoor playground.² Similarly, the gas station attendants silently permitted the kids to use their hoses to wash up; I imagined that they knew from personal experience that a home water supply was a privilege rather than the norm.

Such flexible responses to the children who came to the intersection to make money speak to the complex ways adult workers negotiate their subject positions as both authorities and victims of social exclusion. Their work uniforms, marking them as laborers in projects of spatial control, temporarily distinguished the company employees and policemen from the cholo mass that La Molina was meant to exclude. If social proximity to the child laborers with whom they consistently interacted was partly responsible for their relaxed authority, the social distance between the kids and the

² This was interesting because while the kids were uninhibited in asking families for their leftovers as they left the eating establishment, they respected the physical boundary of the KFC until I began using its bathroom during my long hours at the intersection. They started by occasionally asking me if they could accompany me. Over time, the staff sometimes allowed them to go in on their own; I always imagined that to some extent, this was because of their association with me. In part to keep up the good rapport with the KFC workers, I invited the kids to a chicken lunch, a big treat for them, every so often. By bringing them into the eatery as customers, I was also testing the limits of this private space. For more on indoor playgrounds as the ultimate symbol of the privatization of bourgeois childhood, see Katz 2006.

drivers who paused briefly at the traffic light also articulated itself through subtle, and sometimes contradictory, forms of discipline.

Regardless of their social position, I contend, the adults with whom the children engaged at the intersection did not primarily understand these out-of-place bodies as physical threats to private property or to the general public; they knew that the kids had internalized the limits of permissible behavior in their already unsanctioned use of space. Instead, I suggest, their subtle gestures of discipline were modes of asserting a proper relationship between adult and child—one based on protecting the poor or endangered child, if in the interest of social order. As children who have escaped the confines of disciplinary institutions drew them into unsolicited engagements, adult workers and drivers alike fashioned responses that reflected historically-rooted ideologies about the link between childhood, poverty, family, and public space.³

* * *

Anthropologist Deborah Poole and literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt, in their analyses of travel writing, address the power of classification and representation in structuring encounters across difference. Poole describes the production of “types” (Poole 1997: 12) while Pratt employs the term “contact zone” to refer to the “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (Pratt 1992: 4). Focusing on European representations of colonial subjects, Pratt also accounts for the partial agency of the colonized as they “undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer’s own terms” (7). This conceptual framework draws attention to the intimate link between representation and performance that children like Mateo and

³ These engagements not only reproduce poor children as particular kinds of subjects, but also, in a dialectical manner, give rise to raced and classed adult identities.

Bryan activate when they pester families for leftovers or otherwise reinforce the very stereotypes in which they misrecognize themselves in their encounters with strangers.

Scholars of the contemporary have theorized such understandings across difference in various ways. Anthropologist Anna Tsing uses the concept “friction” to assess the “sticky materiality of practical encounters” that characterizes global power in Indonesia (Tsing 2004: 1). Much academic work on representations of child poverty, in contrast, favors a political-economic approach that examines not intersubjective communication but rather the construction of third world subjectivities through stories and visual images of child poverty (Smith 2006; Hutnyk 2004; Cartwright 2005). Anthropologist Jessaca Leinaweaver reinserts the question of agency into these conversations about representation by showing how marginalized subjects in the Peruvian Andes negotiate power through adoption, godparentage and other forms of kinship that involve complex forms of circulation and flexible understandings of care (Leinaweaver 2008).

Perhaps the most widely-analyzed relationship of difference in the contemporary Latin American context, figuring into the narratives of Peru’s most acclaimed works of fiction, as well as into academic and activist literature, is that between elite and middle-class families and their live-in maids and other domestic laborers. Novelists and filmmakers have highlighted the strange and sometimes scandalous forms in which power works as domestic laborers enter into different kinds of relationships – loving and contentious, exploitative and paternalistic – with members of employer families (Matto de Turner 1889; Vallejo 1951; Arguedas 1958; Bryce 1970; Ribeyro 1977; Vargas Llosa 1990, 1998; Riesco 1994; Bayly 1994; Paranoia Clase Media 2007; Dioses 2008; Milk of Sorrow 2009). As anthropologists of Latin America have unpacked the ways that laborers negotiate such structurally imbalanced power relationships (Gill 1994; Smith

1989) and as historians have uncovered the deep roots of domestic work (Christiansen 2005; Graham 1992; Glave 1988) activists and NGO workers have focused on reform through empowerment and rights if not outright denunciation (Anderson 2011; Hoyos 2000; Alarcón 2000; Ruíz et. al. 2000).

The complex relations of power that drive child labor resemble but are also less apparent than those that characterize other common relationships across difference. The subtle interactions that children had with drivers at the intersection, I argue, reveal unique forms of negotiating difference because of their particular spatial and temporal dimensions. Whereas the domestic laborer is hired to work in the private space of the family home for an extended period of time, the child street labor draws drivers into unsolicited, if brief, relationships of patronage by requesting that they roll down the glass window that divides private and public in order to recognize what is otherwise understood as an unsanctioned form of labor and use of public space. In the colonial encounters and tourist relationships that other scholars describe, those possessing the power of the gaze knowingly enter foreign lands prepared for outright encounters of domination. But Lima drivers face a reverse sort of territorial invasion as bodies imagined to belong to underdeveloped shantytowns have traveled to occupy a district intended to protect its residents from the lower classes and the disorder that they signify. In this way, the relationships of power that drive child labor become obscured as the child – or the imagined adult behind the child’s labor – seems to be the initiator of the encounter, and the adult driver imagines her or himself as a responder in an unsolicited situation rather than a participant in the power structure that produced child labor in the first place.

Returning to the conversation with which I began the chapter, by stating that “people roll up their windows because they think we’re going to rob them” and that

“they don’t understand that we’re working; we’re not thieves,” Mateo revealed how the reinscription of the car’s transparent border produces powerful experiences of misrecognition among children whose livelihoods depend on communicating with motorists. Rather than inviting a discussion about what it means to work, how it feels to be wrongly stereotyped, or why drivers imagine all children on the street to be *pirañas*, the statement provoked Bryan to redeploy the moralizing gaze to the “gangs in our neighborhoods.” This was not the first time the kids at the intersection had named this contrasting form of youth deviance to validate their own activities. While brainstorming ideas for the open-ended photography project that emerged out of our work together, Bryan and Mateo, the de-facto leaders of the initiative, repeatedly proposed that they act like “mini-reporters” and “document problems in [their] *barrios*, like the gangs.” They never went through with this, but I found their interest in mimicking the mass media’s sensationalized depiction of youth deviance significant; after all, when I had initially presented my dissertation project to them, they feared that I was a reporter looking to portray them in a negative light. Taking my camera into their hands, like differentiating themselves from gang members and thieves, repositioned them on the opposite side of a gaze of which they were typically the object.

If their active disassociation from the most widely represented forms of youth deviance served to challenge the assumption that their bodies posed an explicit threat to the safety of the exclusive neighborhood, this mode of self-legitimation reaffirmed aspects of the municipal policeman’s preoccupation that, because of the presence of children like themselves, “La Molina is going to turn into El Agustino.” Yet as if to refute the law enforcer’s discourse of contamination, the kids displaced their own configuration as potentially dangerous onto others by tapping into the spatialized and classed imaginaries that locate the origin of youth deviance in poor neighborhoods.

Whereas the problematic kids are those who stay in their neighborhoods and associate with gangs, Mateo and Bryan implied, they occupied a different moral plane; leaving their neighborhoods for the purpose of working, they constituted anything but a threat.

In imagining that drivers mistake him and his co-workers for thieves, Mateo also drew on common stories about quick-moving criminals who take advantage of Lima's ungovernable streets to stealthily and at times violently rob drivers stuck in traffic. While rolling up the car window when stopped was undoubtedly a precaution taken by many motorists to shield themselves from assaults to their material possessions and physical bodies, I suggest that in the context of the intersection, this gesture also expressed a more symbolic sense of insecurity. Drivers were not simply seeking protection from kids like Mateo and Bryan, but rather from what they represent: a threat to a social order governed by a private-public divide according to which the proper place of children is imagined. For adults concerned with arriving at their destinations unbothered, the experience of being hailed by children who problematically occupy public space is a disruption to the protection offered by the private car and thus a destabilizing part of everyday life. In this way, rolling up the car window is a form of reclaiming authority by reasserting the distance necessary to mark the multiple kinds of difference that the public-private distinction encompasses. Bryan had made this clear to me months earlier, when he juxtaposed drivers' two common forms of response: "'You should study instead of doing this; you should study to have a career.' Or sometimes they think we're going to take something from them." The forms of protection enacted by rolling up the car window (the gesture that prompted comments like the latter), I suggest, make sense in relation to the seemingly opposing gesture of communicating verbally with the children. In a world in which, as the UNCRC states, protecting children is considered fundamental to achieving social order and development, the

physical and verbal gestures that Bryan identifies constitute discrete modes of articulating power in relation to children who are paradoxically endangered and dangerous (Foucault 2004, 2008).

While closing the window protects drivers from certain kinds of engagement, it leaves open the possibility of visual observation. With reference to photography, critics have argued that images of poor children reproduce the power relations fueling Western liberal humanitarianism. Visual scholar John Hutnyk argues that such photographs, as souvenirs through which “we come to know an other place,” represent the “congealed social relations” (Hutnyk 2004: 85) of the fleeting and romantic tourist encounter and, insofar as they provoke a certain kind of philanthropic pity, demonstrate how “charity is an alibi for avoiding the structural redistribution that would not only alleviate but eradicate the poverty of children, also of adults, families, people” (81). If cameras work as a symbolic medium through which the observer wields epistemological power over the observed, they also function, in the physical sense, as a shield. “I had never been on the other side of the glass before,” my photojournalist friend Martín succinctly noted after first time I brought him to the intersection to teach the kids about taking pictures. Often introducing his thoughts through metaphors, Martín went on to contemplate how being on the other side of both the camera lens and the car window challenged his presumed knowledge of the generic child he routinely encountered as he traversed the city and occasionally photographed for assignments. In much the same way, rolling up the car window at the traffic light secures the power of visibility through which drivers may imagine, and actively distance themselves from, the stories of the children on the other side. In contrast to the inherent distance that the observer enjoys when consuming images circulated by tourists and charities – a dynamic central to what visual scholar Lisa Cartwright calls “the politics of pity” (Cartwright 2005: 187) – the embodied nature

of the exchange below the traffic light makes it such that drivers must actively articulate their distance.

Even if the child worker can see through the car's transparent window (at least if the glass is not tinted!), the adult driver's capacity to regulate this symbolic border draws attention to the public-private divide as an important component of visual power. Closing the car window serves as a mechanism of protection and observation as it positions the driver in a private space from which to see, read and categorize the bodies that remain in public. In his anthropological treatise on value, David Graeber discusses the ability to hide one's body as a privilege through which the bourgeois subject exercises power over the visible bodies that correspond to the public. "To be visible on the other hand... is to be the object of action rather than one who acts on others" (Graeber 2001: 98). Yet with regard to the exchanges under the traffic light, even if the car imbues the driver with persuasive power, the desire of the child for a monetary exchange complicates the dichotomy between the visible, passive and the hidden, active subject.⁴ In the brief time that the encounter lasts, it is the child's unsolicited action that hails the driver as responsible (response-able), regardless of whether or not the driver arrives at the intersection with a desire to directly communicate.

Furthermore, the child's form of engagement is always itself a response to his or her understanding of the ways that the driver – as a stand-in for the generic bourgeois subject or a vehicle for the circulation of dominant knowledge – imagines the poor child.⁵ In this way, Bryan's corrective, "Who are they to judge us? They don't know who

⁴ This also brings attention to the ways that marginalized groups use a language of visibility to demand recognition of their identities. In this sense, gaining visibility (or refusing to remain invisible) refers more to social inclusion in response to a history of exclusion and repression.

⁵ Similarly, in a fictional ethnography that emerged out of his long relationship with a Brazilian street child who recorded her thoughts on a tape recorder that he gave her to carry around, anthropologist Tobias Hecht

we are,” is a reminder that the encounters at the traffic light are never one-sided. But there is a physical window that the drivers have the power to close as the children remain exposed. In this sense, rolling up the window is at once a refusal, a recognition, and a reclamation of authority in response to children who transgress the rules of social order by soliciting the attention of adult strangers. It is one of many responses in this condensed and particular struggle over public order and development.

Like the municipal poster campaigns reminding the public of the proper configurations of public space, closing the car window may be seen as part of the larger project that critics of urban revanchism have referred to as “taking back” cities presumably stolen by undesirable bodies. In this sense, Bryan’s belief that drivers are “afraid we are going to take something from them” corresponds not simply to a concern with material possessions. Instead, I suggest, Bryan and his counterparts pose a threat to a particular way of being in the world associated with the imperative of adults to protect children for the good of society. When confronted by children trying to engage them in unsolicited economic exchanges, motorists use not only their power of visibility, but also their voices to reclaim this authority through a set of false assumptions that emerge from and reproduce dominant structures of exclusion. I argue that such responses are based not simply on a vague notion that child labor is bad or that street workers sully the city, but rather on specific knowledge that drivers presume to have about children like Mateo and Bryan.

I was not surprised by Bryan’s revelation that sometimes, rather than rolling up their windows, motorists communicate through comments such as, “you should study

posits that Bruna “situates her subjective experience in relation to what she saw as an audience” (Hecht 2008: 239).

instead of doing this; you should study to have a career.” Indeed, I had also heard drivers yelling other versions of this: “Why aren’t you in school?” or “Do you go to school?” A straightforward and honest reply would have been, “I study in the morning session and currently it’s the afternoon,” or to the second inquiry, “Yes I go to school, and the only way I can afford to is by also working.” Such questions, though, were intended not to elicit matter-of-fact answers, but rather to express moral authority based on the assumption that a child on the street is a child who does not value or even attend school. Another common inquiry was, “Where are your parents?” or more specifically even, “Where is your mother?” These rhetorical forms of verbal engagement, I contend, are part of a moral discourse that imagines child laborers as deviant subjects precisely because they have escaped – whether voluntarily or because of parental coercion – the very disciplinary institutions intended to regulate childhood. Before addressing the idea that work and school are mutually exclusive and other similar misperceptions, I show how these loaded remarks are vehicles for the circulation of false forms of knowledge that categorize poor families as morally inferior and mark child laborers as publicly available.⁶ Figured as repositories of value, liminal beings, potential citizens, and conduits for social reproduction, children, as I have continually shown, are key sites of ideological struggle. To engage with a child, in contrast to an adult street vender, is thus always way of participating in the ideological project of imagining the future.

Insofar as they convey values to and through the children they encounter while stopped at the traffic light, drivers’ verbal messages reflect not only the content of corporate- and state-sponsored municipal poster campaigns, but also the rhetorical strategies of UN-funded NGOs invested in ending child labor. Several years prior to the

⁶ In subsequent chapters I will focus more on the question of family and the particular experiences of families with which I worked closely.

appearance of the “Society with Values, Society without Working Children” poster in Lima’s wealthiest neighborhood, the director of a Peruvian NGO in a northern province asked me to sit on the jury of the “Values Talent Show” to which she had invited local children including those with whom she worked. I arrived at the small theatre on the Friday night the event was to take place and learned that my task was to evaluate the ten skits according to how well they relayed children’s rights. About halfway through the show, I recognized a pattern: all of the groups emphasized the contradiction between child labor and the rights to study, to play, and to be protected. My vote, I realized, was supposed to be based on how effectively the young contestants expressed the idea that child labor, in contrast to the rights associated with normative childhood, threatens social values. Perhaps due to my status as a white North American adult, I had been incorporated into a moralizing effort that operated by indoctrinating endangered and potentially dangerous subjects with a notion of values that they were to reproduce through public performances such as the talent show and through the regulation of their own everyday embodied practices.

Drivers participated in a similar ideological project when they stopped at the traffic light and openly expressed a set of implicit rules about children’s proper place. By communicating assumptions about children’s (improper) relationship to school and family, a topic I will explore in more detail in the following chapter, they marked Mateo, Bryan and their counterparts as deviant subjects for having disobeyed the rules of mobility particular to their age and class—or, shifting the blame, for having obeyed their presumably irresponsible parents who failed to enforce these rules. Insofar as the everyday moralizing interventions at the intersection constituted a form of child socialization based on drivers’ symbolic power over the children’s absent parents, they mimicked aspects of the historical association between poor children and surrogate

patriarchs. Motorists' verbal responses, then, reveal another way that drivers confront the paradox of how to both protect themselves from and protect children.

The concern with children like Bryan and Mateo emerges, in part, from the idea that children who occupy public space tread a slippery slope towards thievery, glue-sniffing and other forms of threatening deviance. Following this logic, child protection, a pillar of the UNCRC, is a mode of monitoring the development of vulnerable subjects who could become dangerous to others, a strategy that scholars have shown to be integral to nation-building projects all across the globe. The idea of child protection is also a way to control the mobility of prematurely independent subjects who, in theory, cannot shield themselves from the physical and social risks of public space, such as traffic accidents and exploitative relationships with strangers. Here, however, poor children represent a particular paradox, for they do not have access to the privatized spaces – such as the indoor playground at the intersection's KFC – intended to protect children from such dangers. Instead, their association with public space figures them as part of the imagined threat to which such private forms of protection respond. In contrast to the orphanages, youth detention centers, and NGOs that exist to discipline the poor, these privatized spaces reinforce the link between recreation and consumption, emphasizing how class inequalities are maintained through the differential structuring of children's spaces.⁷

* * *

⁷ With regard to the privatization of children's spaces in post-9/11 New York City, social geographer Cindi Katz argues that "the terrorizing contentions concerning violence against children in the public arena—from abductions and molestations to armed assaults and murders—weigh heavily on the public imagination" (Katz 2006: 108). She cites the rise of indoor playgrounds in relation to the exaggerated fear of strangers, as part of a "discourse that helps hide that the private sphere is the locus of the most horrific threats to children, and this serves to sharpen the false dichotomy between public and private arenas in ways that do not serve children at all" (111). Indeed, the emergence of private indoor playgrounds in Peru's chain supermarkets and eateries reinforces the association of public space with danger while presuming the sanctity of the private.

In his influential theorizing about the changing meaning of the slippery signifier “public,” Michael Warner examines the relations of power and difference among the bodies that occupy what has traditionally been called public space. “Some publics are defined by their tension with a larger public. Their participants are marked off from persons or citizens in general” (Warner 2005: 56). Indeed, the kids on the street corner resemble Warner’s counterpublics insofar as “they are testing our understandings of how private life can be made publicly relevant” by producing “visceral reactions” that turn on “affects of shame and disgust” (62). Yet Warner cannot fully account for the nature of the transgression that child street laborers pose. First, the children with whom I worked, unlike Warner’s “counterpublics of sex and gender,” did not necessarily have “an aim of transformation” (62); although they certainly had an “awareness of [their] subordinate status” (119) within dominant culture, they drew on dominant discourses rather than attempting to challenge them. Second, Warner’s use of children as either pre-adults (23) or metaphors (“public discourse craves attention like a child” [89]) assumes an adult subject and excludes children as actors. So, even though Warner recognizes that public, in its traditional sense, is an exclusionary construct, he stops short of considering age a “minor category” and is therefore unable to fully account for the complex relationships of power that can exist between public children and adult strangers.

Warner’s interest in the normativization of stranger relationality in modern society is not so much concerned with the face-to-face relationships between individuals that the interactions between the kids and the drivers represent; rather, he is interested in the way that the discourses that circulate through print and other media produce differentiated subjectivities. “This necessary element of impersonality” differentiates his theory of public address from Althusserian interpellation, as the latter, he posits, is about “addressing a particular person, not a public,” whereas in the former, “it is

equally important that we remember that the speech was addressed to indefinite others, that in singling us out it does so not on the basis of our concrete identity but by virtue of our participation in the discourse alone and therefore in common with strangers (77-8). If Althusserian interpellation can help in explaining the interactions between the children and the drivers, Warner's idea is helpful in thinking about the work of the municipal poster campaigns. The San Isidro posters, for example, produced a common public among strangers by calling on "local government, enterprises, and community" to create a "Society with Values, Society without Working Children."

Warner argues that "to address a public or to think of oneself as belonging to a public is to be a certain kind of person, to inhabit a certain kind of social world, to have at one's disposal certain media and genres, to be motivated by a certain normative horizon, and to speak within a certain language ideology" (10). Yet this implicitly adult and bourgeois public can only exist insofar as the posters exclude the poor working children to which they are also visible from equal participation in their discourse. In other words, the campaign reproduces age- and class-based forms of power by differentiating between deviant bodies that require intervention and a privileged public authorized to contribute to the social good in conjunction with the private sector. The campaign that instructed English-speaking tourists not to "give money to begging children [because] your alms will not resolve the problem" similarly interpellated the privileged public into a disciplinary project that denies marginalized publics self-representation.

Just as the content of the campaigns that directly address the privileged public serves to marginalize others, the campaigns whose written messages explicitly address street workers also communicate a message about social difference to the privileged public. The poster that appeared at the intersection prior to the international forum on

development and poverty was an explicit warning to the children on whom my research focused, yet also indirectly invited passersby to frown upon so-called informal street activities. The campaign that read, “Behind every working child is an exploitative adult,” speaks to a more ambiguous public, yet also distinguishes the (ethical) privileged public from exploitative (and thus unethical) poor parents. This production of differentiated subjectivities through the public diffusion of moral standards is also at play in drivers’ multiple responses to the kids at the intersection. These varying forms of public discipline, I contend, are crucial to the production of child laborers’ subjectivities, yet their significance can only be grasped by considering what it means for child strangers to initiate public exchange with adults. This complicates theories of publics as well as the critical scholarship on child-stranger relationality, which focuses mainly on the figure of the dangerous stranger who puts the innocent child at risk.

Social geographer Cindi Katz shows how the child is often a stand-in, or a voiceless body through which to imagine threatening adult subjectivities. She argues that the “terror talk” (108) surrounding the rise of indoor playgrounds in New York to protect children from strangers “merely shows how children, like nature, are a ready canvas on which all manner of social phenomena and anxieties are inscribed” (Katz 2006: 111).⁸ While the adults who stop at the intersection certainly imagine children as bodies on whom values may be inscribed in the service of the social body, here, I suggest, it is the experience of being addressed by children that is disconcerting. The diverse scripts through which drivers respond to children, responses to this destabilization of power, gesture towards the obligation of the privileged public to participate in the construction of a “society with values.”

⁸See also Anagnost on how the child in China is a symbol of value, functioning as “place of origin for adult subject and, by extension, for the modern nation-state” (Anagnost 2008: 53).

As I have argued, the children at the intersection are figured as paradoxically endangered and dangerous. Rolling up the car window and verbally moralizing are ways that adults protect themselves from children and articulate the need for children to be protected. Socializable, children also represent a threat to the social order. If adult street vendors and beggars disrupt the urban landscape as well as the rules of inter-class relationality, children are especially problematic as they are supposed to consume rather than produce capitalist exchanges with adults.⁹ Moreover, they are always also imagined to be attached to the presumably irresponsible parent who has authorized this transgression. These moments of exchange between child and adult strangers, I have suggested, encapsulate broader tensions about the ways child poverty, informal labor, and urban space figure into Peruvians' image of themselves as members of a "developing" nation. The question of how to respond to the child performers that occupy so many of Lima's chaotic intersections has become part of everyday public and private life.

* * *

Peruvian friends and acquaintances never hesitated to offer me their unsolicited advice about which kinds of "street children" – if any – deserved "*colaboración*." Often, I was told to decline requests for money so as not to encourage children to *acostumbrarse*. A reflexive verb meaning "to accustom one's self," or "to become accustomed," *acostumbrarse* does not require an object, so people generally refrained from further specification when employing it in this context. Given that a standard inquiry about my research was whether kids who work on the street are doomed for disaster, I interpreted this use of the term as connoting the transformation of a bad practice into a habit or

⁹ Of course their "informal" activities reflect the very inequalities produced by capitalism.

permanent state of being. By drawing on the notion that children are moldable subjects and that children on the street are on a particularly problematic moral trajectory, my informants were asserting themselves as subtle contenders in a new form of child socialization.

When I asked people to explain what they thought children might become accustomed to, a frequent response was, *ganar la vida facil* (making a living easily). This suggestion that requesting money from strangers on the street is not hard work but rather an easy way out delegitimizes the struggles of the poor and overlooks the structural roots of poverty by valuing certain modes of money-making above others. Recalling drivers' assumptions that Bryan is not in school and is therefore denying himself the possibility of a career, the concern with children becoming accustomed to easy work also implies that Peru is a meritocracy where *profesionalizarse* (to become professional and thus guarantee oneself a career) or even to engage in wage labor is always possible or even profitable. The idea of *ganar la vida facil* ignores that informal labor arises from a tradition of exploitation in the formal sector and from the lack of jobs for the masses of impoverished adults with childcare responsibilities. This is linked to what historian Paulo Dr̄iñot describes as a historical refusal of the Peruvian state to recognize the indigenous population as workers (Dr̄iñot 2011). Regardless of whether child labor is desirable, I contend that the notion of *acostumbrarse* redefines a set of structural injustices according to a discourse of poor child socialization that invokes narratives of parent-blaming and moral surrogacy as well as a narrow and individualist concept of work.

People often correlated *acostumbrarse* with *dependerse* (to depend, or to be dependent), another reflexive verb that does not require an object. A defining condition of normative childhood, dependence ironically takes on a negative connotation in

reference to poor children engaged in public economic activities. If children are supposed to depend primarily on their parents, then dependence on strangers, even when out of economic necessity, indicates parents who inadequately provide for or, as one poster campaign suggested, exploit, their children. Hence the common opinion that by giving children money, “we’re sending parents the message that it’s okay to have their kids *dependerse*.” In this way, the idea of *acostumbrarse a dependerse* conveys not simply that poor children are dependent in the wrong way, but moreover that they are being poorly socialized by their parents. This mimics culture of poverty arguments that generalize about the intergenerational transmission of the purported values of the poor, such as the acceptance of inferior life conditions and absence of a work ethic.¹⁰ Another way that my informants differentiated between the ethical (bourgeois) stranger and the unethical (poor) parent was by begrudgingly capitulating to children’s requests for money on the basis that “at least tonight their parents won’t punish them for not making enough money.”

Also linked to *acostumbrarse* was the question of faking, or trickery. Early on in my fieldwork, I shared a rush-hour “*lonche*” (tea time snack) with an academic friend and her businessman husband on the outdoor patio of an expensive café in a traditionally well-off district. Carola and Patricio pointed out the pouting child who meekly approached pedestrians waiting to cross the busy street. “You really have to learn to distinguish the kids who are *fingiendo* (faking it),” they warned me, and went on to explain that parents often train their kids to cry or to “use” their cuteness as a strategy to evoke strangers’ sympathetic responses. Over the years, I heard various versions of this. “Often the kids seem like they’re all alone,” many people told me, “but if you look

¹⁰ In the United States, this logic has been recently reanimated by current Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich (Blow 2011; Ehrenreich 2012).

around the corner you'll see their mothers lounging lazily on the pavement or next to a bush, waiting for their kids to bring back their earnings." Yet even children accompanied by adults aroused suspicion, particularly in the wake of the media hysteria about parents who rented their children to beggars pretending to be helpless mothers (Comercio 2/11/08). These varying concerns communicate the common judgment that adults have taught children to lie. The question of child socialization once again emerges by blaming poor families for the kinds of trickery that are imagined to corrode the social body and threaten the collective future. The notion that dishonesty is a value produced by poor parents (and indirectly reproduced by adult strangers who grant children's requests for money) elides the crucial ways that structural corruption perpetuates poverty in Peru.¹¹

In his ethnography of African call girls, John Chernoff argues that "hustling is not stealing" but rather a response to the structural injustices that marginalized subjects must negotiate as a matter of survival (Chernoff 2003). The idea that economically privileged people must protect themselves from being tricked by poor children links to Bryan's comment about drivers' fears that he and his counterparts will "take something from them." Once again, I suggest that the "taking" to which Bryan refers is not so much about the threat of a violent physical assault, but rather that of the destabilization of age- and class-based power. In a system in which individuals derive power from the ability to both categorize others and control economic exchanges, there is a certain discomfort with poor children who rob bourgeois adults of their ability to freely "choose" to enter

¹¹ For an analysis of the diverse ways informality is sanctioned by the state, see Mújica 2008; Calderón 2005). For an anthropological analysis of everyday corruption in Peru as facilitated by small-scale public functionaries, see Huber 2008. The question of corruption exploded with President Alberto Fujimori's 2000 escape from Peru, followed by the *Vladivideo* scandal, in which videos were leaked of Vladimiro Montesinos, the president's top advisor and head of intelligence, engaging in payoffs with prominent business people and politicians.

into economic exchange. Considering such destabilizing experiences to be examples of deceit on the part of the poor reproduces dominant structures of power by locating the street as the site of immorality and crime. This is particularly relevant in the aftermath of the 2011 electoral campaign in which candidate Keiko Fujimori, daughter of the Peruvian ex-president now serving a lifetime prison sentence for corruption and human rights violations, hired “urban crime-stopper” Rudy Giuliani as her urban security advisor (Wade & Aquino 2011).

The notion of *acostumbrarse* not only masks the structural injustices responsible for poverty, but also undermines agency by imagining children who work on the streets as repositories of value rather than social and economic actors who make informed, if unfair, decisions about their relationships with adult strangers. I suggest that the children at the intersection, rather than learning to pretend, are constantly fashioning performances in response to the dominant, if often conflicting, knowledge that circulates about them. Such performances take multiple forms and sometimes reproduce stereotypes. Initially, I was perplexed when the kids in La Molina madly dashed to the KFC to fight one another for leftovers after having humbly walked from car to car in hopes for monetary recognition of their ability to juggle six balls while balanced atop a five-person pyramid for the duration of a red light. Suddenly behaving like beggars, I thought, seemed to discredit their commitment to a form of work based on patience and corporal discipline and play into the representations of “street children” as desperate and unruly.

Anthropologist Elizabeth Chin describes a similar scenario with regard to the black girls with whom she did her fieldwork in New Haven. As they stood at the border between the girls’ neighborhood and one of the city’s wealthiest zones, one of the girls shouted at a car driven by an older white woman in such a way that “exaggerat[ed] the

very character traits that she knows are most feared, disliked, and disparaged in the white world beyond her neighborhood” (Chin 2001: 64). If purposeful in her enactment of stereotypes, Chin suggests, “Tionna could be reasonably sure that only those familiar with her neighborhood as a community would be able to see through the put-on” (64). Similarly, “this ability to use outsiders’ notions of authenticity to advantage” (63) is what kids in La Molina activate, if not always in uniform or predictable ways, when performing to strangers’ stereotypes and expectations. While I was hanging out with the two adolescent girls who came to the intersection one day, Betina complimented Yocelyn on her nice clothes. Yocelyn noted that it was important to give an impression of cleanliness to gain strangers’ respect. Betina was doubtful, however: “If we dress too nicely then the rich people may think that we’re pretending to be poor.” Such differences in opinion show children’s performances as part of the everyday burden of living as a stigmatized subject. I contend that imagining Lima’s working children as tricksters-in-training from whom passersby must self-protect is itself a fundamental trick of a system that blames children and the parents by whom they have presumably been socialized for unfairly approaching adult strangers trying to abide by the rules of social space.

If many strangers invoked narratives of individual responsibility when explaining their objection to child street labor, my self-proclaimed progressive friends, who critiqued arguments based on distrust and poor socialization, justified their refusal to *colaborar* by offering a structural critique of child labor. A common way that people expressed the belief that giving money was a band-aid solution to the systemic problems of poverty and inequality was by invoking a critique of *asistencialismo*. Referring to the system of handouts that characterized Fujimori’s hypocritical brand of populism in the

1990s, *asistencialismo* remains a keyword among proponents of democracy and justice.¹² Although rooted in a left critique of power, I argue, the idea that giving children money is a form of *asistencialismo* paradoxically articulates with aspects of *acostumbrarse* reasoning.

Asistencialismo has long been a controversial topic. Critiqued by activists and intellectuals as an undemocratic form of governing that failed to adequately address the causes of poverty, *asistencialismo* was readily accepted by many poor Peruvians who revered Fujimori for his role in ending terrorism and for his gifts of schools, food and other resources (Mortensen 2010). Progressives, however, argued that *asistencialismo* has never been anything more than a way to placate the poor and disguise the human rights violations and widespread corruption for which Fujimori is currently in prison. Other critics have argued that despite Fujimori's deplorable practices, the emphasis on *asistencialismo* imagines the poor as falsely conscious or sell-outs. The same logic would hold that child street workers, rather than actively negotiating exchange relationships, are dupes at best and tricksters at worse. The anti-*asistencialismo* justification for not giving, therefore, if intended to convey solidarity with the poor, can reinforce class difference by imagining the poor as passive recipients of intervention and those with the power of capital accumulation as agents of intervention. In this way, it can have the effect of ignoring drivers' passive complicity with the reproduction of inequality.

Like the poster campaign that told passersby, "Your alms don't help resolve the problem," the notion that giving children money is a form of *asistencialismo* stops short of articulating a clear alternative. As with all structural critiques, the question of how to address the immediate issues of hunger and poverty remains an unanswered challenge.

¹² The kids I worked with, mostly born in the 1990s had always existed within this political climate. Many of their families, particularly during the period that he was on trial in 2008, expressed their support for Fujimori.

Indeed, Peru's recently elected president Ollanta Humala has disappointed progressives by maintaining the status quo with regard to economic policy.¹³

* * *

Many people opposed giving money to children on the basis that doing so was "complicit with child labor." This justification emerges from the assumption that child labor, whether a result of structural poverty or poor parenting, is a problem to be eradicated. Others, however, surrendered a few coins *a veces* (sometimes). I contend that granting children's requests for money, if a seemingly spontaneous action, was typically a choice based on a set of internalized rules that varied from case to case yet paradoxically resembled the evaluative criteria that guided the refusal to give. Like the ethical judgments connoted through the "Society with Values" poster campaign and the NGO "Values Talent Show" for which I agreed to sit on the jury, the logic behind the decision to hand a few spare coins to needy children revealed a multifaceted notion of value that was only partly about money. Just as Mateo and Bryan admitted, after some prodding, that their exchanges with drivers were more diverse and complicated than the straightforward (or hoped for), "here you go" and "thank you," the meanings that drivers attached to their monetary exchanges with children involved complex standards of evaluation.

People often commented that they only gave money to artistically talented kids. This meant favoring the teenager who simultaneously played the charango and Andean flute over the child who sang a screechy melody while scraping an old comb against an empty metal can. It meant favoring the twenty-one-year-old fire-thrower over the eleven-year-old who struggled to juggle self-made dirt-filled balloons. This evaluative

¹³ Many progressives voted for him not because of his left-leaning politics or out of a desire for a radical political-economic overhaul, but rather as a rejection of the Fujimori legacy.

logic reflected an age and class bias, as the young artists, if never from wealthy families, nonetheless occupied a superior social position to that of children who lived in extreme poverty. Moreover, I suggest, this form of valuation was linked to a notion of disciplined work that contrasts with the image of the needy and impressionable street child. Even if someone like Bryan could have qualified as an artist based on his skill as a comedian and puppeteer, the kids I came to know understood the significance of striking a balance between being perceived as pitiful and poor and giving an impression of dignity and respectability. This was the distinction that Yocelyn and Betina made when debating how their forms of dress determined their public's proclivity to give them money. It was also what came into tension when otherwise disciplined kids ran wildly to the KFC exit to pester patrons for leftovers, a situation that elicited varying responses. At times adult strangers surrendered their food to the closest hand in an attempt to rapidly disengage from what they experienced as harassment. Other times they ignored the children completely. And sometimes they directed their leftovers at a specific child. I learned from friends that the decision of which child to give to involved factors including gender, disability, and age, as well as who seemed the most patient, the saddest, or the least powerful in relation to his or her peers.

As performers, the kids at the intersection required that their publics attach value to something more abstract than a physical commodity. At times, however, they came with candy and other objects for sale, whether to substitute or complement their performances. Years before beginning my dissertation research, I had developed a habit of giving money but refusing the product, usually because I didn't find the product useful and figured I may as well maximize the kids' profit. Friends told me that they did the same because they wanted to recognize the child's intention to work and not beg. Others dispersed healthy snacks instead of giving cash so as to assure that the children

would not spend money on “unhealthy” things; this was a form of taking control over the children’s consumptive practices. Although at times kids greatly appreciated the gift of food, often they needed money for other essential items and already had forms of obtaining food, whether at home, with their money, or through families exiting the KFC.

Refusing the product can also be interpreted as the conversion of a potential market exchange into a gift. As scholars influenced by Marcel Mauss have argued, gifting is never totally selfless, but rather confers power upon the gifter insofar as it always requires reciprocity (Mauss 1990). I suggest that when privileged adults recode their exchanges with poor yet laboring children as gifting, this mutual obligation, impossible to fulfill in any material sense, becomes a vehicle through which the powerful maintain control. This is best understood by considering the *casero* relationship and annual donations, two more blatant modes of gifting.

Casero traditionally refers to individuals engaged in a regular relationship of exchange with one another. Like many anthropologists of Peru, the first time I encountered the term was at an Andean market, where the vendor from whom I always purchased vegetables was my *casera* and I, hers. In the context of the intersection, *casero* did not connote this same kind of mutuality, but rather referred to specific individuals who regularly arrived at the intersection prepared to give the kids money and therefore did not require the same type of performance that kids targeted at complete strangers. When I began fieldwork, the children constantly anticipated the appearance of Charlie the gringo, who supposedly worked at the US embassy, only carried \$100 bills, and bought a new car every month. I never saw Charlie in all my time at the intersection, leaving me wondering whether he existed as something other than part of group mythology.

The kids' representation of Charlie demonstrates how poor Peruvians commonly imagine financial generosity in classed, raced, and gendered terms. Similarly, the light-skinned Peruvian husbands who ritualistically drove to the intersection at Christmastime to unload their children's used toys from their expensive cars draw attention to the link between power, gift-giving and the reproduction of difference. These annual acts of charity had become so ritualized that flocks of kids I had never seen before would ride the bus to the intersection in the days leading up to the holiday, expecting to return home with new toys. I often wondered whether these charitable individuals were the same residents of nearby neighborhoods who rolled up their windows when typically stopped at the traffic light. If so, did Christmas somehow induce a spirit of forgiveness an ethic of salvation that enabled these drivers to overlook the ways in which the kids' use of space reproduced social disorder? Perhaps this voluntary act of charity was also a form of soul-cleansing in the same way that my socially-conscious middle-class friends prompted me to think of the KFC as the new Church when describing giving as "the rich ridding themselves of guilt."

The *casero* and the Christmastime scenario both revolve around wealthy white men actively deciding to bestow gifts upon poor brown-skinned children.¹⁴ I suggest that the very idea of *voluntad* (will, or voluntarism) works to maintain dominant structures of power, particularly when adults consider their everyday encounters with such children to be assaults to their ability to choose. It is the very inability to return the gift to these willful charity-givers that fixes poor children in a permanent state of indebtedness and thus powerlessness; this is a similar logic to that which guides the

¹⁴ These men embodied a different kind of masculinity to that of the (mostly boy) kids on the street and, presumably, their fathers, a topic I will take up in Chapters 3 and 4. Yet in contrast to the figures of the *pishtaco* (Weismantel 2001) and the *duende* (who the children I knew often expressed fear about), they were not considered dangerous.

strategy of chain stores that profit off of locking the poor into debt. When the gift is subtle, as in the case of rejecting the commodity, the gift of money is based on a moral valuing of the intention not to beg, or the refusal to comply with the unethical practice of child labor. Converting a market exchange into an act of charity also softens the blatant power disparity of entering into a capitalist exchange with a poor child and gestures towards a morally valued form of child socialization.

Masking a contentious form of exchange as an act of *voluntad*, the gesture of gift-giving at the intersection complicates the distinction between begging and laboring. Following Graeber, it also draws attention to the multiple meanings and expressions of value.¹⁵ Selling objects such as candy requires kids to invest the little capital they have in bulk purchases and profit from the commodity's standard resale value. However, the paradoxical position of children in relation to labor and the market reveals a kind of value that, if often expressed through money, fails to correspond to a preordained notion of profit. Here, if value may be determined in part by the labor of the exploited factory worker who made the product and that of the vendor who put it on the market, it is most importantly determined by the negation of the child's street activities as labor. In other words, even if expressed through an economy of money, value here is primarily moral. If the driver were to exchange his money for the product being sold by the child, he would be publically recognizing the child's actions as labor, or valuing child labor. Yet insofar as he refuses the product, his gift of money becomes an act of charity and an activation of a moral code based on values – or, to borrow from Graeber, “conceptions of

¹⁵ Graeber asks what happens to value “when there is no market in labor at all, or none that is especially important. Does the same thing happen? That is, is it possible to apply anything like Marx's value analysis to the vast majority of human societies—or to any one that existed prior to the eighteenth century” (Graeber 2001: 56)? Modifying his question, what happens in exchanges like those under the traffic light, that both do and do not correspond to a market?

what is good, proper, or desirable in human life” (Graeber 2001: 1).¹⁶ Value is thus situational, determined not simply by the market but also by the driver’s moral codes.

The performances that children enacted to legitimate themselves as members of the deserving poor reflected dominant notions of value linked to common perceptions of child street labor. As the summer drew to a close, the kids at the intersection would approach drivers with their lists of school supplies for the upcoming year, speaking back to the assumption that they did not go to school and anticipating the question, “What are you going to do with your money?” Another approach was to emphasize their strong work ethic and their commitment to family; when I asked them to write short letters to potential tennis ball donors in the United States, all of the kids explained that they were poor and came to the intersection with the intention of “helping my mother.” If their performances often challenged dominant forms of representation, the kids also gave the impression that they had internalized their marginal condition. Despite being a universal activity among children, when in-fighting occurred in conjunction with begging at the KFC door, the behavior reproduced classed stereotypes about public disorder. Additionally, the children complicated the distinction between working, begging, and passive gift reception by paradoxically soliciting gifts from passersby through the phrase *regálame*, a phenomenon that Swanson has discussed for urban Ecuador (Swanson 2010). Taken together, such performances, further marginalizing children like Mateo and Bryan by reproducing the assumptions that land them in the “street child” category, provide powerful examples of the conflicting expectations that society has of poor, working children.

¹⁶ This moral dimension of value is also seen when the commodity drops out and the object for which kids ask passersby to pay them is a performance.

This chapter has focused on how institutionalized understandings of childhood, poverty and development circulate in public spaces that seem to be free of institutional mediation. I have shown how, in the everyday yet always awkward encounters with children who work beneath the traffic light, adult strangers draw on representations of public childhood to assert themselves as agents of socialization. At first glance, this response seems only natural; after all, the children prompting these unsolicited exchanges threaten both the protected journey that the private car seems to promise and the idea that children should not occupy public space in this way. Yet as I have demonstrated, it is important to examine the various, often contradictory, reactions that these children's actions elicit: adults' responses to these momentary inversions of age-based power signal the historical failure of disciplining institutions' efforts to effectively manage children; they also draw on the discourses that such institutions exist to reproduce. Drawing on historian Irene Rizzini's idea that "child-saving" has never truly been about the individual child, but rather about removing bodies that symbolize disorder to produce a "civilized" social environment that elites can enjoy (Rizzini 2002), I suggest that the moralizing gestures through which adult drivers respond to children in public represent an intervention into the construction of an imagined national future. In other words, the privileged public, in stepping in to socialize the public child, participates in a project of national progress that resinscribes the link between the regulation of public space, the management of childhood, and the establishment of social order.

Children have always been an implicit site of struggle in debates about how to unify the "two Perus." In this context, I suggest that the multiple scripts that are activated in the exchanges at the intersection point to the varied and often contradictory ways Peruvians struggle to make sense of and assert control over what it means to be

part of a fragmented nation. In contrast to influential anthropologists such as Margaret Mead who established child socialization as central to how societies reproduce themselves from generation to generation, the kind of socialization that happens under the traffic light is a racialized and classed way of trying to reconstitute a society that is imagined to be corroding from the inside. Children who work on Lima's streets are seen as the next generation of *cholos*, the pejorative word that refers to Peru's brown-skinned poor majority that, despite its urban character, continues to be associated with the countryside.¹⁷ Their parents, typically not on the scene, are imagined to be at fault for their presence in a public space considered off-limits not simply to children but to all poor bodies. For this reason, socialization – traditionally thought of as the responsibility of the family, the community and, increasingly, the school – becomes the public responsibility of the car-driving strangers who, in La Molina, could very well be the corrupt politicians and business people that enjoy most of the country's wealth. In the following chapter, I move out from the intersection and into children's homes. I elucidate the factors that contribute to families allowing (or sending) their children to work, as well as the ways that public families are forced to justify their child care practices before the public institutions, such as the school, that mark their everyday lives.

¹⁷ Recently, a polemic erupted in the media when the son of a famous Peruvian actress shouted racist insults at a couple in a movie theater (Correo 2/16/12). With regard to Mexico and Ecuador, respectively, Martínez and Swanson argue that the street vendors' indigeneity (often associated with innocence) can sometimes convert outright hostility into more paternalistic responses (Martínez 2003; Swanson 2010). However, children who work on the streets in Lima are very rarely coded as indigenous.

Chapter 2. Troubling Families: Defensive Motherhood and Public Neglect

The only overweight kid at the intersection, Alfredo was used to being mocked. All it took was a slight angling of his body towards the snack kiosk or the approach of a walking candy vendor for his buddies to start calling him Dorito or *Caramelo* (candy). While most of his peers juggled tennis balls, Alfredo preferred to use oranges, inviting jokes like, “*Gordo* (fatso), don’t forget that those are for juggling, not for eating!” The twelve-year-old took such teasing well; after all, moving back and forth between target and instigator in these everyday power struggles was key to social success at the intersection and a fact of life for kids his age.

One mid-summer Saturday, I found Alfredo at the far end of the strip mall, sprawled out in a sunny patch of grass at an intersection normally inhabited by adult street vendors and a couple of talented older teenaged musicians who played classic Andean tunes for passersby. Next to him sat Clelia, a thirty-two-year-old car-to-car candy vendor, and her four daughters, who sometimes helped her but mostly just hung out on the lawn. As if transforming the relative safety he had from the playful advances of his pals into an opportunity for revenge, Alfredo took an unexpected jab at Clelia: “You’re gonna get put away in Maranguita for mothers!” he shouted, referring to an imaginary mothers’ version of Lima’s juvenile jail. “You exploit your kids by bringing them here and making them sit alone on the side of the road while you work!”

“Who are you calling exploitative?” She chimed back. “I bring my daughters to work with me so that I can watch over them. Leaving them at home would be exploitative because something could happen to them. Besides, your mother is the exploitative one! I bet she stays at home while you come and work, and then beats you if

you don't bring home enough money. To this, Alfredo retorted, "That's not true! I don't bring my money home! I come here to make money for my *vicios* (vices, or bad habits), buying junk food and playing video games at the internet place. Just ask Leigh."

Trying to quietly register all the accusations and assumptions packed into this particularly pointed dispute, I was caught off-guard when Alfredo suddenly brought me into it. The incident forced me to reflect on my ethics of response when my research subjects pit me against each other and, more generally, my participation in explanatory narratives about child labor. As an anthropologist studying children who work, I was accustomed to being asked for my "expert" opinion on child labor by friends and acquaintances as well as academics and other professional contacts whose knowledge of the topic comes mainly from media hype, anti-child labor campaigns, and encounters at the traffic light. Almost always, the questions contained the very assumption that Alfredo was debunking: parents are the cause of child labor. I had also grown used to the supposition that because my research subjects work on the streets, they must therefore also live there, rather than in homes with their families. Although mutually exclusive, these assumptions hinge on one another, as children who live on the street are often imagined to have escaped from abusive or neglectful families. They thus reflect the common reading of children who work on the street as signifiers, and victims, of the dysfunctional family. In other words, as I discussed in the previous chapter, children on the street always already exist as the embodiment of disorder and immorality within a particular set of explanatory narratives about child labor, development, urban order, and child discipline that blame the poor family especially by imagining the mother as exploitative.

As they jostled with one another, Alfredo and Clelia reproduced and challenged these narratives of blame in response to the threat that they perceived to their individual

subjectivities. It was no coincidence that their exchange took place literally in the shadow of the sign that the municipality had posted on a light post a few weeks earlier, warning vendors and beggars that the municipal police were cracking down on their public activities. The sign was a reminder of the state's intolerance of people like them. In this context, Alfredo's invocation of Maranguita for mothers seemed, at least in part, a response to a generalized environment of policing, particularly as the state's security apparatus prepared Lima's streets for a major international conference to be attended by powerful foreign leaders. But his comment must also be understood in light of a widespread rumor that, given the already overflowing state orphanages, this youth detention center was doubling as an emergency containment site for "street kids." This rumor spoke to a fear that was all too real among the kids with whom I worked. One day, I had walked in on a conversation in which a sweet eleven-year-old boy who stopped going to the intersection to work after a few weeks was recounting to Simón, one of the regulars, about the time he had been a victim of a round-up. "I had to beg the people at the orphanage to call my poor mother to come and get me." Given Alfredo's already precarious sense of freedom, I suggest that his invention of a "Maranguita for mothers" was an attempt to protect himself – and, by implication, his mother – by fixing the delinquent as someone who fit all too easily into a readymade category of blame, a mother who brought her children to the street.

If Alfredo's strategy was to divert the gaze to a recognizable class of deviant subjectivity (the exploitative mother), Clelia's response was not to challenge the legitimacy of this category, but rather to exempt herself from it and identify with the values associated with normative motherhood and family. First, by implying that she was protecting her children by keeping them within her view, rather than endangering them by bringing them to the street, she suggested that Alfredo was confusing

exploitation with care. She then circled back to Alfredo by imagining his mother, someone she did not know personally, according to another prefabricated narrative, one that presumes the (unseen) mother of the child laborer to be lazy, coercive, and abusive: lazy because she sits at home doing nothing, coercive because she forces her child to work, and abusive because she beats her child if he doesn't work hard enough.¹

Anthropologists of Latin America have drawn attention to the ways bad mothers are systematically produced through dominant notions of maternal care that overlook structural oppression, economic injustice, and cultural traditions (Scheper-Hughes 1992; Goldstein 1998; Fonseca 2005).² Clelia and Alfredo's loaded exchange draws attention to the power of the bad mother – as an idea – in interpellating its subjects; both ended up trying to defend themselves in the very same discursive terms that marginalize them. This constant struggle over representation, I suggest, is an integral part of survival, a concept often understood in strictly physical and material terms, particularly with regard to childhood (Brettell 1998; Whiteford 1998).³ For people like Alfredo and Clelia, this struggle occurs through their everyday relations with the range of individuals that come in and out of their lives: their co-workers, the passersby for whom they perform to make money, the police and other representatives of the state who embody the managing gaze that never allows them to be totally free, and people like me, who occupy more ambiguous roles in their lives.

¹ Similar to the stereotypical "welfare queen" (Hancock 2004; Lubiano 1992), the idea of the lazy mother who, instead of going out to make money for the family, stays at home while her children go out to work, can ignore women's unremunerated home-based labor. For more on affective labor and unpaid domestic work, see Weeks 2007; Fosado & Jakobsen 2009.

² For a historical approach to the construction of motherhood in Peru, see Mannarelli 1999; Fuller 1998. For US-based examples see Chodorow & Contratto 1992; Korbin 1998.

³ For a more complex anthropological understanding of survival, see Nordstrom & Robben 1995; Goldstein 2003.

Alfredo and Clelia had no real power to take on the institutions and individuals who propagate the myths about working kids and their families. They responded instead by sparring with each other and performing stereotypical age and gender roles. The twelve-year-old boy argued that his motivation to make money on the street had nothing to do with his mother, but rather rested in his personal desire to buy junk food and play video games. Clelia, in contrast, drew on the idea that children, and especially girls, need parental protection; she justified her family's presence on the street by representing herself as a responsible mother who combined money-making with watching over her dependent daughters.

In this chapter, I show how the narratives of responsibility through which the bad mother is produced depoliticize poverty and inequality (in keeping with Fujimori's neoliberalization of the Peruvian economy) and deflect attention from the varied meanings and motives children and their families attach to their work. Key to this process, I contend, is the privileging of a normative notion of the gendered family against which the family of the child laborer is imagined as exploitative – a concept whose meaning, in this context, reflects the tense coming together of national histories and the universalizing language of the transnational development industry. I argue that understanding child labor as a problem of exploitative families and bad mothers naturalizes the very object that it blames, eclipsing the way the state and other institutionalized forms of power produce, regulate, and ultimately fail the family – the very unit they claim to protect. It is out of this framework, I demonstrate, that children and their families emerge as publicly available, one aspect of a concept I call public childhood. In this context, poor families' survival practices, including child labor, are read as evidence of exploitation – or, at best, a demonstration of ignorance. Turning to these misunderstood logics, I show how my research subjects – who are indeed invested

in the idea of family – work in and against dominant models of care and kinship as a matter of survival and common sense.

* * *

In the previous chapter, I argued that the La Molina intersection exists as a site of articulation for a set of institutionalized discourses that conceptualize childhood, child labor, and the family in terms of national development. Here, I have suggested that the intersection operates as a stage on which narratives that depoliticize structural inequalities by blaming poor mothers are played out through diverse social relationships, including those between the very subjects whose presence on the street signifies disorder and immorality. That the mother emerges as the primary agent of exploitation in Alfredo and Clelia's dispute is significant given that, historically, the concept of exploitation has been used to describe relations of power based on class difference and masculine domination. In their classic analyses of capitalism, Engels and Marx argue that it is through the institution of the patriarchal family, in which women and children represent an inferior class, that the state reproduces the system of exploited labor that keeps capitalism going (Engels 1978; Marx 1978). Peruvian discourse about child labor, in blaming mothers, undoes this foundational critique of power by making exploitation's object into its agent.

In the neoliberal era of globalization, the concepts of exploitation and child labor often go hand-in-hand. Typically, child labor conjures an image of a third-world sweatshop in which a profit-driven boss, trying to maximize his profit in the transnational production chain, exploits his non-white, underage workers through meager wages, risky labor conditions, and unmerited punishment (Sykes 2003). In the contemporary Peruvian context, however, child labor (as well as adult labor) is associated less with wage labor and more with the informal economy. Here, children are

imagined to belong to underground networks run by anonymous Fagen-like characters. While I never encountered this form of child commodification in my fieldwork, it was easy to understand how media reports on pornography rings and child-renting, as well as transnational campaigns against child trafficking produced such a perception. Indeed, these forms of exploitation exist precisely because of the invisibility (or impunity) of cartel leaders combined with the desires produced by global capitalism. Yet what unites these diverse understandings of child labor is that even as they seem to point the finger at a real or imagined boss, they also have the effect of holding parents (and particularly mothers⁴) responsible for having purposely (even if out of ignorance or economic necessity) given their children up to the hands of exploiters (Ward 1999).⁵ Hence, in contemporary situations in which child labor has been delinked from wage labor, and in which the imagined male boss is often invisible, exploitation remains a powerful signifier that articulates itself through ubiquitous, if sometimes subtle, narratives of parent-blaming.

In January 2008, before the La Molina municipality hung the poster under which Clelia and Alfredo staged their debate, Peru's Ministry of Women announced its plan to undertake "the first raid on parents who exploit their children" (Andina 01/04/08). "We will be inflexible on this subject," the Minister declared. "Peruvian society must prepare itself because we have the rule of law behind us to avoid this situation of child labor." A press release stated that the initiative would target "mothers and fathers who, under the

⁴ Historically, the father was considered the moral authority in the family, even if the mother was always understood to be the primary caretaker. However, with the decline of traditional forms of patriarchy and the subsequent naturalization of the absent father, I suggest, the mother has increasingly become the exclusive object of scrutiny in situations of so-called child exploitation, even when a more inclusive language ("parents," or "mothers and fathers") is used.

⁵ In critiquing the assumption that parents are complicit with their children's exploitation, I am by no means suggesting that neglectful or abusive parents are absent in Peru.

pretext of poverty, rent or use their children in order to work or beg on the street.” As if to confirm the government’s commitment to this plan, the article mentioned that during a recent anti-beggary campaign, police had been sent out to identify “abandoned and at risk” children and place them in the state’s de facto child containment center. In a similar vein, in 2007 when an abandoned market that hundreds of families had been occupying as a living space was deemed unsafe for habitation, the state staged a massive raid. Despite concerns about the violent military tactics (NAPA 2007; Choike 2007), policemen received medals for having saved children from the risks to which their parents had been exposing them and the news media represented the intervention as a highly successful operation that set a precedent with regard to order and illegality (BBC 5/29/07; Comercio 5/12/07).⁶

Incredibly, the state justified the intervention strategy not as a matter of children’s wellbeing but as a diplomatic imperative based on Peru’s macroeconomic and geopolitical interests: the enforcement of sanctions against child labor, according to the Minister, reflected “a promise made in the Free Trade Agreement that Peru just signed with the United States (Andina 01/04/08).” Despite the unlikelihood that the Free Trade Agreement was created with the interests of child street laborers in mind, the simple fact that the government could name this as reason for taking legal sanctions against Peruvian families provides yet another example of how national strategies for social control are always about maintaining a certain image before global powers like the United States.

If the Ministry of Women, citing its treaty with the United States, threatens parents of child laborers with punishment, local NGOs, also supported by transnational

⁶ These same structures of blame are evident in the Oscar-winning documentary, *Born into Brothels* (2004), about children from Calcutta’s Red Light district, which I read as a colonialist narrative of foreign intervention in order to save (brown) children from their (brown) mothers. See also Shah 2005.

institutions, tend to employ more subtle modes of discipline in which parents are figured as subjects of reform rather than repression. In his groundbreaking work almost two decades ago, anthropologist Arturo Escobar discussed the construction of the “subject in need of development” as an epistemological form of domination that assumes the global North to be the legitimate site of knowledge production (Escobar 1995).⁷ With regard to child labor in Peru, the development discourse manifests itself through reformist NGOs that imagine poor parents as lacking rational thinking, and corresponding development projects that seek to teach parents that child labor is a bad long-term investment for the family economy and for the child’s future.⁸

Hence, like punitive measures, aid-driven strategies focus on the individual family, failing to consider the structural constraints under which the poor make decisions about child labor. Furthermore, the reformist approach, far from rejecting the idea of the bad parent, simply reimagines exploitation as resulting from ignorance rather than from bad intentions. In this way, the concept of exploitation, central to discussions about child labor in contemporary Peru, works as a rhetorical tool for making parents the object of blame. More specifically, it enables a causal narrative whereby bad parents are seen as responsible for the production of their children as deviant and publicly available subjects. In the Peruvian context, then, exploitation takes on a meaning that echoes the way the UNCRC conceptualizes the relationship between childhood and publicness: children who occupy public places are out-of-place because they are

⁷ See also Mitchell 1995; Shrestha 1995.

⁸ These ideas are reflected in the “Myths about Child Labor” generated by the ILO and available via internet through its network of Anti-Child Labor institutions (Global March). In contrast, two recent documentaries by internationally-based filmmakers (*Back of the World* 2000; *Oblivion* 2008) represent child labor and its relationship to parenting practices in more complex ways that, while implicitly condemning the exploitative conditions under which poor children must make a living, also take into account structural inequalities.

exploited by their parents who are supposed to protect them; they therefore can be legitimately intervened upon by outside (often “public”) institutions.

This linear logic reproduces a notion of order that sanctions social control by erasing the ways childhood, publicness, and the family are constructed in intimate relation to one another. More specifically, the idea of the exploitative parent, produced in opposition to the normative reproductive nuclear family that understands the proper conventions of child discipline, is what enables the child on the street to be claimed as knowable and available for intervention. In Chapter 1, I suggested that the idea of two kinds of childhoods enables drivers, endowed with the power of observation, to imagine themselves as possessors of knowledge who can lay claim to the socialization of the poor(ly managed) child, and thus to the project of social ordering. On one level, this may be about reclaiming and redisciplining the child as a subject to be protected as opposed to a subject from whom protection is sought. In this chapter, I will go on to discuss how individuals and institutions representing another kind of public (the state) abide by a similar logic when confronting child laborers and their parents. This form of intervention, part of everyday life, figures the state as an opposing force from which the children and parents I knew worked in different ways to protect themselves. One common mode of defense, as Clelia and Alfredo showed, was self-surveillance, rather than resistance. While they misrecognized themselves in this discourse of public availability, the ways that they used it against others indicated that they did not necessarily disagree with the structures of knowledge from which it emanated.

* * *

When I first began going to the intersection, I could more or less predict the cast of characters I’d find on Saturdays. Fifty-year-old Garganta, a much-loved blind man whom the kids took turns guiding as he begged drivers for change, always greeted me

by saying that I was the prettiest woman he knew. While this caused some to loudly wonder whether he was truly blind, it served to confirm the authenticity of Garganta's disability for Jhon, Frank, Ricky and Raul, a group of brothers who juggled under the traffic light and acted as the intersection's young ringleaders.⁹

In the few weeks that it took me to grow used to the social dynamics of the space, I realized that the pool of workers at the intersection was not always so steady. One April day early on in my fieldwork, as the grey winter began to intervene upon the lingering summer, a six-year-old girl whom everyone else seemed to know captured my attention. Her apparently new buzz-cut, partially disguised by a baseball cap, offered a perfect pretext for the boys to tease her: if they weren't questioning her femininity by calling her *machona* (a derogatory word used to denote a masculine female), then they were loudly speculating that she had cut her hair to get rid of *piojos* (lice, but also cooties).¹⁰ Using her baseball cap as a shield, she angled her head downwards, the same gesture with which she responded to my attempts to introduce myself.¹¹

Unable to engage the girl in conversation, I remained puzzled about her place at the intersection. She didn't seem to have juggling balls or a bag of candy to indicate that she was working. Nor did she move beyond the kiosks, except for an occasional stride towards the KFC exit, where families seemed more enthusiastic about offering their leftovers to her than to the more aggressive boys. Giving up on her for the moment, I

⁹ The public suspicion, as I discussed in Chapter 1, that children were "faking it," also extended to adults who used blindness as a way of establishing themselves as worthy beggars.

¹⁰ The way the boys made fun of the girl draws attention to the gendered dynamics of this space, where there were never more than a few girls at once. For an analysis of adult masculinity and public space in Lima, see Vich 2010. The emphasis on hygiene, common among the children with whom I worked, draws on a historical tradition of identifying and civilizing poor children by linking corporal and moral hygiene (Mannarelli 1999).

¹¹ Admittedly, the suburban child in me who had been warned not to talk to strangers, together with my anxious anthropologist self who tried to avoid pressuring my research subjects, felt temporarily comforted when children responded to me with caution.

looked around and noticed another new body: a plump woman who, arm-in-arm with one of the boys I had seen juggling during my previous visits, moved from car-to-car holding out a tattered paper cup for donations. Although the distance between us limited the clarity of my vision, I surmised that she was blind as her begging style resembled that of Garganta and countless other blind adults I had observed at traffic lights during years of long trips across the city. After a half-hour within my peripheral gaze, the woman headed over to the kiosk area. Before I could blink my eyes, the unidentified girl was showering her with hugs and kisses, guiding her to a stool by the kiosk, and asking her for change to buy candy. As it turned out, Zoyla and Sandrita were mother and daughter.¹²

Intrigued by the pair and happy to have some female companionship in this masculine space, I was disappointed when Zoyla and Sandrita disappeared after a month. To my surprise, however, they reappeared one sweaty summer day, eight months later, accompanied by Sandrita's two sisters, eleven-year-old Yocelyn and newborn Mar. Piecing things together, I could assume that their absence was at least partly due to Zoyla's pregnancy. But I had also learned by then that these disappearing and reappearing acts at the intersection were common: in addition to the regular crowd, there were people who came and went, vanishing for anywhere from a few weeks to a year.¹³ Other kids would come to check out the scene for a couple weeks before deciding to permanently move on to a new location, whether for reasons of competition and convenience, or because their personalities didn't mesh with the regulars.

¹² This had not seemed like an obvious connection as few kids at the intersection were accompanied by their parents. Yet, as Clelia's case also suggests, it was not altogether unheard of for children (especially girls) to go to the intersection with parents (usually mothers).

¹³ This was often frustrating for me as a researcher who dreamt of a steady pool of subjects!

Over time Sandrita, Yocelyn, and Zoyla began opening up to me about different aspects of their lives. When I asked if we could sit down to tape-record some conversations, they responded enthusiastically. My first session was with Zoyla, and thereafter I met exclusively with Sandrita and Yocelyn, at times together and at times separately. All of our meetings took place at the intersection, and I typically brought paper and colored pencils as drawing was something the girls enjoyed and a helpful tool for generating conversation. Of course, with Zoyla we could not use visual aids, but as was invariably the case when I interviewed mothers, it took no prodding on my part for the twenty-nine-year-old to launch into a narrative describing the conditions that had landed her family at the intersection:

I was in my early twenties, my Yocelyn was four, and my Sandrita just a baby. We lived in an *asentamiento humano*¹⁴ up on a hill, not exactly paradise. My Yocelyn was so little and I said to myself, "Where am I going to work? I don't have the means to *darle* (provide for her).¹⁵

Zoyla had been making money selling the recyclables she found in the garbage, such as shoes and cardboard boxes. In a city with no centralized garbage or recycling collection system, this was a fallback income-generating activity among the poor. But with competition stiff, the young mother needed something more dependable. One day, a neighbor approached her with an opportunity: "In La Molina there's work. There you can make a lot of money, there the work is good." Unfamiliar with the neighborhood,

¹⁴ Literally translated as human settlement, this term references the squatting origins of Lima's shantytowns. Another common term, one used more by outsiders than insiders, is the euphemistic *pueblo joven* (young town), as exemplified in Lloyd 1980.

¹⁵ The age gap between Zoyla's two daughters, as suggested by this comment, was less than what I knew their age difference to be. It was not uncommon for me to encounter mothers who confused the chronological ages of their children, a situation attributable to factors such as low education and lack of standardization around the issuing of birth certificates, particularly among the poor. When talking about her need to provide for Yocelyn, Zoyla probably left Sandrita out since she was a baby and still breastfeeding, whereas Yocelyn needed food and, soon, school.

inexperienced in begging, and physically incapable of moving around the city on her own, Zoyla learned through the guidance of others.

We left at 7:30 in the morning. We took a bus to Surquillo, and then another one here, and when we got here, my neighbor said, "take this cup and let's go. I'll guide you to the car window and you ask for money." I didn't know how to do it, so she taught me, little by little, although I was a bit shy because I didn't know how to do these kinds of things. But that's how you make money. Half for her and half for me.

In adopting car-to-car begging as her livelihood, the impoverished mother learned some lessons with ease and others with greater difficulty. After going to La Molina a couple of times with the neighbor, she met another woman who offered herself as a guide, only to deceive her by running off with her money and thereby breaking one of the cardinal rules of the system: splitting the money half-and-half between beggar and guide. Determined to persevere even after several negative experiences, Zoyla realized that the kids who worked at the intersection were the most reliable guides, and the idea of providing them with work gratified her. This meant that Yocelyn had to help her disabled mother with the commute between home and the workplace, quite a feat at the beginning given Lima's chaotic streets and haphazard bus system.

If Zoyla's blindness – which, remarkably, never became a focal point of her narrative – marks her case as exceptional rather than generalizable, her disability points to the severity of the state's abandonment of the poor. Operating according to a pseudo-welfare model, the Peruvian state does not guarantee services or provide compensation for handicapped citizens like Zoyla. The relatively recent NGO boom, characteristic of the neoliberal moment, has in part been a response to the failure of the State to adequately serve the needs of its population. Yet, as I have discussed previously, NGOs are plagued by problems at the practical, conceptual, and ideological levels. Such organizations tend to work on the basis of short-term projects that, often inefficient, target specific populations (although seldom the blind) as opposed to addressing the

need for broad-reaching, regularized social services. As a result, Zoyla and many others in need remain excluded. Furthermore, NGOs belong to a development apparatus that conceptualizes and confronts social problems according to the same rhetoric of personal responsibility through which the state relinquishes the care of its citizens.

As a matter of survival, marginalized Peruvians must negotiate their subjectivities within discourses that represent the poor as responsible for their own hardships – and poor adults as responsible for the plight of their children. As Clelia and Alfredo made clear, expending energy to prove exemption from dominant narratives of blame is part of everyday life for child laborers and poor mothers. Yet sometimes survival involves a trade-off between engaging in an ontological and epistemological struggle to protect one’s family and satisfying one’s physical needs. No one is more acutely aware of this than eleven-year-old Yocelyn who, aided by her younger sister Sandrita, explained to me during a tape-recorded conversation the problems her family faces:

YOCELYN: Problems come and go. They come when it’s the end of the month and we have to pay rent, or when we owe people money. Later the problems go away, but then they come back again. They go away and come back, go away and come back.

LEIGH: So some of the problems are money problems.

YOCELYN: Yes, some of the problems are family problems, money problems. Or sometimes it’s that people trick you. There are so many different kinds of problems.

LEIGH: And what do you think about problems, Sandrita?

SANDRITA: Sometimes when my mother doesn’t have money, we don’t eat. Remember New Year’s, Yocelyn?

YOCELYN: On New Year's, we didn't eat anything. Just like yesterday, we didn't eat anything, not in the morning nor in the afternoon, because we didn't have any money.

LEIGH: Nothing at all? Not even a cracker?

SANDRITA: No, nothing.

YOCELYN: Nothing. So we had to go to school like that. My head felt all weird, I did my work slowly. I was weak, you could say. When I don't eat, I'm weak. I can't write, I can't add, I do my work wrong, instead of writing "nota," I write "noto" [indicating a spelling error].

LEIGH: So you can't concentrate?

YOCELYN: No. But I don't like to tell people about these things. When the teacher asks me, "What's wrong?" I say, "No, nothing." I can't say anything because if I tell her I haven't eaten, she'll tell my mom off.

LEIGH: So you're holding in a lot of stuff that you can't say. Why can't you talk about these things?

YOCELYN: I don't tell the teacher anything because if I tell her that I haven't eaten, she'll say, "These kids, they don't eat, they don't have clothes," and she'll think all sorts of things. She'll send us to the orphanage. But they're *equivocando* (getting it wrong, making a mistake), and upon *equivocando*, they're bringing on problems, problems against me and my mom, mostly against my mom.

Yocelyn's reflection is unsettling not only because of the suffering it conveys, but also because of the sound logic it employs. The sequence of her reasoning, upon initial impression, resembles a progressive NGO sound bite: shortage of money within a household leads to scarcity of food, which causes malnourishment and, consequently, cognitive problems that impinge on academic performance. Yet Yocelyn did not stop

there, but rather went on to explain how the state – represented by the public school and the teacher, in this case – interpreted the situation as a product of bad mothering, arming itself with the responsibility of child-saving or surrogacy through the forcible separation of mother and child. In order to avoid this painful and historically persistent outcome, Yocelyn had learned to silence her hunger, thereby sacrificing not only her physical wellbeing but also her ability to perform in the formal educational structure that her mother worked day in and day out to retain access to.

In concluding her explanation of why she must withhold information, Yocelyn switched from speaking in the third person singular about her teacher to using the third person collective to refer to a more abstract subject that was both “getting it wrong” by mistakenly blaming her mother for her inadequate care and creating a whole set of problems for her family. Her transition to the third person collective indicated her awareness that the teacher was but one actor in an erroneous knowledge structure that imagines and approaches poor families as public, or available for intervention. In other words, Yocelyn’s critique invites us to see the potential encounter between her teacher and herself as a reflection of how moments of misrecognition that take place within the school are linked to broader processes in which poor children must engage the system defensively to avoid further encroachment into their systems of kin and care.

Just as her use of the collective points to the epistemological stakes of this everyday encounter with the state, so too does Yocelyn’s choice of vocabulary. By using the verb *equivocarse* – meaning, “to make an error, or a mistake” – in describing dominant readings of her family as dysfunctional, her mother as neglectful, and herself as publicly available, she emphasized that this was a problem of competing knowledge. Similarly, in concluding her statement by talking about the “problems” that could be produced by the teacher’s power to send her to an orphanage, she circled back to the

topic with which she began her discussion; this time, however, she more explicitly named the public institutions and the knowledge structures they represented as the producer of family problems. Yet, despite her awareness that the teacher's knowledge was "wrong" and that public institutions help generate family problems, Yocelyn remained powerless to challenge the structures responsible for these repeating violences. Instead, she had to employ a survival strategy of withholding information, ultimately reproducing the misunderstandings through which hegemony operates.

Just as survival exceeds the material and physical dimensions, the power of the state, as represented by public institutions, goes beyond its failure to guarantee basic needs. As I have shown, the state exercises power by performing interventions and then disappearing, by producing poor families, abandoning them, and then blaming them for their own plight. In building narratives of individual responsibility, such as mother-blaming, into the institutional machinery of everyday life, the state releases itself of accountability towards its citizens, leaving traps through which the threat of direct intervention forces the most marginalized subjects into a constant state of defense – one that they must risk at times because they simply must go out and make some money. As Alfredo's reference to Maranguita and Joceyn's hypothetical encounter at school suggest, the justified fear of mother-child separation produces strategies of self-protection that involve manipulating knowledge sometimes at the expense of one's physical wellbeing.

That the school emerged as the site in which Yocelyn misrecognized herself as a publicly available subject draws attention to the ways that this institution works to reproduce difference. Scholars of Peru and elsewhere have challenged the myth of the school as the great social leveler, showing how historically the disciplinary institution has existed to achieve control over not just children but also their parents (Foucault 1995;

Wee 1995).¹⁶ Historian Antonio Espinoza argues that the extension of primary education to the poor in mid-19th century Peru was a strategy for producing national unity, political stability, and disciplined future citizens. This is similar to what historian Irene Rizzini describes for Brazil, where schooling represented an attempt to produce a “population that was at once educated and docile, hardworking but amenable to the established order, efficient but unaware of the value of its labor, patriotic but uninterested in governance” (Rizzini: 2002: 177). If school aimed to curtail the “idleness and criminality” associated with poor children (Rizzini 2002:177), it also worked on and through poor parents, imagined to be moral obstacles to the state’s disciplinary project and thus available for public intervention. In late 19th century Peru, a law established that parents would be fined when their children failed to attend school. Although certain concessions were made in rural areas during growing season, parents who neglected their children’s formal education remained stigmatized (Espinoza 2005: 245-6). Ironically, Espinoza reveals that one of the hidden reasons for which parents hesitated to send their children to school was teachers’ use of “illegal and humiliating forms of punishment” in the name of child discipline (Espinoza 2005: 247). In this way, it is clear that the “problem” of absenteeism was not always linked to parents’ cultural traditions or to the family’s productive economy, but rather grounded in the systemic abuse of children by adult in positions of public authority.

Recognizing the ways such institutionalized spaces perpetuate race, class, and gender inequalities, revolutionaries, reformists, and romantics alike continue to see the school as a potential site for social transformation (Freire 2000, McLaren & Scatamburlo-D’Annibale 2004; Carnoy 1974; hooks 1994). Yet even models that seek to empower

¹⁶ In the United States, similar critiques have been made of Bush’s No Child Left Behind policy.

marginalized children through more inclusive curricula sometimes come into conflict with the ways parents try to pave their children's paths to progress. In her research on a Quechua-speaking indigenous community in Cuzco, Peru, anthropologist María Elena García shows the effects of Spanish-speaking activists' efforts to introduce bilingual (Spanish and Quechua) education into highland schools as an affirmation of Peru's multicultural identity. Quechua-speaking parents resisted the intervention, insisting that only Spanish should be taught in the schools: home was the place to learn cultural traditions and school was the place to learn to get ahead in life. In this way, parents, refusing to be spoken for, were asserting their understanding that by speaking a native language in school, their children were guaranteed to remain second-class citizens in a country where Spanish is undoubtedly the language of power (García 2005).

For better or for worse, school remains a priority for Peruvian families, regardless of its legacy as an oppressive institution that guarantees nothing in the way of equal opportunities. If teachers are part of the problem, their constant union strikes indicate that they are also exploited laborers and victims of a corrupt system. Indeed, the need to drastically revamp the educational infrastructure has been widely recognized by scholars and policy-makers critical of the government's general devaluing of public education (Lynch 2006; Ames, ed. 2006). And yet, despite their adverse experiences with the system and their clear understanding that their country was far from a meritocracy, the parents and children I knew considered school an important investment; indeed they did all they could, including encouraging their children to work under the traffic light, to access the terribly under-resourced schoolhouses that Fujimori had built to buy the favor of the poor. However, even when they did comply with the moral imperative to send their children to school, families of child laborers continued to occupy a defensive position. Yocelyn's description of her forced capitulation to a "mistaken" system of

which she knew herself to be a victim, together with her need to withhold knowledge about her physical wellbeing in order to protect herself and her loved ones from intervention, underscored the symbolic power of the school as an institution that unjustly constructs poor children and their families as public. The eleven-year-old's behavior before her teacher is one example of how a state without any real regulatory capacities still achieves the effect of differentially managing its subjects.

* * *

Yocelyn's fear that her teacher could interfere with her family speaks to a reality that many of my research subjects experienced firsthand. A heavyset mother of nine children and grandmother of another nine, fifty-five-year-old Justa epitomized a calming and commanding matriarch. Her children, whose ages ranged from ten to thirty-two, as well as the fifteen-year-old son of her oldest daughter, worked as street vendors and performers. The younger cohort, composed of Jhon, Frank, Ricky and Raul, juggled at the traffic light and took turns guiding Garganta, although competition and convenience brought them to relocate to an intersection closer to home a year into my fieldwork. The rabble-rousers of the intersection, they occasionally prodded an otherwise playful Alfredo to the point of tears, just as they instigated the jokes about Sandrita's haircut the first day I met her. But their fun-loving side was endearing to me and the seriousness with which they honed their juggling skills impressed me. Their brotherly solidarity and the pride that they demonstrated towards their work made continually more sense to me as I got to know their tight-knit family.

During a long tape-recorded conversation with the family matriarch and her twenty-eight-year-old daughter, Lily, I unexpectedly learned about Justa's experience of having to defend herself against the bad mother stereotype. "It happened to me!" Justa suddenly exclaimed. "What?" I asked, confused.

The school came to me to tell me that I was exploiting Jhon.¹⁷ I explained to them Jhon's case, I told them, "Jhon was orphaned by his father. And, furthermore, we have to pay rent on our house. That's why he works; I'm not exploiting him." Many people have understood, and have said, "he's a good kid."

In a country where the extralegal squatting-to-owning process enables many poor families to own homes (Cockburn 2005), renting can signal an exceptional circumstance. This was the case for Justa's family, whose home was destroyed in a fire. Similarly, since it is common for fathers to be absent from their children's lives in Peru (Ponce 2007) and since extended family members customarily help raise children when parents die or are otherwise unable to provide for them (Leinaweaver 2008),¹⁸ it struck me as interesting that Justa referred to Jhon as an orphan. However, I realized that in the encounter with the teacher, identifying their home as a rental and Jhon as an orphan was a way for Justa to declare that she had had no control over the unfortunate crises with which her otherwise unified family had to contend. In other words, Justa responded to the teacher's accusation that she exploits her son by implying that her family's patriarchal structure had disintegrated not due to personal negligence, but rather as a result of two uncontrollable losses. With both Jhon's father and their home taken from them, the family had adopted child labor as a mechanism through which to secure access to shelter and keep the family intact.

After noting the teacher's concession that Jhon was "a good kid," Justa broadened the topic to the overall moral character of her children.

¹⁷ Justa often referred to Jhon as her son even though he was biologically her grandson and even though his mother, who lived with both of them and was present in Jhon's everyday life, also called him "son." Likewise, Jhon used the term "mother" to refer to both his biological mother and his grandmother. Such naming practices are common in Peruvian – and particularly, Andean – families, where age cohort can be as important as biological parentage in determining patterns of care (Bolin 2006; del Pino, et al [n/d]). Because Jhon was of the same age cohort as (and, in fact, older than) his uncles Frank, Ricky and Raul, the four referred to each other as brothers.

¹⁸ This pattern is similar to the idea of the "female-headed household" in the United States. In Chapters 5 and 5, I will address absent Peruvian fathers in more detail.

My kids are known at school for their hard work and *educación* (good manners). This will lead them to a good future; they won't suffer even if their mother is no longer alive. I'm not going to let them suffer the day I'm no longer here. "You're going to stand tall," I tell them. "You're going to wear the mark that your mother always taught you to work hard; that mark will never be erased." It's true: these things stay with you forever.

By using the term "*educación*," which refers doubly to "education" and "good manners," Justa drew attention to how her work as moral educator complemented the school's formal educational work. The visual image she invoked – that her children will "wear the mark that your mother always taught you to work hard" – is significant for several reasons. First, wearing a mark on one's body acknowledges that individual identity is always linked to public perception, a particularly consequential consideration for people who have the burden of proving their exemption from narratives of blame. Second, the idea that good *educación* could manifest itself on one's body evokes a contrasting image to that of the stereotypical marked body that signifies delinquency, especially when it corresponds to a teenaged male in an urban space, something akin to "walking while black" in the United States and to the forms of profiling that anthropologist Alvaro Jarrin discusses for Brazil (Jarrin 2010). I learned about this association early on in fieldwork, when a teenager I met at a *quinceañero* party in a working class neighborhood opened up to me about the embarrassment that his facial scar produced: even though he had acquired it in a childhood accident, he knew that the mark, combined with the neighborhood he was from and his clothing style, led strangers to regard him with caution.

Finally, the mark symbolizes the precariousness of Justa's life and, moreover, the relationship between her mortality and her children's future. By resignifying a standard marker of deviance as an expression of care and an indicator of her investment in her children's future, Justa challenged the dominant understanding of maternal exploitation that undergirded the teacher's accusation. Lily expanded on Justa's reasoning after

emphasizing that her mother now deserved a *descanso* (rest) after having devoted her entire life to her children:

Mother's not always going to be around. Father's not always going to be around. When they're no longer around, what will become of us? This is why we work, and so that my younger siblings *se sepan defender* (know how to defend themselves). You never know from one day to the next, something bad could happen and if you're *acostumbrado* (accustomed or used to) looking for the easy way out, you get *acostumbrado* to grabbing things that aren't yours, or lying. But when I go out to work, I realize that if you work hard and sweat, that's how you get ahead. You can always get material things, but you can't always have life. Sometimes life just ends.

Both mother and daughter discussed the value of children's labor in terms of Justa's inevitable mortality. Justa considered it her maternal obligation to create the conditions for her children to have a stable future upon her death. However, unable to leave substantial inheritances or take out life insurance policies, she, like many poor mothers, focused on instilling her children with a set of ethical standards to guide them in life. In this way, her children's work ethic is an indicator not of exploitation but rather of Justa's successful work as a mother.

In working hard to defend themselves against judgments that are made about them, families of child laborers often reinforce stereotypes about the poor. We saw how Clelia and Alfredo bounced narratives of mother blaming back-and-forth, while Lily employed the idea of *acostumbrarse* to refer to the slippery slope through which children who work on the street become delinquents – a fate that her brothers were being educated to avoid. Justa started from a similar premise when responding to Jhon's teacher. Her anecdote, like Yocelyn's hypothetical exchange with her teacher, pointed to a mode of communication that contrasts with the anonymous and fleeting nature of the encounter between the children who work under the traffic light and the drivers who pass through the intersection. Yet this more intimate and sustained relationship, a potential site for more fluid interactions, emerges as another space in which mothers are

produced as agents of exploitation who must protect themselves from public intervention. Thus, as with Clelia and Zoyla, Justa's everyday struggle to survive goes beyond providing basic necessities to encompass the burden of responding to her misrecognition on the caring-exploitative mother dichotomy crucial to the workings of a system that produces her and her children as publicly available.

The first day I spent with the entire family was, quite appropriately, Justa's birthday. Every year on this day the entire family pooled their money and rented a *combi* (a minibus typically used for public transport) to take them to a countryside *recreo* two hours from Lima, where they barbequed, swam, and played games. The spot was about one-third of the way to the family's hometown in the central Andes, so the ride inspired nostalgia in Lily, who cathartically narrated the family history to me during the journey. "We weren't always the way we are now," she began, and went on to explain how the family's fate had abruptly changed as a result of two simultaneous crises: her father losing his supposedly stable job in the school system and their house burning down in their hometown. As a result, the family migrated to Lima in waves, beginning with Lily and her three older siblings.

Determined to work hard in order to reunite the family in Lima, Lily took a job at her aunt's photocopying store. She elaborated on this during our tape-recorded conversation:

I felt lonely here in Lima, and I was worried and sad. I didn't have my parents by my side; we were like a sad family. So we siblings talked amongst ourselves and decided to work hard (*duros y parejos*) to save up and bring the whole family together again.

Her voice grew excited. "We finally brought them here for Christmas, but they thought it was just for a visit. The surprise was that they were going to stay here in Lima, we were all going to be together!" Accustomed to a rural atmosphere in which they could

play outside with their cousins, the younger boys quickly grew bored in the capital city. Soon enough, however, they began to spot kids their age juggling under traffic lights.

So they asked our parents' permission and they started to work and liked it. It enabled them to earn some money to buy snacks at recess and some extra things that they need here and there, and also to help out with house costs. So, they work and study. The important thing is that they work *sanamente* (healthily, cleanly, honestly), right? And my mom is always talking to them and orienting them.

Lily's narrative draws attention to the absence of a formal safety net when catastrophes befall Peruvians. Instead, when her father lost his job in the school system and the house burnt down, the family implemented a survival strategy that eventually transformed their children into laborers. Yet, as both Lily and her mother emphasize, work was never only about putting food on the table, but also about ethics, recreation, and reconstituting family in the face of crisis.

Like her mother's focus on exploitation and *educación*, Lily's emphasis on working *sanamente* draws attention to the burden that Peru's graduated citizenship system (Ong 1999; Holston & Caldeira 1998) places on its most vulnerable subjects to prove their investment in the values deemed crucial to Peru's national progress. The language with which Justa and Lily discuss their attitudes towards the children in their families marks them as contributors, rather than impediments, to a form of social reproduction grounded in notions of moral hygiene that have been prevalent since the early 20th century (Mannarelli 1999).¹⁹ By incorporating such vocabulary into their discussions of the boys' work, they challenge the assumption that child labor is monolithically dishonorable, unhealthy, and disruptive to personal development and public order.

¹⁹ In chapter 3, I will discuss a similar pattern with regard to the catch-phrases that children who work on public buses as vendors and performers use to preface their requests for money. These include "*me gano la vida honradamente*" (I make a living honorably) and "*con debido respeto*" (with due respect).

* * *

Framing child labor as a practice that, under particular circumstances, can reinforce dominant social values associated with progress and development calls into question not only the unfair assumptions that standard anti-child labor rhetoric reproduces, but also the simplistic conceptions of cultural continuity on which certain arguments in favor of child labor draw. In contrast to the universalizing assumptions about the evils of child labor against which families like Justa's must defend themselves, a culturalist perspective, much like studies of pre-modern childhood, approaches children's work not as a problem but rather as a component of traditional modes of socialization (Llanos & Moreno 2003; Díaz 1999). In Peru, this argument is expressed through the idea that work, play, and education have been historically interrelated in Andean culture (Gálvez & Jaramillo 2002). Without denying that certain forms of child labor are exploitative, supporters of Peru's National Movement of Working Children and Adolescents posit that calling for the eradication of all forms of children's work is an assault on family traditions, dignified work, and the universal right to education, which they interpret in a broader sense than simply formal schooling (Domic 2004; Schibotto 1997). While the culturalist framework challenges dominant discourses about social difference, it can also reproduce the classic and oversimplified rural-urban dichotomy of Andean anthropology (Isbell 1978; Lobo 1982) by overlooking labor conditions in agricultural, or community settings while fixing cities, or work environments with more blatant power hierarchies, as the exclusive sites of exploitation. In her introduction to a special journal issue on "Child Labor in an Age of Capitalist Restructuring," Christine Ward Gailey urges anthropologists to break down this binary. Giving examples as diverse as work-study, gendered home labor, contract labor, and prostitution, she proposes the concept of "education for social authority," not specific to class or

geographic region, to determine the appropriateness of children's work (Gailey 1999: 117).

Following the critiques of anthropologists who have problematized the romanticization of Andean cultures (Silverblatt 1988) and their resistance to change (Starn 1994), the celebration of tradition can also have the effect of devaluing the particular challenges facing the families that I came to know: Andean descendents struggling to make a living and to produce children who "*son mejores que nosotros*" (are better than us) in a city where they continue to be considered second-class citizens. Ward's notion of "education for social authority" assumes that social authority is a clear-cut concept, or even that everyone has the same access to the opportunities that enable the attainment of this status. I suggest that the conflicting understandings of education, social authority, and the relationship between them, is precisely what children and parents struggle with when trying to reconcile their own understandings of work as a path to progress with dominant discourses of street labor as a sign of underdevelopment.

Despite their Andean origins, none of the families I came to know explained their children's work in terms of cultural traditions. For them, child labor was a way of contending with their structurally disadvantaged position in Lima. This did not mean that families relinquished all of their values and practices upon relocating to the capital city, but rather that they reworked them in accordance with their new circumstances. As Nancy Scheper-Hughes argues with regard to mothers' seemingly unloving attitudes in a Brazilian shantytown, cultural and material conditions always work in conjunction with one another to shape attitudes towards children (Scheper-Hughes 1992). An example of this was Lily recounting that her younger brothers' initial foray into juggling at the intersection had emerged from their desire to reproduce a form of recreation with

which they had grown up in the countryside. In the context of Lima, this practice also became a way of gaining the financial means to achieve social progress.

While certainly not always the case, the idea that child labor is a way of keeping families together, providing children with a moral education, and even promoting recreation was also relevant to the family of Bryan, the puppeteer, comedian, and occasional juggler and windshield-washer who figured centrally into Chapter 1. The second time I had lunch at his house, I casually mentioned to Judith, his mother, that I was worried about my godson's mother, for her work as a bus vendor was causing her debilitating hip and back pain. Immediately, Judith identified with the situation and launched into her personal story. Years ago, looking for a way to *darles* to her three young children (the fourth had not yet been born), she found herself selling candy on public buses, a typical work activity among poor, uneducated, physically healthy women with young children. Eventually, the labor became too taxing on her body: in addition to having to hop quickly on and off the buses and brace herself during frequent jerky stops, she had to balance her merchandise with two kids hanging from her body and another standing beside her. Withstanding the physical pain, she saved up enough money to take a two-week sewing course in order to get a job in a clothing factory. After a few years working long hours for a meager salary and no benefits, she and her husband had recently decided to leave the factory and convert one of the two rooms of their rented apartment into a workshop to fill take-home orders.

The new work arrangement was less financially profitable than the factory job, given the unstable demand for labor and the fees associated with renting sewing machines (the family's precarious financial situation precluded them from buying their own equipment). Nevertheless, Judith insisted that working at home was worth the sacrifice, as it enabled her to take care of her children in the way she wanted. Whereas

before she often arrived home late, she now had more time to devote to domestic tasks that guaranteed the wellbeing of her family, like cooking and cleaning. Furthermore, she was glad to be able to keep an eye on her daughters, rather than having to leave them home alone. Judith's ability to double up on work – engaging in piecework at home while performing a highly gendered form of unremunerated work – points to an important reason so-called formal labor makes little sense for poor Peruvians, and especially mothers struggling to meet both the economic and affective needs of their families. Another aspect of this preference for informal and home- or family-based labor links to the long tradition of explicitly excluding the lower-classes from the laboring population. As historian Paulo Dr̄iñot posits, from the time of industrialization, when labor was regarded as fundamental to achieving national progress, the Peruvian state apparatus, through social policies designed to protect workers as well as legal documents such as the Constitution, considered the lower classes (primarily indigenous and of rural descent in the early twentieth century) incapable of becoming laborers and thus incommensurable with progress. Thus, he argues, exclusion was “not the consequence of the Peruvian state's ‘failures,’ [but rather]... immanent to the project of Peruvian nation-state formation, which was and in many ways continues to be premised on the overcoming of indigeneity, that is to say on the de-Indianization of Peru” (Dr̄iñot 2011: 15). Indeed, the legacies of this racialized system have emerged in the politics and anti-politics that have characterized Peru's continued, and corrupt, march towards macroeconomic progress (Cotler 1982; Parodi 2000; Degregori 2000; Durand 2007; Mújica 2008).

The invisibility of Judith's labor to the public world speaks back to the argument between Alfredo and Clelia, in which Clelia drew on the stereotype of the lazy mother who sits at home and forces her children to go out to work. Judith's concern with

watching over her daughters recalls Alfredo's accusation that Clelia was an exploitative mother for keeping her children with her by the side of the road. Even though Clelia and her daughters occupy the public space of the street while Judith and her daughters inhabit the so-called private realm of the home, both women's definitions of good motherhood emphasize physical proximity to their children. Moreover, in linking the idea of protecting their daughters to keeping them within their reach, Judith and Clelia suggest that when hard-working mothers determine how to best protect their children, traditional conceptions of the public and private realm are less important than the gendered understanding of care whereby girls, owing to ideas of morality and the regulation of female sexuality (Mannarrelli 1999; Fuller 1998), require more physical protection than boys.

In contrast to keeping their daughters safe by staying physically close to them, mothers encouraged honesty and responsible decision-making in their sons by allowing them a certain level of spatial independence. When I was first getting to know Judith, I mentioned that Bryan had proudly told me that he gives her S/6.50 of his daily earnings. She responded, smirking:

Well, yes, that's the amount we agreed upon, but, frankly, it's not the money I'm concerned about. I mean, I know that the next day he's just going to ask me for it back to buy a snack or go to do something fun. What's important is that he learns how to work and the value of money. I mean, I might die tomorrow, and my husband could leave us at any time, so my kids need to learn to defend themselves. If he doesn't learn how to work, then he could become a thief when I die.

Having broached the subject of Bryan's work by focusing on money, I was surprised when Judith redirected the conversation to the question of moral values. Moreover, I was struck by yet another instance of a mother framing the ethics of her child's labor around her own mortality. Just as Lily discussed her family's transformation into a household of workers in terms of a sudden catastrophe, Judith also contextualized the

development of the work ethic she is now passing down to her children in terms of the unfortunate circumstances of her own life. Her transformative crisis was the death of her own mother when she was a teenager, just a few years before Judith would have her own children. "My mother always looked out for the wellbeing of me and my siblings and never wanted to make us work." The negative repercussion of this form of care and protection, Judith lamented, was that in not teaching her how to labor, her mother left her to learn the hard way when she died. Deeply grateful for her own upbringing, Judith nevertheless wondered if she may have avoided the stress and strain of working on the buses had her mother sheltered her less. In this way, Bryan's mother drew a direct connection between the effects of her own mother's death and teaching her children the value of labor: the experience of losing her primary caregiver in the absence of a formal safety net drove Judith's commitment to preparing her children for a motherless future.

Just as the families I came to know exposed the cultural continuity argument as essentialist, they also challenged the widespread idea that child labor is a destructive cycle passed down from generation to generation. By describing their parenting decisions as corrections to the inadvertent mistakes that their own mothers had made by trying to protect them from the harsh world of labor, both Judith and Justa implicitly questioned that valuing child labor is necessarily evidence of a culture of poverty, a notion that has been used to demonize poor mothers since it was first put forth by sociologist Oscar Lewis in relation to Mexican and Puerto Rican families in the 1960s (Lewis 1975; 1998). Following Scheper-Hughes's critique, anthropologist Donna Goldstein argues against the idea that seemingly unethical mothering practices among the Brazilian poor are an expression of inherent cultural norm. With regard to the shantytown where she conducted her fieldwork, Goldstein shows that mothers see severe treatment as a form of preparation for the tough world that awaits their children.

She states that in addition to “being a harsh disciplinarian,” Gloria, one of her main informants, “also encourages [her children] to do ‘honest’ work, the grueling minimum-wage work of the poorest, so that they do not get involved in the gangs that represent the most obvious alternative to unemployment” (Goldstein 2003:169).

Neither Justa nor Judith used the harsh discipline Goldstein describes, but both prioritized “honest work” as a form of prevention and preparation. Far from perpetuating a cycle of indifference, acceptance or laziness, it was the imperative to make a moral investment in their children’s future, in the face of material deprivation, that brought Judith and Justa to depart from their mothers’ styles of child-rearing. In the historical, economic and geographical context in which Judith had grown up, agricultural land provided a reliable means towards a decent livelihood, making wage labor, child labor, and so-called informal labor unnecessary. Justa had a similar upbringing, going so far as to describe herself as having been an “*engreída*” (an endearing term commonly used to signify spoiled, although not necessarily in a material sense) who was left to learn the hard way later on.

Inculcating a work ethic in their children, rather than an expression of generational continuity, was the way that the mothers I came to know gave their children the opportunity for a better future than the one their own well-meaning and loving mothers had set up for them. Ethnographers have shown how parents in the Andean region come up against critique by the more powerful segments of society as they develop seemingly counterintuitive strategies to encourage the upward mobility of their children through education. Social geographer Kate Swanson demonstrates that in urban Ecuador, the money children earn from begging is primarily used to finance their schooling (Swanson 2010). As I discussed earlier, anthropologist María Elena García’s fieldwork in highland Peru shows how, under pressure from local and transnational

activists with an agenda to promote multiculturalism in the Andes, indigenous parents opposed the efforts to implement a bilingual curriculum that would include not only Spanish, but the native language Quechua (García 2005). Arguing that the home is the place to teach their children about tradition, parents insisted that the schoolroom is the place where children must learn Spanish so as to have the same opportunities for upward mobility as their non-rural counterparts.

Even as scholars have problematized the use of culture to generalize about the poor, I have suggested that, often, mothers who are faced with the burden of exempting themselves from such judgments do so by reaffirming the idea that a culture of poverty does indeed exist. Like Lily's use of the *acostumbrarse* discourse, Judith argues that by learning to labor, her sons will avoid becoming thieves or "street kids." Similarly, by emphasizing their good *educación*, Justa defines her children in contrast to the negative stereotypes through which they are often read. This binary thinking is similar to what Goldstein describes in relation to Gloria, whose "world is divided into bandits and honest workers.... Gloria constantly uses Pedro Paulo [her dead son] as an example of what the others should strive not to become—dead in the street" (Goldstein 2003: 169). This need for struggling families to constantly defend their child labor practices both against and through the systematic pathologization of the poor draws attention to the impossibility of everyday life without the threat of intervention. No matter the particularities of their spatial organization of protection and labor, such families are always already public.

In response to a state that has never cared for its most marginalized subjects and that continues to consider the members of this population second-class citizens, poor Peruvian mothers produce homemade safety nets for their children. Such investments, whether they challenge or reproduce dominant discourse, are systematically considered

evidence of exploitation. In this way, it is not that the poor reproduce a culture of poverty – or a system of values that encourages laziness and knows no work ethic – but rather that the state, parading, if weakly, as child advocate and surrogate parent, generates a culture of self-defense among the poor. My research subjects emphasized this constant struggle through their references to public institutions as seemingly divergent as the school (where intervening on behalf of the child means demonizing mothers) and Maranguita (where children are punished through their forceful separation from presumably neglectful parents). For poor families, sending children to work on the street is a more sensible investment in the future than relying on an uncaring state. For mothers keenly aware of the precariousness of their own lives, teaching the value of labor through practice is an investment in their children’s inevitably motherless futures. Yet as Clelia, Alfredo, Yocelyn, and Justa showed, engaging in child labor, like going to school, requires constant self-policing.

* * *

In contrast to Judith, most parents I came to know regarded their children’s income as crucial to the household economy and interwoven with the ethical value of their labor. The crisis that provoked Justa’s family to migrate to Lima and become street workers was, in the most basic sense, material. With the primary breadwinner suddenly unemployed and the house literally up in flames, the family was left with no income or shelter. Yet in recounting the events that followed, Lily consistently discussed the family’s economic response in relation to a foundational set of ethical values linked to a larger moral discourse of “*pobres pero honrados*” (poor but honest, or honorable). She described her father as having suffered an “emotional imbalance” as a result of the crisis, causing him to become a self-reflexive yet socially withdrawn alcoholic, unable to

find the strength to provide materially for his family.²⁰ Nevertheless, both she and her mother emphasized how he had never ceased to teach his children moral lessons (including to stay away from alcohol!). The family thus regarded him with a mixture of pity and reverence, accepting his weaknesses in exchange for his assets, which included imbuing the children with the strong work ethic that he had learned during his own difficult childhood and, until the crisis, practiced as an adult.

With the patriarch psychologically distraught, the rest of the family had to find the strength to *seguir* (go on) in order to satisfy basic needs, pay the rent, and ensure that the kids stayed in school. They developed an accounting system that divided the family income into two funds: the money that *los chicos* (the kids) made juggling; and the income that *los mayores* (the “older ones,” or those beyond school-age) generated through their informal business of making jello at home and selling it on the street. The distribution of funds was equally straightforward: the *chicos’* account, managed by Justa, was for educational costs, such as school uniforms, shoes, backpacks, and notebooks, as well as for paying the electric and water bills if the money made by the *mayores* did not suffice. The *mayores’* fund, or the *dinero de casa* (the house money), went directly to food, rent, and any extra items that the *chicos* might need. Of course the kids were expected to spend some of their earnings on treats like snacks or the internet!

There were some exceptions, of course. Gabi, Justa’s most career-oriented daughter, was getting her nursing degree at a technical institute; she preferred to be as self-sufficient as possible, selling candy at an intersection close to home so as to fund her studies, *darle* to her adopted son, and maintain personal control over how her earnings were spent. Her older sister Nancy, the mother of Jhon and two younger girls, also sold

²⁰ In subsequent chapters, I will elaborate on the emasculating effects of fathers losing their status as their family’s primary breadwinners, and the resultant changes in kinship structures.

candy at the same intersection in order to provide for her children. When I asked her why her daughters did not work, she replied that the street was too risky for girls, so they stayed at home with Justa when they were not in school.²¹ In addition, Justa's two oldest sons were exempt from participating in the family economy, as they had their own children, lived with their in-laws, and worked to provide for their new families. In contrast, Justa's four daughters all had children of their own, but with the fathers generally absent, the women's primary household continued to be that of their own mother.

The way Justa and her daughters describe their household economic structure highlights the link between child labor and *educación* in its double sense. If burdened by the expense of school, the families I knew prioritized *educación* and adjusted their work practices accordingly.²² Over the years, for example, Zoyla, Sandrita and Yocelyn developed a division of labor whereby one daughter accompanied Zoyla to the intersection while the other stayed at home to attend to domestic chores and, more recently, care for the baby. Yet as summer vacation drew to a close and the pressure of the upcoming academic year set in, the two older daughters came to the intersection as workers, armed with products to sell to drivers. The extra income they generated helped them meet the costs of schooling, even if this also came with the cost of having to bring baby Mar into the hot sun, something Zoyla lamented. Likewise, as I noted in Chapter 1, in the weeks leading up to the new academic year the kids at the intersection often

²¹ Again, this spoke to the gendered management of space, virtue, and perceived moral and physical danger, through which the risks for boys are invisibilized.

²² Sending a child to an under-resourced public school is an expensive endeavor for poor Peruvian families, who must pay registration fees, buy school supplies, purchase uniforms that include a specific style of shoe, and sometimes give the teacher a required "tip" on her birthday and other occasions. Additionally, in order to take part in extracurricular activities, such as the popular dance competitions, participants had to contribute to costume and space rental.

approached drivers with lists of supplies distributed by their schools. More than a request for pencils and notebooks, the list functioned as a guarantee of commitment to school, a promise that a few stray coins would be put to virtuous use as it announced that kids who work under the traffic light not only learn to labor, but also labor to learn.²³

* * *

In his work on Brazilian street children, anthropologist Tobias Hecht identifies two opposing types of children: those who are nurtured and those who nurture. The former describes children who passively receive the care of their parents and “are loved by virtue of *being* children;” the latter receive love from their parents based in large part on “what they *do*,” economically, for their households (Hecht 1998: 80). Hecht argues that these divergent conceptions of childhood are classed: nurtured childhood correspond to a bourgeois notion of children as consumers of commodities, whereas nurturing childhood encapsulates children who work on the street in order to help satisfy their family’s basic material needs. In shedding light on key distinctions between the responsibilities of rich and poor children, Hecht echoes the critiques of the UNCRC that I described in the Introduction and the insights of fellow Brazilianists. However, I suggest that his dichotomy, in relying on an individualized and economic approach to care (in which care is defined by the monetary contribution that individuals make to the family), fails to capture what I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter: the multiple yet subtle ways that nurturing children are also nurtured. The child laborers that I came to

²³ I hope not to have presented an overly rationalistic explanation of families’ understandings of labor. Despite their poverty, my research subjects are deeply enmeshed in consumer worlds as targets of advertising and subjects with recreational needs and desires. Although Alfredo’s comment about spending all of his money on junk food and video games was partly a joke, it draws attention to his identity as a consumer as well as a producer. Likewise, Bryan’s favorite treat was to save up his money and go to the movies with his pal Mateo; this made the boys feel independent and gave them a break from their daily routine of studying and work.

know, for the most part, belonged to families in which adults and children practiced forms of mutual care that were both economic and emotional in nature.

The complex ways the families I knew conceptualized the relationship between maternal care and child labor again point to the limitations of approaching everyday survival in material or economic terms – in other words, as exclusively about avoiding child mortality. As I have explained, despite the often contradictory performances in which children and families engage in order to gain some control over the way that their activities are publicly understood, the aim of “sending” kids to work is not just to put food on the table, but also an investment in the future. Contrary to the stereotype that I discussed in the previous chapter – that parents are training their children to become “*acostumbrados*” (accustomed) to “*la vida facil*” (the easy life) on the streets – the parents I worked with continually expressed the conviction that by developing a work ethic now, in addition to eventually graduating from high school, their children would remain honest individuals and responsible family members, and hopefully even become professionals.²⁴ This understanding of upward mobility, achieved through work and schooling, relies on the connection between moral and formal education, and ethical and economic value.

All the parents I knew dreamed about their children becoming professionals, but were aware, on different levels, that there was unfortunately no guarantee that their strategies would produce this desired outcome. I was reminded of anthropologist James Ferguson’s *Expectations of Modernity* about the simultaneous power and failed promises of discourses of progress in Zimbabwe (Ferguson 1999). Zoyla’s comment, “Who *wouldn’t* want their kid to become a professional?” after I asked her what she would like

²⁴ The importance parents gave to their children graduating from high school is particularly relevant given that most of them had not completed their secondary education.

her daughters to do later in life, expressed hope but also a tacit recognition that this universal parental fantasy was unlikely to be fulfilled. As Paul Willis has famously argued in the context of industrial England, “working class kids get working class jobs” because of the way that institutions of social reproduction, namely the school, are structured (Willis 1977: 3). In Peru, while graduating from high school is a widely held social value, it guarantees little for individuals struggling to survive in a system that is anything but a meritocracy. I was shocked to find out that Arelí, a thirty-three year old who sold jello and oranges to *combi* drivers stopped at the intersection, had not only graduated from high school but also studied to be a nurse technician. She and Roberto, her husband and co-worker, explained to me that after saving up all their money and delaying having children so that Arelí could become a professional, she only lasted a couple years at the private clinic where she landed a job. The low pay, erratic schedule, long commute, and lack of benefits such as health insurance, made it more practical, materially and logistically, to take out a micro-loan and start a jello-making business. “It took a lot for me to swallow my pride and come out here to do this humiliating work on the street every day,” Arelí told me. “But, well, *así es la vida* (that’s life).”

Another factor that complicates Hecht’s nurturing-nurtured binary as well as common representations of mothers of child laborers as exploitative and lazy is that the mothers I knew did not seem to understand their children’s labor as replacing their own. This is an especially important consideration with regard to mothers who, unlike Zoyla and Clelia, were not visible on the street alongside their children. As I discussed earlier, Judith saw her children’s labor not primarily in terms of its economic value, but more as an ethical investment in their future. Despite her sons’ work on the street and her daughters’ work in and near the home, Judith engaged in two different kinds of home-based labor: piecework sewing for a factory, which enabled her to provide materially for

her family, and the gendered work of cooking, cleaning, and watching over her children. Justa, in contrast, no longer works for a monetary income, but the labor she performs in the home, as a babysitter, advice-giver, and general house-keeper, is fundamental to maintaining the unity that her family values so deeply. Justa's children continually emphasized their gratitude towards their mother through comments such as Lily's: "our mother has done enough for us. She used to go out to the streets to sell with us, but now it's our obligation to provide for her." Justa did not easily accept this arrangement, as she laughingly explained to me: "I love going out to work, I'm not afraid! I'll go out and work, I am not afraid of working! But they won't let me!" In this way, as mothers allowed themselves to be nurtured by their children, who enjoyed doing this, they also expressed a clear understanding of themselves as their children's primary nurturers.

As I have discussed, the children and the families at the center of my research had a general appreciation for the moral *educación* that mothers worked so hard to give to their children through verbal guidance and by teaching them to labor. In this way, they reinterpreted certain practices that have come to signify maternal exploitation as indications of nurturing. Yet, in different ways, they also contributed to the long-standing erasure of women's home-based work as labor. In expressing her deep gratitude for her mothers' work as something that was done in the past, Lily implied that her mother no longer worked. In other words, the time Justa spent each day cleaning, cooking and washing the clothes of sixteen people, in addition to caring for her young grandchildren while their mothers were out working, did not figure as work. While not an inherent cultural norm, these gendered constructions about what is and is not valued as work have a reproductive aspect. While Bryan had been trained as a comedian by his older brother and uncle, his younger sisters were being taught

household tasks, such as cooking, by their mother. Judith readily admitted that such knowledge was valuable preparation for the girls' future as wives.

In addition to gender, age – and, specifically, birth order – influenced the ways that families imagined, invested in, and prepared their children for the future. As other scholars have argued and as I found in my research, poor Peruvian parents invariably express their desire for their children to achieve upward mobility through the phrase “*quiero que mis hijos sean mejor que yo*” (literally, “I want my children to be better than me”), with the idea of becoming a “professional” as an important part of this futurism (García 2005; Leinaweaver 2008). Yet if care is organized according to the parent-child relationship, birth order and age cohort also determine the kinds of care one provides and receives as well as the kinds of sacrifices one may be expected to make for others. During my conversation with Justa and Lily, it was not Justa, but her daughter who stated, “We have to keep working to keep *saliendo adelante* (moving on, or getting ahead), above all so that our younger siblings turn out *mejores que nosotros* (better than us). We have to put forth the best of us for our younger siblings.” This made sense in the context of their family's dual domestic economy, whereby any possible professional future for the younger cohort was linked to older siblings taking on primary caretaker-type responsibilities. Lily's migration narrative had also suggested that older siblings commonly occupy such roles in relation not only to their younger siblings, but also to their ageing parents.²⁵

What Lily did not say explicitly was that for their younger siblings to “*ser algo en la vida*” (be something in life), she and her cohort already have their futures “set” as non-

²⁵ Although in a different way, Jhon's place on the family tree also demonstrates the significance of birth order and cohort. If treated like a brother, Jhon is actually the nephew of Nelson, Arturo, and Jesús, as he is the son of their oldest sister, Nancy. In this family, generationality was defined not strictly in terms of biological reproduction, but more in terms of chronological age groups. These classifications, crossed with gender differentiations, were the basis for the family's division of labor and economic organization.

professionals. This birth-order organization of priorities and system of care manifested itself in different ways in my fieldwork.²⁶ Twelve-year-old María Gracia casually mentioned to me before the school year began that, after several months away, she would now be coming to the intersection more frequently in order to make money to buy a backpack for her younger sister. “See?” she said, smiling, as she flaunted the backpack that her older sister had bought her. But no one expressed the gendered, classed, and age-inflected pragmatics of care more convincingly than Yocelyn.

YOCELYN: What is the second mother? It’s when an older sister is big. So, say my mother dies, who’s going to take care of the younger kids? I’m the oldest so I have to know all the responsibilities. I have to work, I have to wash their clothes, until they grow up and are big. The idea is to educate them well, I’ve given them everything (les di todo) my mom wanted, now that my mom—anyway, I’m like the second mom.

LEIGH: And how does it make you feel to have that responsibility? Good, or does it scare you?

YOCELYN: Good, but I wonder, if I hadn’t insisted, how would things have turned out?

LEIGH: But now you’re just eleven. What would happen if your mom died now?

YOCELYN: I’d wash the clothes, wash the dishes, I would give them money, even if it were just 5 soles so that they have enough to eat. I would work doing anything, even if it’s something chiquito (small), it can be chiquito or mucho mejor

²⁶ Peruvian anthropologist Ponciano del Pino (s/d) has recently examined the different ways in which families prioritize their youngest children. In contrast to Nancy Scheper-Hughes’s study of the indifference to child death in Brazil (Scheper-Hughes 1992), del Pino found that this investment in the youngest children extended even to cases where children were fatally sick.

(much better), I would work for my sisters, I would give them everything (*les daría todo*), so that no *les falta nada* (they're not missing anything).

LEIGH: What does it mean to work doing something *chiquito* (small)?

YOCELYN: Like I would sell candy, I would go to the street, I would wash dishes, clothes. Anything, the idea being that I would be paid to be able to *darles* (give to, provide for) my sisters. My mom always says to me, your aunt won't always be able to take care of you girls. She has to take care of her kids, not us. So my mom says, "You have to know how to work, wash dishes, you know." The day that she dies I'm the second mother for my sisters.

As I have discussed, in most families that I came to know, boys performed the masculine labor of going out to the street while girls stayed at home learning domestic tasks. While Yocelyn was one of the few girls who went to work at the intersection (probably in part because she had no brother who could have done so instead), she was nevertheless highly aware of her gendered role within her family's imagined future. Her comments about being the second mother pointed to yet another way in which, even for children who worked on the street, the family division of labor so often ended up reproducing the old patriarchal models of labor and value all over again. And yet I have tried to show how, in an era in which a resounding global discourse about the evils of child labor runs up against the need for young Peruvians to work for survival, it has become all too easy to point the finger at those who literally cannot afford to keep their bodies out of public reach in the domestic and school spaces of a "proper" childhood. In this way, beyond simply experiencing the traditional devaluing of women's caring labor, mothers with children in the streets must also contend with discourses that figure them as the primary exploiters of their own children. In other words, in an age in which it is increasingly harder to physically locate a merciless boss, mothers become the

supposed exploiters from whom children must be saved. This formula, in turn, further entrenches the idea of the absent father, which I will take up in the following chapter.

Chapter 3. Mobile Home: Performing Family on the Public Bus

Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon. Please excuse us for interrupting your trip in this way. I have come here with my little sister to sing you a song. I hope that you like it and that you can *colaborar* (collaborate). This is how we try to advance ourselves in life and bring bread to our table. And, in this way, we help our mother since our father died in an accident. Thank you so much. We hope you have a lovely journey.

Like many children and adults in Lima, my *ahijado* (godson) Paco and his younger sister Rosy, eleven and five when I began my research, spent most afternoons scrambling onto and off of crowded public buses in hopes of bringing home some money. As Rosy squeezed between standing passengers to carve out a makeshift dance-floor, Paco clearly and confidently addressed the passengers, describing the dire family circumstances that brought them to engage in an income-generating activity considered to be an index and even a source of Peru's underdevelopment. He then reached into his plastic bag and pulled out an empty tin can and an old comb. Vaguely following the rhythm that Paco produced with his homemade instrument, the pigtailed girl moved her body around with childlike flirtatiousness and sang loud enough to overpower her older brother's voice. After a classic Peruvian folk tune and perhaps a more contemporary *chicha* song, the two moved up and down the aisle separately, asking passengers to "*colaborar*" so that they could help their mother with household costs. Meanwhile, if it wasn't laundry day, or if she wasn't in bed with debilitating back pain, their mother, Sara, was likely a half-mile down the road, trying to entice a different set of bus-riders to buy a few pieces of the candy that she had purchased in bulk. Like her son and daughter, she sought to establish herself as deserving of public patronage through a preamble that tapped into moral discourses about family. "As a widow," she stated, "*Soy padre y madre para mis hijos*" (I'm both father and mother to my children).

Paco and Sara carefully scripted their narratives in hopes of distinguishing themselves from the countless street workers and beggars with whom they vied for a piece of the informal urban market. Indeed the bus was a saturated marketplace. Mixed into the crowds that gathered on street corners to await the overcrowded buses were not only vendors, but also vendors. I seldom rode a bus in Lima without several such individuals boarding at different points in the voyage. A porous space that allowed people on and off, the bus also produced a kind of contained intimacy when its doors closed. It thus provided a stage for the personal testimonies that vendors and performers typically gave to try to get a few coins. Passengers, in turn, had to decide whether or not to buy a lemon-flavored candy from a child trying to cover the cost of school, contribute to the medical costs of a woman's sick child, help a motivated high school graduate raise enough money to attend a technical institute, or buy a spelling guide in order to become a less ignorant citizen.

In this chapter, I show how achieving the status of deserving bus vendor in Lima requires the poor to publicly perform gender and age roles that conform to dominant, if unrealistic, models of family. Such performances are one way that the private family is constituted publicly. In particular, Sara's bus performances reveal how her own fashioning of a public self based on responsible motherhood and patriarchal ideals emerges in tension with the way state institutions produce her as a bad mother and claim her as publicly available, a process that I described in Chapter 2. As the Peruvian sociologist Ana Ponce has argued, although almost one-quarter of homes in Peru are headed by single mothers, "maintaining the two-parent nuclear family (father, mother and children) as an ideological model has contributed to prejudiced criteria for what is 'normal' and what is deviant..., [classifying] families that do not fit into this ideal model... [as] 'incomplete,' 'unstructured' or 'dysfunctional'" (Ponce 2007: 99-100).

Aiming to highlight the disjunctures and fluencies between the ideological production of family (and families) in public space and in public institutions, the chapter moves back and forth between the particularities of Sara's life as it unfolds in multiple urban sites and the broader processes through which the gendered family and city produce and give meaning to one another on the public bus. If mothers are at the center of this project of social ordering, so too are fathers, even when they are not physically present, as in the case of Sara's family. In order to ground my analysis of how masculinity is imagined and men are brought into this ideological project, I also examine some of the ways that adult male bus vendors perform gender on the public bus. The marketing strategies of the diverse men on Sara and Paco's bus route point to the gendered character of this space and provide an entry point for approaching motherhood and childhood in relation to questions of masculinity and, in particular, absent fatherhood.

* * *

Over the course of my fieldwork, I grew extremely close to Paco and his family, even becoming his godmother. We spent more time together at our respective homes than on their bus route, and I quickly learned that this family had it as hard as it could get. I witnessed their daily struggles with economic stresses as well as with physical and mental health problems. Being an integral part of their lives also enabled me to observe the many complex interpersonal relationships that they navigated, including those with gossipy neighbors, extended family, co-workers, state institutions, and one another. With the exception of one three-dollar loan, Sara never asked me for money, quite a statement for a candy-vendor trying to raise three kids on her own. Nevertheless, when I became concerned about particular family issues, ranging from medical needs to the requirement that students have proper school shoes, they humbly accepted my monetary help and looked for the cheapest option. Despite her chronic physical ailments

and hauntingly brutal past, I was amazed by Sara's ability to go on. And yet, understandably, the pressure sometimes became too much for her. This resulted in occasional impulsive behaviors and neglect of her children, leading neighbors to judge her and, eventually, the state to intervene.

Sara lived with Paco, Rosy and her middle child, Daniel, in a cardboard house atop a hill in the district of San Juan de Lurigancho, on Lima's northeastern edge. Despite its relative youth, San Juan de Lurigancho, founded in 1967, is Lima's most highly populated municipality, home to a million of the city's almost 9 million inhabitants and to a large and infamous men's prison where petty thieves and Shining Path guerillas coexist. A low-income district, it is nevertheless marked by internal class divisions: just beyond the brick homes and shopping centers that line the paved roads are hills where residents like Sara live in straw and cardboard homes and struggle for access to water and basic sewage. The trip from my house to Sara's was no easy feat, despite the fact that a single bus line serviced our route (this was a rare occurrence in city where I often had to take two or even three buses to get from one destination to another). To avoid a steep half-hour walk once I reached their bus stop, I usually took a *mototaxi* up the paved half of their hill, and then walked another few minutes up the incline to their house.

Family and kinship, of course, have long been fundamental concerns of cultural anthropologists. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Bronislow Malinowski sought to prove that, cross-culturally, the family form confers social legitimacy upon its individual members and functions as the basic unit in structuring society (Malinowski 1963, 1964). The nuclear family, composed of mother, father, and children, he asserted, was a universal institution. Long taken as anthropological truth, this naturalization of family eventually encountered critiques. In the early 1980s, David Schneider argued that

the entire discipline had been built on a false premise, namely mapping Western understandings of kinship onto other cultures (Schneider 1984). Meanwhile, feminists were examining how the patriarchal family structure served to reproduce gender inequality (Collier, Rosaldo & Yanagisako 1982; Rapp 1982).

Against the stereotype that poor families are to blame for their own plight, some anthropologists set out to prove that so-called deviant kinship practices were actually evidence of adaptive survival strategies among historically marginalized communities (Scharff 1998). Leading this line of inquiry was Carol Stack, who undertook fieldwork in a poor urban black community in the Midwestern United States in the 1970s (Stack 1974). Later research, like Nancy-Scheper Hughes's investigation of mothering in Brazilian shantytowns, critiqued ethnocentrism by relativizing concepts such as love and reinterpreting "bad mothering" practices as a response to material and cultural conditions (Scheper-Hughes 1992). More recently, scholars have drawn attention to how the heterosexual nuclear family has operated as a normalizing discourse, producing models of deviance that reproduce old structures of inequality (Weston 1991; Butler 2004). Others have traced how family is being resignified and remade in new sites as global capitalism ushers in novel reproductive technologies and modes of information exchange (Franklin 1995; Rapp 1998; Modell 2001).

These studies, for the most part, argue not for the end of family but rather for its reinterpretation as a flexible – and possibly even radical – form. This chapter underscores that family is a diversely lived experience, something that people both desire and transgress—and, above all, a powerful discourse that simultaneously renders pleasures and burdensome effects in the lives of people like Sara and Paco.¹ My

¹ Here, I take my cue from anthropologist Pamela Reynolds who, in writing about state violence and family in South Africa, argues that "the nature of kinship is flexible, modifiable, but the forces of convention are strong" (Reynolds 2000: 142).

intention is thus not to propose an alternative model of kinship based on a romanticized reading of how poor families resist dominant structures. Instead, I seek to show how the patriarchal nuclear family continues to be a powerful mode of subjectivization that determines the every day performances and survival practices of stigmatized people who use public space as a stage on which to make claims to legitimate sociality.

The bus, as a site where the idiom of family produces gendered and classed subjectivities, contrasts interestingly with the space of the street corner discussed in Chapter 1. To begin with, the presumed class difference between a vendor and her public is infinitely greater at the intersection than on the bus. Driving a private car or taking a taxi through an upper-middle class neighborhood near the US embassy marks people as economically and socially privileged, whereas riding a public bus in Lima indicates a lower class position. Buses, the only mode of public transportation in the overflowing city, are spaces to be avoided, if financially possible.² They are notoriously slow, cramped, and chaotic – but cheap. Taxis, although informal, are more efficient and comfortable – but they remain prohibitively expensive for most Peruvians.

At the intersection, encounters are quick, their length determined by the duration of the red light; as a result, performers communicate more through body language than through words. In contrast, bus vendors are contained within a relatively bounded space with their publics; lacking a formal structure like the traffic light to regulate the amount of time they have to communicate their messages, vendors have more options for presenting their products and services. The bus, however, does not guarantee an

² During my fieldwork, what seemed like a never-ending project to “modernize” the public bus system was taking place. Limans were understandably skeptical that such an infrastructural undertaking would indeed come to fruition; after all, Alan García had failed to complete the electric train line he had ambitiously promised during his first presidency, leaving only a series of ugly towers running down a few avenues in southern Lima. The enduring public resentment about the “disappearance” of these project funds in the late 1980s, a time when Peruvians had to line up to receive bread rations, points to an important link between government corruption and the inefficiency of public transportation. This is just one example of how Peru’s most powerful political agents – not the poor – produce major problems of public disorder.

indefinitely attentive public, as the informal system allows passengers to get on and off even between stops.³

The vast number of Andean migrants in Lima elucidates one of the many ways in which cities are constituted through human mobility. And yet cities also create the need for mobility. Daily, poor people throughout Latin America make long intra-urban bus journeys in order to work as maids and watchmen in middle-class and elite zones, or in other low-paying, often informal, jobs staffed by the likes of San Juan de Lurigancho's residents. However, many studies of the urban poor in Peru and elsewhere focus on peripheral neighborhoods as the site in which individuals and communities struggle to make life meaningful in the face of broader structures of exclusion (Lloyd 1980; Lobo 1982; Riofrío 1991; Driant 1991; Tanaka 1999; Aramburú 2004; Calderón 2005; Holston 2008; Schepers-Hughes 1992; Goldstein 2003; Bourgois 2003). Such place-based studies have contributed important insights into the organization of such spaces and the agency of marginalized subjects, yet they also risk reproducing the idea of the poor as immobile, or as people whose activities are limited to the city's edges. Like social theorist Michel de Certeau's famous city walkers whose "intertwined paths give their shape to space" (de Certeau 1984: 97), it is the masses of individuals whose paths cross as they move around Lima on a daily basis that invest this vast urban space with meaning. I contend that it is impossible to understand shantytown inhabitants' place-based struggles without also examining how the very structures of power that relegate

³ As part of the project to formalize and enhance the efficiency of the public bus system, however, traffic police have been cracking down on bus drivers and *cobradores* (fare-collectors) that allow passengers to exit the bus between stops. Once, in early 2008, when I requested to get off at a street corner where there was not technically a bus stop, the *cobrador* scolded me. "Not anymore, *Señorita*. Miraflores is changing. We have to respect the rules." I was surprised not only by his strict response, but also by the moral tone of his claim; in the past, I had heard *cobradores* justify such actions by simply stating that they wanted to avoid being fined by the police. This semi-formal laborer was not expressing fear of or explicit submission to a greater power, but instead actively participating in a language of spatial regulation long linked to classed and raced civilizing discourses. Miraflores was, after all, a traditionally prosperous district that has become increasingly transited by members of Lima's lower classes.

them to the periphery also produce them as highly mobile subjects who, in turn, resignify public space – if often in ways that are met with disdain. As Peruvian scholar Pablo Vega Centeno has asserted, attention to such daily movements is “essential to being able to understand any other contemporary urban phenomenon” (Vega Centeno 2004:59). Hence by putting Sara’s mobility and use of public space at the center of her subjectivity, I show how the survival of many poor women struggling to keep their families afloat requires that they complicate the traditional yet enduring relationship between public and private, city and home, labor and mobility.

The physical place called home, no doubt, continues to be a key site for the construction of gendered subjectivities; for this reason my ethnography dwells quite a bit in the homes of my informants, where women spend a great deal of time attending to domestic tasks. It is significant, however, that Sara’s daily life does not include organizing alongside her neighbors to demand potable water. Instead she spends most of her waking hours moving around the city in order to pay for basic necessities like the water that a big truck dumps – weekly, if she’s lucky – into the metal bin in front of her house.

Public buses in Lima, like the Greyhound buses in the United States about which Kath Weston writes, are sites of “poverty in motion” (Weston 2008: xii). But, unlike Greyhound riders or Peruvians who occasionally travel back and forth between Lima and their provinces of origin, the buses that Sara and her counterparts ride each day are themselves their destination. As I discussed in Chapter 2, most of the mothers I know who worked on buses had, like Sara, also attempted working for *terceros* (third parties, as in factories or retail where they were paid by a boss). With rigid schedules, long commutes, unlivable wages, and no benefits or job security, these women found more promise in the informal street-vending market. The latter provided more opportunities

for juggling child-care and domestic labor with remunerated work.⁴ In addition to these practical dilemmas, women often experienced harassment and other forms of mistreatment when working for *terceros*. Even though I knew her only as a bus vendor, Sara had previously gotten a job in a factory. But her boss deceived and humiliated her, so she went back to selling candy and made it her goal to save up to *mejorar*, or improve, the home. She told me about her plan with a hint of excitement in her voice, but I knew that this was never going to happen, just as Sara was never going to have a job with adequate health care benefits, which almost no poor Peruvians enjoyed.

The kind of mobile labor that this chapter considers fits within the long tradition of scholarship on the dialectical relationship between individuals and urban space (de Certeau 1984; Lefebvre 1991; Grosz 1995; Smith 1992; Kondo 1990; Low 2000, 1999; Huyssen 2008; Caldeira 2008). As I discussed previously, scholars have increasingly explored the development of new spatial technologies that use the ideas of fear and insecurity to perpetuate urban segregation and social exclusion (Davis 1992, 2006; Caldeira 2000; Gregory 2003; Low 2003; Katz 2006; Smith 1996, 2008). Lima's version of this includes the simultaneous development of shantytowns and gated suburbs,⁵ along with urban renewal schemes that seek both privatization and greater state regulation of public space. A prime example of this is the appearance of transnational food franchises (such as KFC), complete with private indoor playgrounds and the *wachimen* who have

⁴ In this way, flexibly self-employed women like Sara represent an important dimension to critiques of flexploitation, which focus mainly on precarious wage labor and neoliberal entrepreneurship among blue- and white-collar workers (e.g., Ross 2009).

⁵ Social geographer Mike Davis describes the global proliferation of urban slums, in contrast to the previously more prominent inner-city, as "horizontalization" (Davis 2006: 37).

traditionally guarded the entries of Lima's government buildings and private homes.⁶ While the neoliberal moment has introduced new technologies of control, Lima has continued to constitute itself through the discourses of urban order introduced by Spanish colonists centuries ago. In the 20th century, agricultural restructuring and internal war propelled rural inhabitants to migrate to the city, producing what Peruvian sociologist José Matos Mar famously called "*desborde popular*" (popular, or mass overflow, 1984). As anthropologist Daniella Gandolfo argues, the question of how to manage the transgressions of the undesirable urban population remains central to Lima's mode of governmentality (Gandolfo 2009).

Given the historical imperative to regulate the use of public space in Lima, the relative permissibility of informal bus vending marks the bus, a technology central to the city's functioning, as a space of sanctioned transgression. At the same time, its existence is considered a reflection of the general ungovernability of the urban transportation system. As evidenced in the plans for revamping the urban transportation system as well as in some drivers' use of signs or harsh treatment to prohibit vendors from entering their buses, bus vending is seen as a problem that needs to be resolved. Indeed, the signature infrastructural project of Luis Castañeda Lossio, Lima's mayor during the time of my fieldwork, was a "modernized" bus line that would move swiftly along the main intra-urban highway and then network out like a spider into different locations. Most middle-class Limans were excited about the prospect of a fast and efficient bus system that promised to resolve their city's infamous traffic problems. Yet Paco had clued me into the potential negative effects of these improvements. When we first met in 2007, the project was getting underway and it was Paco's route that was being affected. I

⁶ Private security guards are common in Lima, not just in elite work and residential zones. It was seldom that I went to an NGO office, for example, without having to show my identification and get buzzed in. Likewise, most middle-class apartment buildings have doormen.

asked him what he would do when the changes happened. He told me that he would have to look for another route because *puros gringos* (all white people) were going to ride the Metropolitano and people like him were not going to be allowed on.⁷

The close link between informal labor and public transportation as problems of urban order helps to explain the particular modes through which vendors and performers justify their income-generating practices before bus passengers. As Sara and Paco exemplified, many poor workers attempt to win the favor of their publics through the powerful idiom of family. In so doing, they make the bus into a site for renegotiating gendered meanings of space. Sara, like many women, spoke a language of responsible motherhood. Paco emphasized his need to help his widowed mother with the household economy. During my bus trips across the city, I noticed that adult men also used a rhetoric of family to fashion themselves as both properly masculine and deserving of public patronage.

* * *

I was returning home after a long day at Sara's house and my bus was stuck by the entrance to the National Library. A man in his mid-forties, dressed in cleanly pressed clothes and shiny shoes, boarded the bus with a sound system and an assistant for each of his two amplifiers. Initially, I thought the group might be headed to an event for which they had been hired; after all, market vendors in transit often rode the bus with sacks of rice just as heavy and unwieldy as the speakers. But instead of finding a corner to store his equipment, the man pulled out a microphone and some cords and moved

⁷ The Metropolitano took years to construct but, at the time of my August 2011 visit, had been in place for about a year. Indeed I was impressed by its ability to get me to the center of Lima in record time. Yet the massive project did not seem to have resolved the chaotic traffic patterns created by all the other bus lines competing for space on the main avenues. Furthermore, the card-activated turnstiles at Metropolitano stations, rather than eliminating bus vending altogether, simply displaced workers like Sara and Paco, to other locations. Lima's current mayor, Susana Villarán, has also prioritized the development and renovation of the public transportation system, albeit in a more socially-conscious way that claims to take into account the needs and desires of the poor.

into the center of the vehicle. One of his assistants headed to the back and the other remained up front in preparation for the most elaborately orchestrated bus presentation I had ever witnessed.

In contrast to Sara's strategy, the man's polished presentation focused not on his personal plight, but rather on his civic duty towards his co-passengers. He urged his fellow bus-riders to recognize their backwardness as Peruvians and take responsibility for their own education in order to achieve individual progress and national development. "Here in Peru, we have a major problem with education, and it's time that we parents begin to address it." After his moralizing speech, he proceeded to quiz passengers on their knowledge of national history, throwing out questions that ranged from the name of the first president to more obscure textbook facts about pre-Colombian cultures and the political history of the republic. After the quiz, which sparked the enthusiasm of some while failing to wake others from their naps, he moved seat-to-seat projecting an educational video through a portable TV-DVD device.

Through this video, you can educate yourselves and your children about the incredible country we're so fortunate to call ours. Peru, *señores y señoras*, is home to Machu Picchu, one of the Seven Wonders of the World! But that's not it. This DVD offers a comprehensive history of our nation. It can be yours for a mere five soles. I'm not asking more than this, for I understand that money is tight. Take advantage of this incredible offer, an opportunity to educate yourselves, to *mejorar su cultura* (better your culture, in the sense of "high" culture).

An unusual spectacle in terms of its length, his energy, and the use of audio-visual technology, the fifteen-minute presentation struck me as a cross between an infomercial and the evangelical sermons gaining popularity among Peru's poor. Many young men who made a living on the bus were either skilled musicians whose performances spoke for themselves or vendors of miracle remedies that blended native Peruvian healing practices with New Age mysticism. Among middle-aged men, it was common to sell educational products. These included spelling guides "to make us a

more educated nation," etiquette pamphlets to "*mejorar nuestra cultura*," and booklets with biographies of the Peruvian presidents "because we can't remain ignorant about our own history." Such men often employed a marketing strategy that linked responsible consumption with individual uplift and national development.

Many male bus workers, as if needing to guarantee their proper masculinity to both themselves and passengers, opened by describing how they personally overcame the humiliation of resorting to a form of labor conflated with begging. They emphasized that their dignity rested in knowing, at the end of the day, that their hard work helped provide for their families. In this way, their performances sought to legitimize their informal labor by implicitly critiquing the systemic unavailability of jobs while appealing to a gendered rhetoric of individual responsibility. In other words, such street vendors transformed themselves from emasculated men whose unsolicited labor contributes to urban disorder and national underdevelopment into the embodiment of responsible masculinity: men whose labor facilitates national progress through their patriarchal role within their own families and their circulation of a product that promises to make their publics into responsible, knowledgeable citizens. By valuing the product, the public values an ideology of progress grounded in a new form of patriarchy that nonetheless hinges on the traditional link between masculinity, public space, and the private family.

Making their labor legible as an activity that contributes to, rather than impedes, national development requires that male vendors reframe informal street vending as a form of entrepreneurialism, the rhetorical backbone of Peru's neoliberal promise planted two decades ago. During the 1990s, as Lima's mayor launched an urban renewal program that banished informal street vendors from downtown, President Alberto Fujimori imposed neoliberal reforms that shrunk the state and devalued labor, forcing

the majority of Peruvians into regimes of flexible employment. The poor found themselves in a precarious, no-win situation: either in a job lacking benefits and unions; or without a job, making street vending and other informal activities the only option for earning a livelihood.

Peruvian feminist scholar Norma Fuller describes how neoliberal reforms, by refiguring the traditional relationship between the concepts of *obra*, *labor*, and *trabajo*, prompted a crisis in poor and working class masculinity. Defining *obra* as that which “enriches the spirit and contributes to the wellbeing of the community,” *labor* as “manual activities that do not accumulate prestige” but are necessary for generating an income, and *trabajo* as an obligation, a responsibility, the activity through which men are made masculine, she argues that *trabajo* mediates between the other two categories by enabling men to both produce (*labor*) and provide for their families (*obra*) (Fuller 2002: 335-7). Her research in Lima and the Amazonian city of Iquitos revealed that, in the neoliberal moment of labor instability, *trabajo* is “marked by insecurity and pain” (356). Anxiety before the specter of unemployment combines with an unending desire for “tranquility” (356) to produce a response of “individualizing pragmatism” (353), in which men aspire to have their own business, supplanting the previous model of work as contribution to community.

The microenterprise came into vogue in different forms in the 1990s, promoted by entities as seemingly different as Fujimori’s paternalistic-populist government and NGOs seeking to empower the poor by teaching them skills. I suggest that rather than replacing the old mode by which *trabajo*, *obra*, and *labor* constituted masculinity, the male bus vendor I described above discursively fused the images of the individual entrepreneur and the man who cares about contributing to the wellbeing of his community, be it his family or his nation. The success of a man’s *trabajo* in the informal

labor market rests on his representation of himself as a responsible citizen and man who is not only making a living but also contributing to national uplift by facilitating a particular form of individual consumption. Thus, by tapping into the very neoliberal policies and discourses that reproduce their exclusion, these men counter dominant assumptions about informal laborers as signs of both urban disorder and improper masculinity.

Shortly after microentrepreneurial preacher man stepped off the bus, on stepped an unkempt and physically scarred younger man. I had been taking the route long enough that I could recognize his “type” and guess his story, just as I often could with women who boarded with distinct markers of motherhood, including prematurely wrinkled faces, doctors’ prescriptions and, most blatantly, babies. The young man, I imagined, had recently gotten out of the prison located at the end of the bus line, beyond Sara’s house, where at least a couple of my co-passengers had likely just been visiting a loved one. He recognized his past errors and wanted us to “lift his spirits” and help him “become a good man.” He may have converted to Christianity. Along with candy, he may have been selling earrings that he learned to make in the workshops for prisoners. He may have children, but in any case “becoming a good man” meant learning the values of responsible paternity. “Please, passengers,” he began.

I know I may not look respectable. I know some of you might even be scared of me, clutching your purses and protecting your pockets to make sure I don’t rob you. Many of you are probably asking yourself, ‘Why should I help this guy who was in prison for committing a crime?’ Please understand. I have repented for what I have done. I am trying to get on the right path and I beg for your help. *Por favor, colabórense*, please collaborate with me. Please understand that getting on this bus and selling you this small, perhaps insignificant, product, is my way of beginning a dignified life. The price of the candy is small, but what you will give to me is great.

I had heard such speeches before and most stopped about there. But this young man, perhaps even departing from his usual script, went on to signal just how heinous

the prison experience had been. “None of you ever want to live through what I had to live through.” I wondered what more he might reveal, but he held back. “Due to the presence of women and children passengers, I’ll spare you the gruesome details of prison life.”⁸

As the vendor was quick to point out, the value of buying his product lay not in the commodity itself, but in the act of helping an ex-convict become a man by developing a sense of responsibility towards himself, his family (if he had one), and the society into which he was reintegrating. In contrast, the logic behind buying an educational DVD or spelling guide is that the commodity itself has a use value linking individual education and national uplift. Despite these differences, performances of responsible masculinity are central to the ability of the micro-entrepreneurial evangelist for modernity and the ex-convict alike to legitimate themselves and earn a living. The entrepreneur represents the already good, responsible father who, in the absence of formal employment opportunities that correspond to his imagined level of cultural capital, subjects himself to the humiliating labor of informal vending – and, at least in the moment, hopes to resignify this form of labor. In this sense, this particular man marks his masculinity not only in contrast to an imagined female / wife role, but also in relation to a less mature male who does not (yet) have a family for which to provide. The less mature male embodied by the ex-convict, however, legitimizes himself by candidly enlisting his public in his personal project of self-transformation, one that resonates with the rehabilitative rhetoric of the penal system but also references the emasculating violence of the prison experience. Indeed, by marking his purposeful omission of the abhorrent details of prison life as an attempt to protect women and children passengers,

⁸ The vendor was likely referring to the sexual violence rampant in men’s prisons. For a detailed analysis of Latin American men’s need to prove their active masculinity, see Roger Lancaster’s analysis of the Nicaraguan *cochón*, a man who is penetrated by other men (Lancaster 1992).

the ex-convict leaves no doubt of his allegiance to established gender roles – or that his project is one of proper gendering.

Male vendors, in short, adopt an idiom of responsible masculinity through which to claim an active role within projects of moral uplift. This is no easy feat. A man who is forced to earn a livelihood on the streets, after all, transgresses the ideal relationship between labor and the use of public space that, as other scholars of Peru have shown, continues to undergird patriarchal masculinity (Vich 2010). In this context, when bus vendors articulate their labor as a public service that does not disrupt, but rather seeks to contribute to national progress, they draw attention to the complex ways that normative gender roles link to traditional notions of citizenship, work, Peruvianness, and duty, and continue to shape the way the city and its inhabitants make sense of themselves. Indeed, legitimizing oneself as a deserving street vendor requires both hailing one's public through the use of gender- and age-appropriate signs that serve as evidence of individual responsibility and drawing on the common understanding that, in the absence of a caring state, public assistance takes on more individualized meanings and forms.

Like her male counterparts, Sara communicated with her public primarily through her voice. As I noted above, however, female bus vendors were more likely to present physical objects, such as doctors' prescriptions, to signify their responsibility for their family members' wellbeing.⁹ Perhaps the most ubiquitous – and seemingly straightforward – sign of responsible motherhood among bus and street vendors was the baby strapped to the woman's back, a visual spectacle associated with Andean

⁹ Even within the middle-class, it is common to organize fundraisers (often involving a party with alcohol and food) when people fall ill. However, boarding public buses and asking strangers for monetary assistance is a practice in which only the very poorest partake. Both approaches to requesting assistance reflect a structure in which caring for one's health is the responsibility of the individual rather than the state, a situation not so different from that of the United States.

cultural traditions. However, as the use of such signs has become standardized, the question of their authenticity has emerged in public debate. In the midst of ongoing government interventions to “rescue” children from an underground economy in which their mothers are said to rent them out to women wanting to increase their chances of receiving public pity on the street, women vendors who use children as “props” have come under surveillance as child exploiters and con artists (Torres López 2/11/08; Andina 2/13/08; Trome 3/13/12). Coded in a language of child-saving and consumer protection, the highly-publicized effort to crack down on child-renting also encourages the public to regard child-toting women with skepticism; such women, the cautionary logic goes, may very well be fakes, exploiting not only children, but the very concept of motherhood and the good will of the public.¹⁰

Without denying that the practice of child-renting exists and can be harmful for children, the criminalizing rhetoric that has emerged around it has the effect of further stereotyping and marginalizing all poor women who are forced to go out onto the street to make a living for their children. For one, the rumors have racist connotations, given the sling’s association with the Andes. Furthermore, as social geographer Kate Swanson argues for Quito, Ecuador, the moralizing response to child-renting fails to take into consideration traditional child circulation practices linked to the organization of care. Additionally, she points to a double-standard by which charity organizations that rely on the image of the poor child as a sign through which to attract donors are not typically condemned for commodifying children (Swanson 2007b). Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, I contend, turning poor mothers into suspects actively delegitimizes the

¹⁰ Such rumors parallel discourses that imagine the child laborers in Chapter 1 as tricksters, as well as older debates in the United States about the “welfare queen” and the cheating foster mother who takes on a bunch of kids to make money. They also parallel European concerns with “gypsy” mothers who use their children as props in a street theater of abjection and pity.

only means many poor women have to prove their fulfillment of their primary ethical obligation: responsible motherhood.¹¹

Yet the centrality of gender in determining the legitimacy of bodies that labor in public space extends also to workers who represent a contrasting kind of femininity to that of the overburdened mother. Just as the evangelist for modernity has his younger counterpart, so too does the physically and emotionally exhausted woman who must prove not only that she is a good mother but that she is one at all. These women, usually only a few years younger than the mothers I knew, briskly make their way up and down the bus aisles, enticing passengers to indulge in the latest line of gum, whose brand name is conveniently printed across the back of their colorful spandex uniforms and matching visors. With made-up faces, freshly combed hair, fit bodies, and an aura that is at once professional and flirtatious, it is their youthful sexuality, the potentiality they embody, that help them sell their product. As company representatives, these swiftly-moving women blur the line between informal and formal labor and are thus saved from the burden of having to legitimize themselves before their publics in personal terms. However, they are also from poor families and, making next to nothing off a highly inequitable commission system, are also concerned about profiting enough to fund their studies or help their families. Directly contracted by the company whose product they are sent to the street to market and sell, they represent another side of gendered labor exploitation.

* * *

¹¹ The burden of proving motherhood is important to consider in relation to feminist scholarship on the politicization of motherhood. If some second-wave feminists called for the liberation of women through the refusal of motherhood (e.g., Firestone 1970.), other scholars have documented different ways Latin American women have more recently mobilized motherhood as a political instrument through which to make activist and human rights demands of the state (e.g., Bouvard 1994; Craske 1999; Jaquette 2009).

The bus served multiple purposes. For a foreign researcher like me, it began as a conduit, a means of getting from one place to another, and then became a fieldsite. For Peruvians struggling to make a living, like Sara and Paco, it was both a workplace and a medium of transport home. Moreover, when Sara and I rode together as passengers and got stuck in traffic on Avenida Abancay, the bus became the place where the tired and self-sacrificing mother quietly revealed to me the secrets of her tragic life story.¹² Although this main thoroughfare covered a relatively short geographical distance in downtown Lima, its notorious gridlock forced buses to trudge along slowly and even stop altogether, thereby obligating passengers to lose themselves in their inner thoughts or focus on particular details of the journey. There was much to look at from the bus window. Low-level bureaucrats and street vendors, scurrying along or standing patiently, filled the sidewalks. Mothers exited the semi-formal markets with household products made in China or bulk goods such as the candy Sara sold. Historical monuments and government offices, almost invisible to me after so many years in Lima, completed the urban mishmash. Yet these seemingly mundane sites, I would come to understand, contained some of Sara's most painful personal memories.

When the bus got stuck in front of the District Attorney's Office (*Fiscalía de la Nación*), Sara would sometimes gaze at the building's imposing outdoor staircase and recount to me, in a hushed and solemn voice, the humiliating ritual that had followed her hearing a couple years before. The story always gave me the chills. Handcuffed, "as if I were the ringleader of them all," she had to lead a line of men down the staircase towards the waiting vans bound for their respective prisons. At the end of the avenue,

¹² In her research on social representations of motherhood in Cuzco, Peru, anthropologist Sandra Torrejón identifies "self-sacrifice" as one of the main ideals that the mothers in her study strove to fulfill. In using this term to describe Sara, I aim not only to suggest that she sacrificed herself for the wellbeing of her children, but also to draw critical attention to the ways that she had been unfairly and systematically demonized and sacrificed throughout her life (Torrejón 2009).

Sara would point to the plaza that, once a gathering place for Lima's colonial elite, was now an infamous hangout for street children, pickpockets and, as cultural critic Victor Vich discusses, working class men who gathered informally to discuss politics (Vich 2010). "I used to sleep here with Paco and Daniel, before Rosy was born, when I was too scared of their father to go home. It was hard, though; sometimes the police kicked us out." During the late nineties, the period to which Sara was referring, street vendors were experiencing the effects of the Giuliani-style urban "clean up" implemented by Lima's mayor Alberto Andrade. Sara never took the bus to the end of the line, where the number of passengers started diminishing. Neither did I, for I lived in the preceding district. If we had, however, she could have pointed out the prison where she spent several months for murdering her abusive husband in self-defense.¹³

It was from Paco that I had first heard the whole story to which these bits and pieces corresponded. But before I learned the details of the death (when I was initially getting to know Paco and had not yet become acquainted with Sara), I noticed that while the eleven-year-old presented his family structure matter-of-factly when working on the bus, he constantly made it clear to me that his father's absence haunted him. Paco would vaguely remark how sad it was that his father had died, and then abruptly inquire about my own psychological state or contemplate the latest celebrity tragedy. I never knew if I should pry, particularly since his brother and the neighbor children were always just a few feet away, nagging us to join their game of tag on the rocky steep terrain. After about three weeks of spending time together, Paco and I were walking down the hill from his house to the internet arcade where I was going to help him set up an e-mail and

¹³ Sara and her deceased partner, the father of her three children, were not legally married. However, I sometimes use the term "husband" to refer to him since Sara often referred to him in this way. In Peru, it is quite common for couples to live together and have children without going through the bureaucratic, often expensive, process of legal (or religious) marriage.

IM account. Out of nowhere, it seemed, but perhaps taking advantage of the fact that we were walking and thus not looking each other in the face, Paco took it upon himself to offer me the story I had been simultaneously craving and fearing.¹⁴ “Señorita Leigh, I’m going to tell you how my father died.”

Having established on a few occasions that his father physically abused his mother, Paco had a logical starting point. “One day, my father came home drunk and started yelling and grabbing all the plates and forks, flinging them to the ground. Then he grabbed my mother. She was desperate and grabbed the knife and shouted, ‘I’m going to kill you!’” Paco paused awkwardly, leaving me unsure about whether he had finished and was awaiting my response. A moment later, though, he made a stabbing gesture with his arm and continued speaking. “But then the knife dropped on the ground and my father picked it up and stabbed himself. I had to run outside and find people to help. The ambulance took an hour to arrive. All the neighbors came out and the people from the news channel came and interviewed me.” I asked him if Sara had gone to prison, and he confirmed that this was so, although he was confused about the dates and length of her stay. He and his siblings had to live with their estranged maternal grandmother and step-grandfather until a kind lawyer freed Sara, he explained. I asked if he had witnessed the entire ordeal. He initially said no but then changed his answer. Then, excitedly, “Okay, let’s set up my internet account!” Stunned by his story, I hadn’t realized that we had reached the internet arcade. Recognizing that it must have been difficult for him to share such a traumatic story with me, and

¹⁴ For better or for worse, my research style tends to favor under-asking. This arises partly out of my personal notion of privacy, and partly out of my fear of scaring people off. In the case of Paco, I was also worried that too much knowledge about the death would become a burden for me – which it did, bringing up a whole set of questions regarding anthropological ethics.

imagining that the lure of the internet provided a convenient transition away from the uncomfortable conversation, I accepted the abrupt shift and prodded no more.

My relationship with the family was still in its early stages. It was not until the week before the unforgettable walk down the hill, after a half-dozen visits to their home, that I had finally met Sara. I had not yet grown used to the incline leading up to their house, so I had stopped several feet below the cardboard structure to catch my breath for the last bit of the trek. Looking up at the entrance to their home, I suddenly saw the plywood door swing open. Out came two large market bags and a small round body. We hadn't caught each other's eyes yet, for she was still facing the house, but I heard her giggling. "Okay, one more kiss, but first promise me, Paco, that you'll make sure your sister gets enough to eat. I've left lunch for all three of you. And Daniel, don't forget to clean up. I don't want to come home to find junk scattered all about." Then all three kids jumped into their mother's arms to exchange farewell kisses. Surprised to spot me over his crouched-down mother, Paco exclaimed, "Señorita!" He and his siblings came running over to me while Sara gathered herself and turned around to greet me with a bashful yet warm smile.

Shyly, Sara told me how pleased she was to finally meet the "*amiga gringa*" her children talked about incessantly. After apologizing for the mess and for her absence during my previous visits, she explained that in addition to selling candy, for the last month or so she had been preparing lunch to sell to the other street vendors on her route. This extra job had been consuming a great deal of her time and energy: it required waking up early to buy ingredients at the market down the hill, cooking large quantities of food and therefore investing in kerosene, and lugging bags of food-filled tupperware on and off buses as she also sold candy. "But next Tuesday, I'm staying home to do the laundry while the kids were at school. Please, Señorita, come by then and we can talk."

The following Tuesday, I arrived at the hill around ten o'clock in the morning to find Sara surrounded by pails of water and piles of dirty clothes, sitting on a stool that barely elevated her above the mud floor. Was it really true, as Paco had told me, that she was twenty-nine years old, just one year older than me? Her face was soft and clear, but her worry lines and her difficulty in bending over made it seem that she was ten years my senior. Apologizing again for the mess as well as for the impoverished condition of her home, Sara motioned for me to sit on the other stool. As I did, she reached into the bag on the table, the only other piece of furniture in the room, and produced a handful of candy. "Eat, eat," she told me, indicating that the candy was for immediate consumption. This type of ritualized hospitality was so common among poor Peruvians that I had learned not to eat prior to visiting kids' families; if it was not candy, I could count on having to ingest two entire plates of food no matter whether it was mealtime or not. Sara, I noted, was also particularly generous with the neighbor children. And yet even as they offered what they had, families also typically apologized to me for their meager living conditions. If I knew them better, they sometimes made jokes about their poverty, such as "Sorry we can't all eat with you, Señorita Leigh, but we have to take turns since we only have two plates!" and then burst out laughing.

Sara's family lived in extreme poverty. Although there were other neighbors with cardboard houses, hers was the only one with no latrine. Taking everything in (because during my previous visits I had always remained outside of the house), I tried to focus on telling Sara how much I liked her kids and explaining my research. I hadn't yet finished all the candy when she offered me more, as if indulging me with sweets would assuage the reaction I might have to her looming confession. "So, did Paco already tell you how his father died?" I was unsure how to respond, but it was clear that she intended to offer me her version. The excessive offerings of candy continued, such

that my overflowing hands almost distracted me from the overwhelming details she had begun to share. “*Mi esposo murió a mis manos,*” she said, and then repeated. “*A mis manos murió.*” By using the preposition “*a,*” rather than “*en,*” Sara meant that her husband had died not in her hands, but because of, or by way of, her hands. She had killed him, she wanted me to know.

The narrative she told of that fateful day matched Paco’s, except that her version ended in murder rather than suicide. Perhaps Paco had been trying to protect his mother from my judgment or preserve his own notion of her. The murder, she recognized, was a response to an immediate threat to her own life. It was also the unfortunate culmination of her own long history of violent abuse at her husband’s hands. Sara told me her life story in fragments, as the months went on, beginning with her arrival in the overwhelming city of Lima after fleeing her Andean hometown at the age of fifteen.

When she first fell in love with her children’s father, she thought he would save her from her abusive parents. Instead, the relationship brought only new abuse. He would rape her, beat her, and beat the kids. She would escape and sleep in the streets and on the plaza “back when it was *libre*” (free, or open to the public). She would make money selling candy, washing clothes, and cleaning houses. Eventually he would find her and they would get back together. Malnourished, Sara developed anemia and tuberculosis. Once Rosy was born, he refused to provide for her and began denying that Daniel was his son. “Then Paco got pneumonia and I took him to the Children’s Hospital. Luckily the doctor helped me too, because he saw that my face was broken and my nose wouldn’t stop bleeding. That was my life with the father of my children. *Hasta que pasó lo que pasó, until what happened, happened.*” She continued.

It had to happen. My head went crazy. I defended myself with a knife. It’s sad, isn’t it, to go to prison when you have your children? It’s so sad. When they handcuffed me to leave the District Attorney building and put me at the head of that line of guys, I begged them not to handcuff me. In prison I regretted having

been born. Why did my mother have to bring me to the world? I regretted it a million times. I wanted to kill myself. I looked at the bars and thought about how I could hang myself. But I remembered my children and got strength. When I was inside, my children gave me strength to go on. Sometimes they sent me letters. Paco said things like, "If I've ever made you mad, if I've ever made you cry, if I've ever refused to eat the food you have given me, please forgive me. I love you so much. I've prayed to God, Mamita, I know you're going to get out, for us they're going to give you your *libertad*, Mamita." Daniel said the same. When the judge asked me if I wanted to add anything to my declaration, I begged him to have compassion for me and my children, to give me *libertad*, to let me out, because my children needed me. I was lucky because I had reported every beating the man had given me, I would go into the police with my scars and bruises from where he had strangled me. Sometimes my eyes had turned green, sometimes my head was about to explode. And those reports helped my case. The neighbors had seen how I had suffered. And that's how I got out of jail. But I kept on thinking he was still alive, that he was going to find me and hurt me.

* * *

There was absolutely no doubt in my mind that Sara murdered her husband because she had to. As I got to know more people in her life, I learned that this interpretation was unanimous. From the gossipy neighbors that critiqued her irresponsible parenting to the social worker who, during my fieldwork, responded to allegations that Sara was neglecting her children, the tragic incident was consistently framed as a perfectly comprehensible – and inevitable – act of self-defense. Even the news story about the murder, published in a tabloid known for its vulgar photographs of women's butts and sensationalistic stories of violent duels between jealous couples, represented Sara sympathetically.

In order to defend her life, a woman stabbed and killed her domestic partner after snatching the knife with which he had been threatening her inside of their home in San Juan de Lurigancho. The woman herself reported the incident to the police and said that her husband had raped her the day before and was trying to do the same thing when she defended herself. ...At the police station, the sobbing assassin claimed that she had not wanted to kill her husband, but that he his abuse had gotten out of hand and that the night before he had come home totally inebriated, and beaten and then sexually assaulted her. Several hours later, he went out again to continue getting drunk. At around two o'clock in the afternoon yesterday, he returned to their home and once again tried to attack her. She was going to escape, but the man grabbed a knife and threatened her,

producing a struggle between the couple. The woman finally took the weapon away from him and stabbed him several times in the chest.¹⁵

The article depicted Sara as a victim of her drunken partner's repeated physical and sexual assaults, left with no choice but to save her own life at the expense of his. Sara killed her husband to ensure her immediate and long-term survival. The murder figured, in this sense, as an investment in her family's wellbeing. Yet ironically, Sara's everyday practice of survival involved re-presenting the death as a presumably unfortunate accident – one that produced a mother who, as a result of having lost her husband, had to take to informal bus vending to care for her family. Her identification as a widow was crucial to the story she told her public, but only insofar as she never revealed that she literally produced her own widowhood. Given the consensus, even among her critics, that Sara had no choice but to murder her husband, why is it that she, unlike the young male vendors just out of prison, had to distance herself from her ex-convict status and fashion herself as a widowed mother so as to legitimize herself as a member of the deserving poor?

Murderer is, of course, one of the most universally stigmatized identities. Women murderers occupy an especially shameful place in the social imaginary. In the words of one of anthropologist Roger Lancaster's Nicaraguan informants, "You expect women to be wives and mothers, not murderers" (Lancaster 1992: 50). Such expectations, grounded in the gendered idea that care-giving is incommensurable with taking someone's life, extend to other forms of violence as well. Examples include the public responses of horror surrounding the photographs of US military personnel Lynndie England torturing Iraqi prisoners at Abu Gharib (Ehrenreich 2004; Fusco 2008), the notoriety gained by Virginia resident Lorena Bobbit after cutting off part of

¹⁵ In order to maintain confidentiality, I refrain from citing the news source.

her abusive husband's penis (NYT: 1/28/1994), and the terror of Indian shoppers and vendors as a woman walked through the market stalls with the severed head of the man who had tried to rape her (Shears 2008). While all of these cases stood out precisely because the perpetrators were women and the victims men (in two cases, men who had attacked the women), surely no woman or man could board the bus in Lima and admit to having killed someone without violating a major rule of public behavior and soliciting an aggressive, perhaps violent, reaction.¹⁶ Yet, as I have explained, it was common for young men to present their just-out-of-jail stories in ways that elicited the solidarity of bus riders. In contrast, no equivalent narrative existed for women, not even for women who, in contrast to Sara, had been in prison for petty crimes. This, I contend, is a manifestation of the gendered double-standard that is enabled by the continued dominance of patriarchy as a basic structure of public and private life.

It is this systemic loyalty to patriarchy, I suggest, that enabled misogynistic newspapers to report sympathetically on the murder while prohibiting Sara from telling her "true story" to bus-riders who may very well have read the article and acknowledged her plight. If murder is an exceptional crime, this patriarchal double-standard obligates all women to conceal their criminal pasts, even when the crimes they have committed (including drug trafficking in a major cocaine-producing country) are so clearly an effect of a broader system of gendered oppression. As Sara's social worker would tell me, "unfortunately, sometimes it gets so bad that the only choice left for a woman is to kill her husband." Yet even though it is a well-known fact in Peru that violence against women is a prevalent and extremely serious social problem (Alcalde 2010), it is this gendered double-standard that prevents battered women from sharing

¹⁶ Of course, when sanctioned or enacted by the State, certain forms of murder are lauded, such as killing the enemy in a war or sentencing a criminal to death (a topic of controversy in the United States).

their testimonies of domestic violence with bus passengers, while enabling young men just out of jail to clue their publics in to the violence to which other men subjected them in prison. Furthermore, it is the language of patriarchy that brings mothers to announce that they are both “father and mother” – rather than “mother and father” – to their children. And, returning to Sara, it is this system of patriarchy that required her to imply that, rather than having *always* been both father and mother (even when her husband was alive), it was only *because* she was a widow working to fill the sudden void left by the highly valued patriarch that she had taken on this double-role. Being “father and mother,” rather than a survivor of spousal violence, or even simply a hard-working mother, communicates the idea that a family with no patriarch is an incomplete, or lacking, social unit, the very discriminatory classifications problematized by feminist scholar Ana Ponce (Ponce 2007).¹⁷

In drawing attention to Sara’s ironic strategy of implicitly reinventing her husband as a good patriarch, I do not mean to suggest that she should have instead confessed her sins when she stepped on the bus. Rather, I am trying to underscore one way in which patriarchy is reproduced through the survival practices of its victims. The murder of Sara’s husband resulted from her experience of violence on multiple scales. Insofar as it put an end to her everyday domestic abuse, it relieved her of the most direct source and the most intimately tangible form of violence to which she had been perpetually subjected. Yet killing her abuser could not address the less conspicuous underpinnings of Sara’s suffering. To the contrary, her bus performances reproduced the very discourses that kept her in a position of structural oppression. In this way, Sara’s

¹⁷ It is possible also to see Sara’s narrative as a personal strategy for re-membering, a concept that Rosalind Shaw (2007) discusses with regard to Pentacostal youth who participated in the war in Sierra Leone. Lisa M. Mitchell and Eugenia Georges (1998: 113) also use this concept to think about ultrasound’s role in producing a particular relationship between mother and fetus.

narrative formed part of the same ideological project as that of the emasculated men who sold products on the bus by actively inserting themselves into gendered narratives of national progress.

In an attempt to theorize the changing modes through which women are subjected to power in the late capitalist United States, feminist scholar Barbara Ehrenreich argues that patriarchy is an anachronism insofar as it refers to “the intimate power of men over women, a power which is historically exercised within the family by the male as breadwinner, property owner, or armed defender of women and children” (Ehrenreich 1995: 284). She goes on to cite the decline of male wages as a major contributor to patriarchy’s decline, as “patriarchal power based on breadwinning is now an option only for very wealthy men, and this is a striking change” (288). Finally, she contends that the decline of patriarchy offers opportunities for positive change, including men and women uniting against “common sources of oppression” such as “market forces” (290), but can also perpetuate violence. “As men continue to turn away from being protectors of women and become increasingly predators of women, women will continue to ‘masculinize’ themselves, if only for purposes of self-defense” (290).

If the murder that Sara committed in self-defense was both an effect of and a symbolic assault against patriarchy, her performance of responsible motherhood on the bus reflected a public self-fashioning that refigured but did not reject patriarchy. While the shifts in traditional forms of gendered labor that undergird Ehrenreich’s claims about patriarchy are relevant beyond the United States, patriarchy’s inadequacy for describing the organizational intricacies of families is a long-standing pattern in Peru. Historian Bianca Premo dates the failure of the individual patriarchal family back to the colonial period, when the Spanish first introduced the concept. In this context, the nuclear family was imagined as a miniature State whereby members were to obey the

father in the same way that colonial subjects were to obey the absolute power of the “Father King” (Premo 2005: 122-5). As far back as the 17th century, however, this template failed in practice, and the State responded by establishing itself as “surrogate patriarch” and creating a host of residential institutions for children who lacked properly structured families. As ethnohistorian Irene Silverblatt shows, women were also targeted for failing to abide by this gender hierarchy – one that she argues had been established by the Incas. Once the Spanish displaced the Inca Empire and introduced Catholicism to Peru, women who failed to conform to their gender role were condemned for being witches (Silverblatt 1987). For centuries, then, patriarchy has been met with resistance. Nevertheless, the model, inscribed into Peru’s governing structures, remakes itself every day on multiple scales, always intersecting powerfully with race and class hierarchies. It reflects itself in the dominant logic, as analyzed by anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena, that “women are more Indian than men” (de la Cadena 1995) even when women often work harder than their male counterparts when they migrate to the cities. As anthropologist Linda Seligmann’s research on women market vendors in contemporary Cuzco reveals, although “family histories...do not conform to nuclear families” and although husbands rarely had stable employment in the context of a national economy that “does not provide steady jobs for the majority of the population” the ideal family is nevertheless “that of a married couple with children” (Seligmann 2004: 55-6).

The family, as I have discussed, has long been a key site for ideological reproduction, even if, as scholars have shown, patriarchy within the family is not always expressed in a uniform, or traditional, sense. If, as Ehrenreich suggests, patriarchy has been lost (or severely modified) at the level of the family, or even if, as Premo contends, it never corresponded to the everyday experiences of poor Peruvian families, I have

argued that it is upheld, if subtly, as that which needs to be restored for individuals, as family members, to attain social legitimacy and for society, more generally, to progress. This was the underlying message of US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 controversial report on the "tangle of pathology" into which "the Negro American family" had fallen (Moynihan 1965).¹⁸ Indeed, this is the same ideology that Ponce identifies with regard to the disconnect between the large proportion of female-headed households in Peru and the pathologizing language that is used to describe such families (Ponce 2007).

These are the structures that make it such that Sara (like her son and her adult male counterparts) must performatively (re)constitute the nuclear family in order to achieve public recognition on the bus. Yet in other in other arenas of her everyday life, where Sara's voice competes more directly with those who are judging her, this same notion of what makes a proper family is used to figure Sara as a threat to her children and thus a target for intervention. Following my discussion of defensive motherhood in Chapter 2, I propose that examining the ways that Sara is forced to defend herself within her own community provides a context through which to further understand her particular performances of family on the public bus. In what follows, then, I explore some of Sara's relationships to individuals from her immediate social network as well as to public institutions. I draw attention to how the neighbors, family, and social worker that helped Sara survive in key moments of her life also participate actively in her pathologization.

* * *

¹⁸ For scholarly critiques of the report, see Lubiano 1992; Wilson 2009; Crawley 2012.

If any family I knew was stuck, it was Sara's. Sometimes I showed up at the house to find Sara in bed, paralyzed by the perpetual pain that penetrated the core of her body. Such problems kept her from going out to work and were exacerbated by her physical labor: lugging water from the outside bin into the kitchen area of her home; bending over to reach the pails in which she hand-washed the entire family's dirty laundry; hauling heavy market bags up the hill when she had spent the money for the *mototaxi* on a can of milk for her children; keeping balance on the jolty buses; and carrying the carefully-packaged lunches she sold not only down the hill, but on and off of the buses during her morning candy-vending shift. Of course, sleeping alongside a fidgety Rosy on a styrofoam egg crate mattress atop a bed of bouncy springs certainly did not help. The family's situation was so dire, and the causes so vast, that the little help the family got sometimes seemed only to make matters worse. When I finally took her to the doctor, it turned out that Sara was not only suffering from acute lower back pain, but also had kidney stones and ovarian cysts. At another point during my fieldwork, Sara swallowed her pride and moved the family to her mother's house for a month. After a few weeks of relative peace, her born-again Christian mother went back to her old habit of humiliating Sara for her shortcomings, prompting her once-again disillusioned daughter to pack up and leave.

One reason Sara did not go to the doctor was because she put all her money into things that would immediately benefit her children, such as food and school supplies. Sara struggled to keep her kids in the public school at the bottom of the hill, but they often failed to make it through the academic year. I could hardly blame them. The poorest of the poor, they were constantly humiliated by the teachers. Furthermore, when Sara was sick, Paco had to work, and bringing cute Rosy with him was always more lucrative than singing on the bus alone, as he became less of a child himself.

As we became closer and after I agreed to become Paco's godmother towards the end of 2007, I grew increasingly worried about the family. Late one Friday night, as I hastily prepared my backpack for an early morning departure to the La Molina intersection, Sara surprised me with a phone call. Apologetic and agitated, she asked if Paco and Rosy happened to be at my house. They had gone out to work earlier in the day and still hadn't returned, she began to explain over the beeps that indicated that the payphone was about to cut us off. One of the most frustrating aspects of doing fieldwork with people without phones was struggling to fit everything into the one minute that one coin bought and then not having a way to call them back. As it turned out, Paco and Rosy returned home the next day. They had spent the night at the "hostel" for street kids, just a couple blocks from the plaza where they used to sleep huddled together with Sara when she was too scared to go home to their father.

In retrospect, Sara's late night call marked my rite-of-passage into the family. When I went to their house a few days later, Sara urged Paco to explain to me what had happened: "Leigh is going to be your godmother now. She has the right to know." Over the next few weeks, she continually transformed discussions about Paco's disobedience into conversations about the baptism, as if focusing on this promising end was enough to discipline her son. While of course there were practicalities to address regarding the baptism, such moments, reminders of my growing ethical obligation to Paco, were themselves a way of bringing me into the family.¹⁹

One day, I showed up at the house to discuss plans for the baptism and was surprised to be greeted by the smell of home-cooked *arroz chaufa*, a Chinese-inspired dish found in cheap restaurants on almost every street corner. Before I had a chance to

¹⁹ For a discussion of how godparentage extends kinship ties in Peru, see Leinaweaver 2008.

inquire, Sara, single since becoming a widow, shocked me with her announcement: “Señorita Leigh, *me estoy volviendo a comprometer* (I am entering into a committed relationship again).” As if they had rehearsed the scene, Paco walked across the room, disappeared behind the plastic curtain that separated the cooking area from the main space, and reemerged with a stocky man in his thirties, darker-skinned and just an inch or two taller than Paco. “Tío Raúl, this is my godmother.” A musician on Sara’s bus route, Raúl was making an obvious effort to fulfill the role of good family man during our first lunch together: in addition to serving me a delicious plate of food, he held Rosy on his lap, gave Daniel change to buy a soda at the bodega, and marveled over Sara’s beauty. Over the next couple weeks, Daniel and Paco expressed ambivalence about their surrogate father. Daniel told me that he didn’t like Raúl because he and Sara had been doing the *canchis-canchis* (the Quechua word for sex, used as slang even among the non-Quechua-speaking urban poor) out of wedlock. Paco, abstracting his anxieties as usual, told me that “whenever a woman and a man get together, the woman ends up pregnant and then the man leaves her.” Upon further reflection, he modified his position: “What matters most is that my mom is happy.”

I hoped, of course, that Raúl was treating Sara well. After a couple weeks of not seeing the two of them, and instead meeting up with the kids at my house and on the street (as we often did), I returned to the hill, secretly hoping to be welcomed by another tasty meal. Instead, I walked into what felt like the epicenter of an earthquake. As I hopped around to avoid stepping on the clothes, buckets, and garbage that were strewn across the mud floor, a flustered Sara apologized for the disarray and for not having prepared lunch. She had thought about calling me to reschedule the visit, but Ester, a neighbor and Daniel’s future godmother, was expecting us at her house for a meeting about the baptism. I hardly had time to greet Raúl, Daniel, or Rosy before Sara ushered

me out the front door while scolding Paco, who was apparently still in bed, for not having greeted his godmother.

Storming out from behind the counter of the storefront that took up the front room of her home, Ester quickly introduced herself to me but seemed more interested in giving Sara a piece of her mind. In part for my benefit, I'm sure, but in part to exert her authority over Sara, she explained that earlier in the week, Sara had disappeared, leaving her children to fend for themselves for two entire days. Even though Sara was right there with us, Ester continued to speak about her future *comadre* in the third-person. "Luckily a few of us neighbors made sure the kids had enough to eat, but what Sara did was unforgivable!" Then she addressed Sara directly. "I know what it's like to get angry at your children, but you're their mother, and a mother can't abandon her children no matter what. No child deserves that."

Noticing Sara's absence, an anonymous neighbor had apparently called the Municipal Child and Adolescent Defense Unit (DEMUNA). Immediately, a social worker was sent to check up on the situation and issue Sara a summons. In addition, a news team from a local TV station had shown up to cover the story but found no one home. "See what you've created, Sara?" Ester pleaded. "And then you wonder why the nosy neighbors don't like you." Indeed, the situation had spiraled out from being a crisis to which only the most trusted neighbors responded into a scandal involving outside players seeking to produce yet another story about a bad mother. I was surprised that Sara, no stranger to the penal system, seemed more disturbed by the neighbors' meddling than by the intervention of the State and the media. I wondered what the

effects of the summons would be and also what it would have been like for Paco to have once again found himself representing his dysfunctional family before news reporters.²⁰

Peruvians tend to recognize the duplicity of the press, seeing it as an important source of information, but also a distorter of truth.²¹ At the same time, the widespread consensus that the justice system is also corrupt has made the media into an outlet through which Peruvians seek justice, or simply revenge. Indeed, my middle-class activist friends (who certainly enjoyed personal contacts within the media) preferred taking their political battles to the press than through the judicial process. Likewise, the “nosy” neighbor on the hill who had leaked Sara’s situation was looking to administer justice against Sara by way of not only the DEMUNA, a state institution, but also the TV. Ester, in contrast, confronted Sara directly and personally because, despite understanding herself as morally superior, she cared about her neighbor. While authoritative and moralizing, Ester’s approach was not vengeful. Neither her words nor her tone suggested that Sara was a bad person in need of punishment. Ultimately, Ester addressed Sara through the idiom of kinship: “Now that I’m going to be Daniel’s godmother, the nature of our tie changes, Sara. I cannot accept being the co-mother of someone who abandons her children.”

As Sara and I headed back up the hill, she explained what had led up to the abandonment.

Leigh, I was so angry. After all of his rebelling lately, Paco came home without one centavo after spending the night out, and at the internet arcade nonetheless. I

²⁰ In contrast to the kids in La Molina, who openly feared the media’s misrepresentation of them as delinquents or glue-sniffers, Paco had expressed pride over having been interviewed by reporters after the murder. When we were first getting to know each other, he seemed puzzled about my failure to produce a recording device or request a formal interview. I later understood this in relation to his experience with the media after the murder.

²¹ The 2000 revelation of corruption schemes between Fujimori’s government and the owners of the main media conglomerates only confirmed the shadiness of the news industry.

was desperate! The nerve! We need to pay off the new sheets we took out on credit; the vendor keeps coming to collect the money! I was so angry and I just lost it and left! I know it was wrong, but I just wanted to teach him a lesson. Oh, I was so upset. I can't provide for this family without his help.²²

We stepped into the disorderly house and, now that I knew the context, Sara showed me the summons from child services. Raul, present yet quiet when I had initially showed up, had made himself scarce. A nervous Paco emerged from behind the curtain and Sara, looking to ease the tension, made a bad joke: "Paco, they're going to put me in jail again, how would you like that?" Bursting into sobs, Paco threw his body onto his mother's, as if the police were knocking down their flimsy door at that very moment. Sara assuaged him, but the reference to her past experience with the penal system had indicated to me that it wasn't only the neighbors whose interventions she feared.

I descended the hill overwhelmed by despair. Sara was going to be judged. Overcoming my sense of helplessness – and my wish to escape to the comfort of my own apartment –, I told myself that a good anthropologist and caring godmother would take advantage of being in the neighborhood and seek out the social worker from the DEMUNA before showing up to the meeting with Sara. Within five minutes of presenting myself to the receptionist, I found myself sitting before a desk, face-to-face with a woman in her forties who was dressed in a skirt suit resembling those worn by the low-level bureaucrats who lined the bus stops on Avenida Abancay. After a couple of awkward minutes trying to gauge the degree to which we could trust the other with

²² I found myself in a situation reminiscent of what Nancy Scheper-Hughes experienced when conducting research on infant death among poor Brazilian women whom she respected and cared deeply about. Face-to-face with a practice that would be considered unethical from her own perspective, the anthropologist struggled with the extent to which she should, or could, retain a relativistic perspective – approaching mothers' withdrawal of food from their sickly children as a product of structural violence and cultural logics (Scheper-Hughes 1992).

our own privileged information about Sara's family, the social worker and I intuited that we both knew about the murder, and the conversation took a new direction.

Until then, I had thought that Sara and her family maintained a fairly autonomous existence with regard to formal social institutions. I knew that the kids had gone away to some sort of camp-retreat with a church group when Sara was in prison, but I never had the impression that they had been involved in any NGO projects or that Sara had ever sought public assistance. So I was surprised to learn that she was, according to the social worker, a "long-time user" of the system and that it was her regular *denuncias* against her abusive husband that eventually provided evidence that the murder had been in self-defense. "We all knew Sara here. She would come in so bruised up, sometimes limping, sometimes with an eye swollen shut."

After establishing her institution's solidarity with Sara as a victim of domestic abuse, the caseworker shifted the topic to Sara's recent transgressions. Emphasizing "the best interests of the children," a phrase I knew well from my work with NGOs and my research on the UNCRC, she enumerated the ways Sara had been mistreating and exploiting her children: making them work; *not* making them go to school; and perhaps even hitting them. Aware that my position as godmother, researcher, and foreigner marked me as both powerful and biased before the social worker, I politely proposed that the situation was not so cut-and-dry, but rather complicated, owing to many factors beyond Sara's control. She dismissed my suggestion, forcefully declaring that children should not work. "When they do, it is exploitation on the part of parents." She understood that school was a difficult place for Sara's children, but "no kids like school—and, still, they need to go. If Sara's kids continue working and not going to school, our only option will be to place them in an institution. The purpose of our current intervention, however, is to do everything possible to avoid this."

In placing Sara into to a set of predetermined classifications, the social worker implied that her institution's regulations were based on a self-evident and incontrovertible ethical imperative. Yet I sensed a tension whereby the social worker's mode of presentation also seemed defensive, as if she were buffering herself against a possible accusation that she was wrongly intervening, or even feeling guilty that the state was only able to aid Sara after she had to defend herself through murder and spend time in prison. Intent on proving to me that it was not a matter of being against Sara, she got personal. "I too am a single mother, separated from my husband. It's not easy to work and care for my son at the same time. But people should only have the number of kids they can support."²³ She continued using herself as an example: she had been planned her family according to her personal financial prospects, she explained, implying that if only Sara had been so responsible, she might have avoided her current predicament.

In identifying as both the representative of a family welfare institution and a mother, the social worker showed how motherhood functions as a primary idiom and experience through which families are publicly managed, particularly with regard to controversial issues of child welfare. It seemed not to matter that Sara had been continually raped and subjected to other abuses by her husband; her irresponsible "family planning" became a focal point in this particular narrative of her plight. After thanking the social worker for her time and cautiously agreeing to keep her updated on the kids' situation, I made one last attempt at inserting my agenda. "So, Thursday's appointment is about giving Sara advice to avoid having to place the kids in a home?" Hesitant to make promises, she responded with a terse, "For now, yes."

²³ Here, of course, she was tapping into a eugenics discourse that has, in different ways throughout the world, characterized states' control over and interventions into women's bodies.

Punctual as usual, Rosy and Sara were waiting for me on Thursday at a bus stop on their work route. Raúl hopped off a bus a couple minutes later, guitar in hand, and Sara announced that lunch was on her. I followed them to a set-price menu restaurant, comparable in quality and price to a market stall. Costing 16 soles for all four of us, the meal was no small expenditure for someone who made forty soles on an extremely good (and long) day. After a quick lunch Sara, Rosy and I dozed off on what was going to be a long bus ride. Twenty minutes later, on Avenida Abancay, we were awakened by a man selling quote books; groggily, Sara explained to me why she hadn't gotten much sleep the night before.

At around 10:00pm, Sara and Daniel were getting ready for bed, expecting Paco and Rosy to arrive any minute. When the door opened and Rosy was by herself, a determined and concerned Sara flew down the hill in her *ropa de casa*, which included flip-flops inappropriate for running even on flat pavement. "I was worried sick!" Paco had dropped Rosy off at the bottom of the hill, close enough to home to not be abandoning her, but far away enough to flee before his mother could catch up with him. Or so he thought. Reaching the empty bus stop, Sara took a moment to evaluate whether or not to continue her search. Apparently her fate had been decided, for a minute later a bus headed for Avenida Abancay rolled by. She flagged it down and assuaged her twisted ankle during the half-hour it took to arrive at the park where she used to sleep with her children. She got off and limped the couple of blocks to the "hostel" for street kids. Paco was standing at the entrance and put up no fight. On the bus ride home, he confessed to his mother that he felt guilty for not having made enough money that day.

In contrast to Sara's previous night's adventure, the meeting at child services was surprisingly anticlimactic. During our wait, Rosy nervously chewed on the toothpicks she had snagged off the lunch table while Sara told me about her experience

with different birth control methods that had been administered to her at the clinic downstairs. When Sara finally inquired about the waiting time, the receptionist responded, in a reproachful tone, “the psychologist is busy with a victim of domestic violence.” Eventually, a couple of doors opened and Sara and Rosy were shuffled, separately, between the social worker and a psychologist. After the sessions had concluded, the receptionist handed Sara a piece of paper that looked like a bill. It was an appointment reminder for Paco and Daniel. As soon as we were back on the street, Sara let me know how she felt about the interrogation by informing me that “I’m not going to subject my kids to such an uncomfortable situation.” A perfect demonstration of the state’s hypocritical claim to a welfare role, the social worker apparently never followed up.

* * *

Later that evening, while I vainly attempted to take an overdue nap on Sara and Rosy’s bed as Paco watched a Bollywood movie at full volume from his bed two feet away, Ester’s ten-year-old daughter showed up at the door to announce the arrival of Vera, Rosy’s godmother-to-be. Once again, Sara and I walked into a tense scene at Ester’s, but this time it was the large, strong-willed Vera who wanted to give Sara a piece of her mind. She was bitter because the neighbor who was going to rent us a space for the post-baptism party had backed out upon discovering that the party was for Sara’s family. Apparently, Sara owed her a few *soles* for something she had bought from her on credit, and the woman refused to budge even when Vera reassured her that the godmothers, not Sara, were paying for the space. Upon recounting the turn of events, Vera lost her patience: “Ay, Sara, why do you always have to make so many enemies?” Our only option now was to throw the party at Sara’s, which meant going through the

hassle of renting chairs. Furthermore, Vera and Ester worried, Sara's house had no latrine: where would the guests go to the bathroom?

A couple days later, I was waiting for Ester and Vera behind the District Attorney's office, the building that Sara had exited in handcuffs. We were going shopping for baptism decorations and favors at Mesa Redonda, a large market behind Avenida Abancay. Vera had assured us that we'd get a good deal since she had worked there for a couple of years. After waiting for a half-hour, I decided to call Ester on her cell phone, but since I didn't have any credit left on my own phone, I did what anyone in my situation would do: look around for a human telephone booth. This was the latest scheme through which phone companies took advantage of Peruvians' hunger for work as well as the general public's inability to pay the exorbitant costs of placing a call from one's own phone. It only took a moment for me to spot a young woman with two cell phones – one from each major company – chained to her belt. "Movistar or Claro?" she asked, as I approached her. After Ester informed me that she was running late because of "*un problema*," I hung up and handed the woman fifty *céntimos* for the one-minute call. This was half of what it would have cost to make the call from a payphone and a fraction of what it would have cost to call from my own prepaid cell phone, if I had had credit. Unless they were rich or worked for a company that provided them with a calling plan, most people I knew only had cell phones to receive calls, a free service.

The chain attaching the cell phone to the woman, it turned out, functioned not only as a security device, but also as an eavesdropping mechanism. Having surmised that I now had some time to kill, the woman who had rented me the phone, and the friend who worked alongside her doing the same thing, asked where I was from and what I was doing in Peru. They inquired about going to the United States for work and then volunteered their personal reflections on child labor. They were opposed to their

children working, even though both of them – now twenty-nine, my age at the time – had worked as kids. Noting how busy the shopping area was during the holiday season, the friend commented that she had grown up so poor that she never received a Christmas gift. “Now, as mothers, we try to work hard for our kids so they can have a better life than us.”

After another half-hour, I gave up waiting. I don’t know what had happened to Vera, but I went back to the hill and found out that Ester had had a scare involving her ex-husband. Until then, I had assumed that the man she lived with was her daughter’s father, but she quickly clarified my misperception. “Oh, Señorita Leigh, sometimes I still can’t believe that God sent Frank to me. Imagine, he works so hard at that mechanic all day long to pay for Priscilla’s private school and he’s not even her biological father!” Indeed this was the general sentiment in the neighborhood. “He may not be a handsome man, but he’s a good husband, a good father,” both Sara and Vera would subsequently comment, reminding me of the value of a good man. Even though Ester worked hard to keep her family afloat by running a makeshift neighborhood *tienda* out of her house and watching her young son, it was the surrogate father who really made things work.

A few days later, I once again found myself waiting for Ester behind the District Attorney’s Office, but this time with Vera. It was the first time we had been alone together. As with the social worker, she confirmed that I knew “what had happened” before briefing me on her efforts to support Sara and the children during the height of “*la crisis*.” In addition to regularly visiting Sara in prison, she had contacted a prominent feminist NGO, which subsequently provided Sara with legal and psychological support.²⁴ Speaking of her as both a charity case and a friend for whom she cared, Vera

²⁴ This seemed to contradict the social worker’s statement that the DEMUNA had been responsible for setting Sara up with the lawyer that got her out of prison so quickly. I also remembered Paco telling me excitedly that when his mother came back home she was accompanied by a lawyer who had overseen her

lamented that Sara never followed up after the NGO offered her children one year of free counseling. As with the conflict over renting space for the baptism party, Vera's patience with Sara seemed limited. "As Rosy's godmother, my goal is to stop *la bebe* (the baby, or the little one) from working on the streets." I understood her frustration but also saw Sara as living in a no-win situation. Traveling to the psychologist in the middle-class district where the NGO was located, for example, would mean losing a day of work and school.

As if to legitimize her judgment of Sara, Vera confessed that she too struggled with an abusive husband and that although they were currently separated, she still loved him. Despite knowing, of course, that victims come in all shapes and sizes, I was a bit surprised that anyone would take on such a strong woman. Furthermore, I knew that Vera had a great relationship with her own father. Forthright about her vulnerability, Vera nevertheless contrasted herself with Sara: "I also have a house at the top of the hill, but I made the decision to leave it abandoned and I rent a room down near the main avenue." As if to imply that Sara actively exacerbated her family's pain by continuing to live in the house where so many traumatic events unfolded, she continued: "I have to work very hard to afford it, but at least I don't have to deal with the unwanted memories of that house on the hill."

Our conversation was interrupted by Ester's arrival. We shopped for decorations and when it was time to order the engraved baptism favors, Vera contemplated whether to include her husband's name or whether she should go the godparenting alone, like me. "Speaking of father's names," I asked, "are we only putting Sara's name on the

release from jail because he wanted to "help the poor." Later, Sara clarified to me that the lawyer was the son of a woman she knew from the soup kitchen. Why so many competing stories about the lawyer?

favor?" I was thinking not about my godson's dead father, but about Raúl's new role in the family. "What are you talking about?" Ester and Vera exclaimed in disbelief. "The kids' father is the kids' father. He was who he was, a beast, but he will always be their father." And Vera went ahead with her order. "Just my name," she confidently told the woman registering the information.²⁵

* * *

Like many poor Peruvians who had not joined the rising ranks of Evangelical Christianity, Sara and her children practiced a flexible Catholicism. This meant invoking popular patron saints and making a general effort to act in ways that would please God, but stopping short of attending church, praying consistently, or regularly incorporating religious terminology into conversations. Despite the prevalence of this loose attitude towards Catholicism, baptism nonetheless remains an ethical imperative in Peru. The ritual legitimizes children before God and extends kinship ties through godparentage, and thus has particular importance for someone like Sara, unable to default to her own parents and siblings, or even to the state, for support.²⁶ Baptism represents an investment in the wellbeing of one's children. While traditionally the ceremony is performed upon babies, I encountered many poor parents who delayed the event until they had saved some money, established a social network from whom to select

²⁵ I was struck by the disparity between the obligation to include Sara's dead husband as the children's father and the permissibility of omitting Vera's living husband from the kinship bond produced by the baptism. As with Sara's bus performances, this was yet another example of the immortality of the man who had gotten himself killed because he made life impossible for his family. Perhaps Sara's ex-husband could be spiritually present only because he no longer posed an embodied threat. Yet Vera's husband, a man who was abusive but not quite bad enough to explicitly threaten the lives of his family members, was written into non-existence, at least in the baptism narrative. This reminded me of Lucinda, the sixty-something-year-old who owned the newspaper kiosk at the intersection in La Molina. Although her husband was not a violent man, his patriarchal ego made it such that she had to go behind his back to buy a house for her future grandchildren with her own hard-earned money. Indeed, it seemed, neither murder nor separation nor secretly buying private property were enough to adequately address patriarchy's legacies.

²⁶ Anthropologists of Latin America, many having acquired godchildren during their fieldwork, have written about the process of choosing godparents. See, for example, Leinaweaver 2008; Lancaster 1992.

godparents, and were able to make time in their busy lives. For this reason, it was not entirely strange that, at the time of their baptism, Paco was twelve, Daniel ten, and Rosy six.

A couple weeks before the big day, our crew of nine (Sara, the three children, Raúl, and the godparents) marched into the church at the bottom of the hill for the obligatory *charla* (chat) that would prepare us spiritually for the rite-of-passage. Together with numerous strangers whose children and godchildren were also to undergo the mass baptism, we spent an hour being lectured and quizzed on biblical facts and the Catholic life trajectory. I felt like I was back on the bus on Avenida Abancay, except the content of the knowledge we were being indoctrinated with in the church with was distinct. “What is the church?” “The house of God.” Point for Vera! Like mischievous Sunday School students, we chuckled under our breaths when the stern old woman in charge asked how many of us were married. After Sara assured her that “we have the *intention* of getting married,” Vera added that it’s important to “know how to choose a good husband.”

The pre-baptism *charla* – like Sara’s interrogation at the DEMUNA, her neighborhood skirmishes, and her preambles on the public bus – represented one site in a broader system of evaluation whereby individuals are judged and classified according to a patriarchal discourse of family that has characterized Peru for centuries. As I have tried to show in this chapter, the patriarchal family, beyond an individual experience, is an idea so fundamental to the governing of society that it requires its subjects to actively reproduce it even as they reject it in subtle forms. As such, marginalized people like Sara, who represent a public burden by contributing to the “culture of informality” on the city bus and by siphoning the resources of institutions like the DEMUNA, themselves bear the burden of having to incorporate gendered and age-specific

performances of family into their everyday practices of survival. At the *charla*, those of us in Sara's baptismal network participated in this process. From Vera's savvy responses to Raúl's presence as "surrogate patriarch" (in the context of his rapid, and what would turn out to be short-lived integration into Sara's family²⁷), we signaled our knowledge of and superficial conformity to this model of social reproduction.

Yet like the performances on the bus, the humorous response of Sara's contingent, particularly around the question of marriage, reflected a disjuncture between the desire for social legitimacy and the impossibility of recognizing oneself within dominant models of family. If baptism was a way of facilitating children's communion with God, it also functioned in more subtle ways to bring people like Paco, Daniel, and Rosy a little closer to a level playing field. Without devaluing my counterparts' belief in God (indeed, I was the only one there who was not even nominally a Catholic), the baptism seemed less religious and more a bureaucratic procedure aimed to ensure the future of Sara's children by officially extending their social network through godparents. Like the theatricality of the Peruvian state bureaucracy, the humorous undertone at the *charla* and the chaotic scene at the actual baptism made the entire procedure seem like a collective performance whose primary objective was to formalize Paco, Daniel, and Rosy's relationships with adults to whom they would be able to turn for support. In this way, baptizing her children was a way for Sara to show that she was a good, responsible mother who looked out for the wellbeing

²⁷ I remembered the conversation with the neighbors after Sara disappeared. Ester had conceded that, although Sara had acted irresponsibly and indeed scandalously, the real culprit was Raúl: "Before him, she never left her kids without food. She has the right to have a boyfriend, but she does not have the right to abandon her kids." I wondered if Ester was right. To what extent did Raúl have to do with all these new tensions? Surely, wherever Sara had disappeared to, he had been part of the getaway. But, no matter: in the eyes of the DEMUNA, Sara was at fault.

of her family – something her relationship to the DEMUNA, her work activities, and her structurally marginalized place in society put her in the position of always having to prove. Perhaps, symbolically, the baptism provided a way for Sara to relinquish her children in an ethical, or socially sanctioned, way.

Just as the mothers in Chapter 2 saw child labor as an ethical form of life insurance in the context of their own mortality, the baptism, beyond its religious significance, ensured Sara that her children would be cared for by other adults, regardless of their opinion of her as a mother. This made sense not only because Sara's life was as precarious as any other poor mother without the means to adequately attend to her own health, but also given her fragile ties to her own parents and the traumatic experience of being separated from her children after defending herself against their father. In this way, the baptism and the rituals leading up to it represented Sara's attempt not simply to reconstitute family, but moreover to weave together a safety net for her children in the context of a state that appears, intervenes, judges, blames – and then disappears.

In this chapter I have shown the many ways that Sara's struggle to survive involves routinely establishing herself as a good mother. She accomplishes this in her work as a public bus vendor and through her relationships with the neighbors and the public institutions that both aid and demonize her. In both subtle and explicit ways, good motherhood continues to be defined through the idiom of patriarchy, resulting in a particularly burdensome situation for families that lack such a structure. Absent fatherhood, then, emerges both as an idea that mediates the performances of legitimate motherhood and responsible masculinity on the bus and as a powerful personal experience that haunts the everyday lives of Sara and Paco. The following chapter addresses the complex ways in which Paco responds to this tension.

Chapter 4. Impotent Adolescence: Arcade Addiction and Narratives of Family Breakdown

Paco's baptism seemed the perfect transition to the year 2008. It was the proverbial rite of passage and symbolized the strengthening of kinship ties. The glow, however, did not last long. Just a couple days after returning from a brief holiday visit to the United States, I found that Paco was in a group home for street kids and drug addicts. I got the news from Sara, after we coincidentally encountered each other on a bus where she, Rosy, and Raúl were singing for change. "I had to commit him," a distressed Sara told me when we got off the bus together. "I had to put him in an *hogar*." My heart sank. "What happened?" I asked. "Well, as you know, he had been rebelling a lot." The worn-down mother paused heavily to collect herself. "And then I learned that he had been sniffing glue (*terrocal*)."¹

I found it inconceivable that Paco had been using drugs. I knew the general signs of glue-sniffing and had spent a fair amount of time around people with other drug addictions. While *terrocal* was no doubt the drug of choice among street kids, my years of involvement with working children and child-oriented organizations had made me skeptical of the exaggerated representations of "street kids" as delinquents and street-based labor as a gateway to drug use.² And, in any event, Paco did not fit the mold. With

¹ While *terrocal* is associated with street "kids," *pasta básica* ("basic paste," an unrefined form of cocaine) is the "adult" street drug in urban Peru, usually ingested by smoking. Refined cocaine, unlike in the United States, is affordable to middle-class Peruvians as a recreational drug, since it is produced in Peru and thus available in the national underground market before it reaches the international traffickers. The leaf from which *pasta* and cocaine are produced, however, has been used by Andeans for centuries (Allen 1988; Yezer 2007).

² Anthropologists Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Daniel Hoffman found that street children in Brazil obtain glue from the shoe factories, an industry upon which the local economy depends. Sniffing glue, the children reported, helped them feel calm and reduced their appetite – effects that would understandably appeal to anyone poor, hungry, and struggling to survive. Despite the serious risks involved with glue sniffing, the authors note that the media "has exaggerated the toxicity of the glue and its effects" and used the practice as

a willfully anti-social personality out of line with the group character of glue-sniffing, he was about the most independent and distrustful young street worker I had ever met. As far as I could tell, his social relations were limited to the interactions with the bus drivers, vendors, and publics necessary to his daily routine.³ Furthermore, he constantly judged kids who used drugs or engaged in other deviant practices associated with the street: whenever I asked him why he wasn't friendlier with the other kids his age who worked on his route, he would nod his head disapprovingly and inform me that "those kids are no good;" that they smoked, did drugs, or pick-pocketed. But as little sense as it made, I accepted, sadly, that I had been naïve and that Paco was indeed one of them.

The events of the subsequent days and weeks, though, served only to justify my initial skepticism about Paco's purported deviance. Even though he was out of the *hogar* in less than a month, it took me almost a year to confirm that he had never sniffed glue – and that the real object of his supposed addiction was video games. In December 2008, four months after finishing my fieldwork, I returned to Peru for a three-week-long visit. On Christmas day, I took Paco, Sara, Daniel and Rosy out for one of their favorite treats, a rotisserie chicken lunch in Lima's historic downtown, followed by ice cream. Walking arm-in-arm across the Plaza de Armas, far enough away from Avenida Abancay that it seemed like an outing rather than a minor digression from his workday, my *ahijado* (godson) and I caught up. Getting right to the heart of the matter in his typical

a way to further demonize street children rather than to recognize their plight (Scheper-Hughes & Hoffman 1998: 367-8).

³ In this regard, Paco contrasted sharply with the kids I worked with in La Molina who, for the most part, enjoyed spending time with one another (and yet still avoided doing drugs!). Interestingly, however, while Paco generally exercised caution in his relationships to others, he was much quicker than the La Molina crowd to trust me—or at least to show me that he trusted me—when we first met. One explanation for this could be that the process of gaining acceptance from an individual differs from that of gaining acceptance among an entire peer group.

confessional manner, Paco took a deep breath and said, “*Madrina*, I’ve developed a gaming habit.” As if she had been eavesdropping in anticipation of the revelation, Sara emerged from behind us to corroborate her son’s story: Paco’s *vicio* (vice) had become the major emotional and economic obstacle in their daily life as a family, she explained. “*No puedo dejarlo, madrina*, I can’t stop it (or leave it behind).”

Peruvians use the term *vicio* to refer to different “uncontrollable” practices on the spectrum of moral. I often heard people invoke the word in reference to bad habits such as TV watching or excessive indulgence in Coca Cola. Yet *vicio* also overlaps with addiction discourse, which has continually gained ground in Peru with the growth of Alcoholics Anonymous and other therapeutic models. It was clear to me that Paco and Sara were talking very seriously about a matter that deeply worried them and affected not only Paco’s wellbeing, but that of their entire family. “It’s my only *vicio*,” Paco pleaded desperately. His relationship to video games had emerged as a cause of concern in the past, but this was the first time he had explicitly confessed to me that it was a *vicio*. Together, he and his mother went on to enumerate the negative effects of his video game *vicio*: Paco was staying out all night long at the internet arcade, often with Rosy; he had failed the school year; and because he often spent all his money on games, the family was suffering economically.

A video game problem was more plausible in Paco’s case than glue-sniffing. Considering that a year earlier he had been on his way to an institution for users of an addictive substance, I asked him how the two *vicios* were linked. Surprised by my seeming inability to connect the dots, he matter-of-factly stated, “You need to be a glue-sniffer to get into the *hogar*. So I told them I had sniffed glue a few times.” It was never clear to me at what point in the process Sara had come to understand that her son was not, in fact, using *terrocal*, but for me it felt liberating to finally resolve this enormous

concern – and doubt – that had nagged at me for almost a year. Yet knowing that Paco was not, and had never been, into drugs opened up a new set of distressing questions. What sort of a world makes it such that a boy has to pretend to be a drug user in order for his mother to get him the kind of aid that a subsidized group home provides – namely food, shelter, education, and some technical training? Could it have been that, in the process of performing a kind of deviance stereotypically associated with street kids, Paco had learned that a discourse of addiction, or *enviciamiento*, was a way to gain attention? I felt sad about the possibility that Paco was struggling with the painful experience of addiction, real or imagined, and I had no idea what I should, or could, do to help. But amidst their very palpable unease about Paco’s loss of control, he and Sara seemed almost relieved to have an internalized scapegoat-of-sorts to explain their family’s constant state of crisis (even though I knew, as did they, that their problems were attributable to much deeper issues than Paco’s rebellious behavior). After the glue-sniffing had been revealed to be a make-believe stunt, it occurred to me that the narrative of *enviciamiento* was perhaps more significant than whatever the object might be. Did the narrative itself offer Paco the form of escape commonly associated with addictive substances and video games? Was it indeed escape that Paco sought? Or did the narrative of deviance give him a kind of legibility that, paradoxically, lent a sort of social legitimacy to his marginal status?

Once I left Peru again in January 2009, my contact with the family was reduced to occasional e-mailing and instant-messaging with Paco and twice-yearly visits to Lima. I also kept in touch with his teacher, Jhon, who looked out for Paco and his siblings. This new mode of exchange obviously restricted my access to the details of their everyday lives. Yet the necessarily compressed nature of Paco and Sara’s updates enabled me to see in new ways the patterns according to which they narrated their lives. Specifically,

for the next year-and-a-half, Paco's *vicio* remained the dominant frame through which he, Sara, and even Jhon represented their family's hardships. This chapter builds on the previous to explore the claiming of *enviciamiento* as a form of social identification, and even legitimation, for someone in Paco's difficult position.

Paco's performance of deviance through *enviciamiento* would seem to signal a breakdown in the everyday performances of family unity that he and his mother engaged on the public bus. I seek here, then, to explain why it made sense for Paco to claim to be *enviciado* in this particular moment of his life. I take into account the perpetual crises preceding Paco's stint in the *hogar* as well as the different forms of rebellion with which he experimented during my fieldwork. Paco's struggle with his *vicio* and his internalization of blame for his family's problems, given his already marginal subjectivity, were painful experiences. Yet I suggest that accepting personal responsibility for his inability to control a behavior that hurts him and his family paradoxically functioned as a way for adolescent Paco to negotiate his belonging in a society in which impotence increasingly defines masculinity. Claiming addiction, in other words, more even than an ironic assertion of agency or a way to place his life within a meaningful frame of trauma and attempted recovery, was a form of relinquishing, or taking a break from, the burden of responsibility that had marked his childhood. This was especially significant, I will show, as Paco struggled to reconcile his own transition out of boyhood with his personal understanding and experience of adult male violence.

Paco's claims to *enviciamiento* seemed to perfectly situate him within the trope of the deviant street child who is a danger to both himself and society at large. However, a closer look at the particularities of his problematic relationship to gaming challenges such oversimplification. In addition to exploring the meanings of his identification as an

enviciado, this chapter examines Paco's attraction to the video game and the public internet arcades where the games are housed, known as *cabinas*. Clearly, the theme of internet addiction has taken on global dimensions given the billions of hours children worldwide spend in front of screens. Yet understanding the issue also means paying close attention to particular contexts. In Paco's case, the uncontrollable draw to the flashing screens and the physical space containing them, I suggest, emerged from the unique ways poverty and other forms of violence had affected his experience of private and public. In this context, I show, Paco's experiences and identification as a struggling video game addict point to the specific ways he grappled with his masculinity as he approached adulthood. All of this came together around the language of *no poder* – a concept that translates as both “to be unable” and “lack of power” – that Paco used to assume personal responsibility for the family problems that, according to this narrative, stemmed from his individual failure to overcome his *vicio* to *cabina*-based video games. The idea that overcoming his *vicio* is a matter of individual willpower glosses over the vast networks of violence that have consistently acted upon Paco's family, contributing to not only his condition, but also to Sara's construction as a bad mother.

I argue that, in addition to what the spaces of the *cabina* and the video game offered Paco, the discourse of addiction provided him with a means through which to internalize his failures, articulate his lack of power, and, paradoxically, release himself from the particular kind of responsible subjectivity he had inhabited as a boy. His condition as a child street laborer had always marked him as deviant, but as he transitioned out of boyhood Paco had to rearticulate the particular form of deviant subjectivity he represented. Speaking about himself through a recognizable language of failure and impotence, and admitting defeat before an ambiguous set of forces, Paco not only deferred a deeper engagement with his own traumas and diverted blame for family

problems away from other actors such as his mother, but also reproduced the structures that kept him marginalized. If Paco's "*no puedo*" (the first-person conjugation of the verb "*no poder*") articulated his preemptive failure to meet dominant standards of adult masculinity, then his predicament would seem to signal a potentially endless state of liminality, a contradiction in terms (Turner 1967; Van Gennep 2004; Durham 2008). Such a condition, I will show, characterizes the struggles of many young Peruvians to move into prescribed adult gender roles.⁴

* * *

It was something visceral that had led me to pursue a relationship with Paco in the first place. Wary of the many problematic ways that adults with class and race privilege tend to approach poor children, I had always met my research interlocutors through trusted contacts, rather than simply walking up to random children on the street. After a long day of fieldwork in March 2007, however, my style unexpectedly changed. I was traveling home from La Molina when an adorably enthusiastic little singer boarded the bus with her gentle and attentive older brother, interrupting my anxious thoughts with the most innocently off-tune musical number I had heard since the class plays of my own childhood. They then gradually moved towards the back of the bus, where I waited to drop a coin into the can that had doubled as the boy's instrument. Something about them warmed my heart, and I continued to smile as I observed the brother gripping the pole by the back door with one hand while holding his little sister steady with the other. If things had proceeded normally, they would have gotten off at the next stop to wait for another bus while I continued on for a couple miles before getting off and walking two blocks to my house.

⁴ An important question that arises out of this is, within such a framework, what sorts of masculinities are left for adolescent boys, who have been gendered according to normative standards, to imagine or inhabit?

The bus, however, came to an unexpected halt and Rosy fell down and started wailing. Paco did his best to lift her up and comfort her, without losing grasp of the pole that would stabilize him once we started moving again. He seemed overwhelmed and not quite ready to get off the bus, so I ceded them my seat, trading places with Paco. He examined Rosy's leg injury and spoke to her tenderly, quelling her sobs. At this point it would have been perfectly fine for a concerned passenger to make small talk. I built up my courage. Aware that they would likely get off at the next stop, I took a risk and told them about my research, careful to avoid pressuring them. Sensing their interest, I asked if I could get off the bus with them to arrange meeting with their parent. Once we were under the bridge, Paco explained how to get to his house. "And when you get off the bus, make sure you take one of the *mototaxis* parked next to the newspaper kiosk, not one across the street. Tell the driver to take you up the hill to *la última pista*, where the paved road ends. When you get out, ask around for Señora Sara, and the neighbors will point out our house." I hoped I'd be able to figure it all out. "*Ojo, beware! Esos mototaxistas son unos vivos*, those mototaxi drivers like to take advantage of people. Don't let them charge you more than one sol (the equivalent to thirty cents)." I appreciated his gesture of protection and told him I'd be there on Wednesday.

I continued home, excited about my new connection. Although Paco and Rosy were obviously poor, I never could have anticipated the direness of their situation. Once I started to learn about the family's past – the hovel at the top of the hill; the abusive father killed in self-defense by their mother – I came to interpret Paco's attentive and nurturing disposition as a sign of incredible resilience. Even as he began, in the words of Sara, to act "rebelliously," Paco continued to impress me as a hard worker and devoted family member, deeply and genuinely concerned about the wellbeing of his loved ones. Life was necessarily a profound struggle for Paco, but I had no reason to imagine that he

was doomed to become a pick-pocket, glue-sniffer, or otherwise morally corrupt street kid.

It utterly baffled me, at the beginning of the following year, to learn that Paco had been sniffing glue. I panicked as I imagined my godson confined within the walls of a child rehab center. It was no secret that residential institutions for poor children were often violent places. Ironically, just a few weeks earlier I had heard the Defensora del Pueblo (Peru's Ombudswoman) publicly decry the lack of accountability in such institutions.⁵ My first impulse, then, was to chastise Sara for having willingly placed her child in such a risky situation. But I knew, at a broader level, that her decision was one more reflection of a system that exhausts its most marginalized subjects and impedes mothers from adequately caring for their children. I also knew that Sara was madly in love with her kids. Despite her own "rebellions," especially her temporary abandonment of them before Paco's baptism, her children were all she lived for. Sara went to see Paco at the *hogar* on every visiting day, bringing treats indicated on the carefully folded piece of paper that she kept in her pocket. On the day that we had unexpectedly run into each other on the bus, she had shown me the list of food products that visitors were permitted to bring to the *hogar*. Like any sad mother wanting to protect her child, she kept repeating, "What most breaks my heart is that the other kids have been stealing Paco's food."

Despite our respective concerns, I understood why Sara had decided to institutionalize her son. In moments of desperation, when she felt unable to control Paco or provide for her family, she had wondered out loud if the best way to assure their

⁵ The event at which she spoke was part of the *Adios al Castigo* campaign, aimed at eradicating child abuse through the participation of international aid agencies, local NGOs, grassroots organizations, and state institutions. Her assertion was significant given that most of the invited adult speakers, ranging from the Minister of Women to the head of the Congressmen's Wives' Committee, had named "family" as the main perpetrator of violence against children.

collective wellbeing might be to put her children in a charity home. She occasionally suggested that if she institutionalized Paco and Daniel, she could get a job as a live-in maid and bring Rosy along.⁶ Admittedly uneasy when the topic came up, I also knew that Sara had carefully evaluated all possibilities and that she lacked the kind of social network upon which many of my other research interlocutors could rely to satisfy that their children's material and affective needs. In line with the Peruvian tradition that anthropologist Jessaca Leinaweaver calls "child circulation," Sara saw the *hogar* as a resource for redistributing her children in order to ensure their survival (Leinaweaver 2008).

When I pushed Sara for details about how Paco had landed in the *hogar*, she was unclear about the specifics of his drug use, revealing an impetus unrelated to glue-sniffing.

Once again, he didn't come home the night before. So when I went out looking for him, I found him at the internet arcade. Oh I was so angry! I couldn't restrain myself. 'I warned you!' I said, and I grabbed him and brought him straight to the *hogar* my co-worker had told me about. When we got there Paco admitted that he had sniffed glue a few times.

I was perplexed about Paco's relationship to drugs and worried sick about the possibility of him being subjected to abusive treatment at the *hogar*. The next visiting day, a Sunday, I made my way to a rundown building in the middle-class neighborhood that housed many of Lima's NGOs, academic institutes and government ministries. Like the over-medicated Paco, the *hogar* itself felt dreary and depressed in some areas while it burst with activity in others. But the workers and other kids I met seemed nice enough. So did the visibly tired, worried, and overworked mothers who, like Sara, managed to find the time, money, and energy to show up with treats and hugs for their children.

⁶ It is a widespread tradition for middle-class and above Peruvian families to employ live-in (*cama adentro*) maids. In some cases, families allow maids to bring their children with them.

My concerns about the physical safety of the *hogar* subsided as I continued visiting Paco. Furthermore, my friends from the working children's advocacy network assured me that this particular institution was reputed to be a decent place. When I met with the director and Paco's social worker, they confirmed that Sara had brought Paco in because he was "had a *vicio* with internet games." Paco's fundamental problem, they asserted, was that he works on the street. When combined with family dysfunction, they warned, this leads to becoming a street kid. They then explained that the *hogar* aimed to get kids to "give up" both the street and drugs by learning to participate in a community through the guidance of a "substitute parent." As I knew, this designation had its roots in a centuries-old strategy for disciplining poor children. While it was obvious that the two professionals saw Paco on a slippery slope due to his street work and his family situation, they were notably vague about his *terrocal* use. I could not understand: if he had not been into drugs, what was he doing at an institution that rehabilitates glue-sniffing street kids not only through group activities but also by administering psychopharmaceuticals? When I inquired specifically about the topic, they responded curtly: he was a "sporadic drug user." Their failure to elaborate suggested that this was a category for children with an uncertain relationship to drugs. The director then stated that Paco's "fundamental problem" was his dependence on internet games – a modification to her initial assertion that working on the street was his "fundamental problem." The meeting only enhanced my skepticism about Paco's drug use and shifted my concern to figuring out why his lack of discipline had been pathologized according to an addiction framework when the object of his *vicio* remained so uncertain.

Meanwhile, Paco became increasingly fixated on getting out of the *hogar*, telling me that he planned to escape if his mother failed to fulfill her promise of removing him after a month. Whenever I encouraged him to talk about how he felt or what had led up

to him going to the home, he changed the subject and excitedly told me about his future plans: attending a “really cool” (*chévere*) evangelical boarding school and traveling to the United States with me when he turned eighteen.⁷ In the short-term, however, Sara took Paco out of the *hogar* three weeks after checking him in. In the months that followed, the topics of Paco’s alleged drug use and his stint in the *hogar* vanished amidst the many other crises in his life.

The *hogar* director’s ambiguity about whether Paco indeed had a problem with *terrocal*, and her focus, instead, on the conditions that put him at risk for problems associated with street kids, draw attention to the power of stereotypes in achieving social control. And yet the fact that Paco had so easily managed to get himself checked into a home for glue-sniffers reveals the paradoxical ways that the very subjects of such stereotyping perform deviance as a strategy through which to solicit the attention of a welfare system that is at once predictable and imprecise. This situation has scary consequences, such as medicating children for problems they do not have; perhaps this is partly the point.

* * *

But what was the nature of Paco’s relationship to video games and internet arcades? In Peru, where private computers, video game systems, and at-home internet connections exceed the reach of the poor, *cabinas de internet* (internet booths), also referred to as *cabinas públicas* (public booths), have become the primary mode of access to such technology.⁸ A cross between a cybercafé and a video arcade, *cabinas* typically

⁷ This topic always brings up a whole set of practical and ethical issues for me.

⁸ As I discussed in Chapter 3, land-based telephone lines are often prohibitively expensive for the poor, and have decreased in importance as cellular phones have become more accessible.

charge by the hour for on-site computer rental.⁹ Some studies suggest that due to the proliferation of *cabinas*, internet use in Peru is higher than in other Latin American countries with similar demographics (Budde). If *cabinas* are “becoming part of contemporary city architecture,” as Haseloff argues for India, they represent a relatively recent phenomenon in Peru (Haseloff 2005: 54). Hard to come by when I first started traveling there in 1999, just a few years after Internet had arrived in the country and the internal war had officially ended, *cabinas* quickly became so mainstream that, by 2002, I could find one on just about every block of the commercial sections of Lima as well as in Ayacucho, the capital of one of Peru’s poorest departments. Initially slow and prohibitively expensive, within just a few years network speed had increased dramatically and *cabinas* had become affordable to just about everyone, charging, on average, one sol per hour – the price of an adult bus ticket, ten bread rolls, or two small bottles of soda. A June 2010 study by Peru’s National Information and Statistics Institute found that for people 6 to 24 years old in Lima, 73.7% access the internet through *cabinas públicas*. The same study showed that 50.7% of the Liman population six years old and above uses the internet once a week, and 33.4% once a day (INEI 2010).

If the internet has revolutionized Peru in technological terms, it has also reinforced spatialized patterns of class difference. The number of internet arcades in Lima’s middle-class districts has diminished considerably as at-home connections have become increasingly accessible to the middle-class in the last few years. They remain common, however, in neighborhoods with universities and technical institutes, as well as in tourist-heavy areas. At the same time, the increasing market for laptops, combined

⁹ In this chapter, I will alternate between the terms “*cabina*” and “internet arcade” (thanks, Hollianna Bryan, for suggesting this translation). The commonly used descriptors “internet café” or “cybercafé,” I find, conjure an image of a coffee shop-like atmosphere with an infrastructure different from that of the typically rundown, makeshift, and claustrophobic *cabina*.

with the entrance of Starbucks and local establishments offering free wireless service, has changed the internet panorama for those who can afford the price of a laptop and an expensive coffee. In contrast, the no-frills *cabinas* that now pervade poor and working class neighborhoods contain second-hand computers crammed into small individual cubicles. In the more commercial parts of these neighborhoods, *cabinas* might double as public calling centers, photo studios, or office supply stores, whereas in residential sections, *cabinas* often occupy the front room of family homes, as an alternative to the more traditional *bodega*. All *cabinas* sell junk food, whether chips, cookies, or soda.

Cabinas were not the medium through which the Peruvian government intended to give the poor access to information technology. During the so-called return to democracy at the turn of the millennium, President Alejandro Toledo ambitiously launched a program to bring internet to poor children in public grade schools. With donations from Bill Gates, Plan Huascarán sought to improve the quality of education by enhancing “communicative capacities, information access, and technological literacy” (PeruEduca). Given Fujimori’s legacy of building schools all over Peru yet failing to equip them with proper resources or social infrastructure, Toledo’s plan was well-received; one news agency called it “the most lauded of all of Toledo’s programs” (Hildebrandt 7/21/02). Soon, however, internal divisions and the withdrawal of the primary sponsor minimized the program’s success. A decade later, Plan Huascarán exists in theory, fused with other Ministry of Education programs. Through participation in aid projects, such as the US-based One Laptop Per Child program, and the welcoming of foreign volunteers to teach educational technology to young students in rural areas, the Ministry of Education continues to promote internet access for school children as a crucial instrument for raising the educational bar and achieving national development (MINED website). Many critics have argued that such efforts are doomed

to failure, given government disorganization and improper teacher training. Hence, if Plan Huascarán succeeded in putting internet on the radar of many Peruvians, *cabinas* have effectively become the agents through which internet – in its many uses – has reached the masses.¹⁰

Lima's *cabinas* have found a place in the informal urban economy as small, unregulated businesses, although some more established franchises also exist.¹¹ As studies have argued for Mumbai, internet arcades represent a “grey” area both with regard to their legal status as businesses and in terms of the variety of activities for which clients access them (Rangaswamy 2007: 115). Common uses in Lima include gaming, information-seeking, typing up documents, e-mailing, viewing pornography, and chatting—sometimes in search of romance.¹² While many teenagers in Lima have shared with me their exciting stories about meeting boyfriends and girlfriends (often other Limans) online, I found that most kids Paco's age used the internet for playing video games, either individually or as a group.

I initially became aware of Paco as an internet user when he asked me help him open up a hotmail and IM account shortly after we started getting to know each other.¹³

¹⁰ Meanwhile, it is not uncommon to find for-profit *cabinas* marketing themselves with signs reading, “*biblioteca virtual*” (virtual library) in an effort to differentiate their product and come across as more serious. I first noticed this near the university in Ayacucho in August 2011.

¹¹ For India, both Rangaswamy and Haseloff link the proliferation of internet cafés to the failure of the state and development institutions to create aid programs that bring communication technologies to the masses (Rangaswamy 2008; Haseloff 2005). Haseloff notes that internet cafés highly outnumber libraries, village kiosks and telecenters; but, he asks, do cybercafés, as for-profit commercial venues that provide a low-cost alternative for the poor, really “bridge the digital divide” (53). I am not concerned with this particular question, as it presupposes a development model in which there exist “good” and “bad” uses of internet. But it is important to consider the ubiquity of *cabinas* in relation to the Peruvian government's official discourse about the internet's democratizing potential.

¹² As the internet has expanded worldwide, anthropologists have studied how people in poor countries use it to facilitate romantic relationships with people from rich countries (Brennan 2004; Johnson-Hanks 2007; Johnson 2007; Williams 2009).

¹³ As I explained in Chapter 3, it was while we walked to the *cabina* that he first told me his story of his father's death.

Wary of overstepping his mother's authority, I asked him, before we headed down the hill from his house to the nearest *cabina*, whether he thought this would be okay with Sara. He proceeded to tell me that his mother had already advised him about improper uses of internet. Although Sara had never used internet herself, she knew enough about it to instruct him to immediately navigate away if he ever happened to sit down at a computer open to a pornography page—something I had frequently experienced. After Paco detoured into an ethical pondering about pornography and prostitution, I warned him to be cautious when chatting, aware that I was surely not telling him anything new; after all, as a bus performer, Paco's everyday life involved negotiating relationships with adult strangers.

As it turned out, it was not Paco's chatting practices that I had to worry about. From the start he seemed more interested in games. After I set him up with a hotmail account and we became IM buddies, I rented my own computer to check my e-mail and help him practice IM'ing. Within a couple of minutes, we each became enmeshed in our own activities and stopped chatting. After the half-hour we had agreed to stay, I got up and found him excitedly entranced in a game he claimed was one of his favorites, leading me to believe that he had experience with the medium. I gave in to his supplications and pre-paid for another half-hour. From then on, whenever Paco came to my house he went straight for my laptop, just like the other teenagers for whom my house afforded the privilege of free and unregulated internet access. While most of them signed onto IM to chat with friends, Paco searched for internet-based games.

If *cabinas* have become the primary means through which the poor access internet, the public nature of this technology, I suggest, has opened up new categories of spatial and behavioral transgressions that fit all too easily within causal narratives about the relationship between child street labor and other forms of deviance. This helps to

explain how Paco's internet habit landed him in an *hogar* for drug-using street kids. Furthermore, the *hogar* director's blatant ambiguity about whether Paco's problem was with internet arcades or *terrocal* suggests that, when dealing with youth who utilize public space in deviant ways, just about anything can emerge as a vector through which to articulate discourses of individual responsibility. This, I suggest, is the built-in risk with generic addiction narratives, and particularly so in the context of poverty, itself a structural problem that masks itself through narratives of personal blame. Paco's internalization of blame for his family's problems, on top of his struggle with his *vicio*, I will show, are uniquely painful experiences given his family's already precarious existence.

* * *

Across the United States, suburban parents worry that video games and internet are making their children indifferent, anti-social, and even violent – and, moreover, that this corruptive technology is invading the supposedly regulated and safe space of the private home. Similarly, in China, where internet was welcomed as a tool of modernization in the 1990s, adolescent internet addiction has emerged as an object of national hysteria, prompting the government to request that the World Health Organization classify it as a clinical disorder (Macartney 2008).¹⁴ As a result, desperate parents have relinquished their children to for-profit boot camps where violent strategies of discipline and control (including electro-shock therapy until it was banned by the Ministry of Health in 2009) have provoked deaths and an internee rebellion (Macartney 2009, 2010).¹⁵ Like parents in the United States and China, Sara worried that

¹⁴ Internet addiction is also a concern in the United States, being addressed by the American Psychological Association and organizations such as The Center for Internet Addiction Recovery.

¹⁵ According to anthropologist Yongming Zhou, the Chinese government, concerned with using internet to diffuse its own messages rather than as a tool for democratic communication and the exchange of ideas,

Paco's uncontrollable dependence on the computer was diverting his attention from more important activities, such as school and work. But in the Peruvian context, Paco's relationship to internet-based video games emerged as a unique problem for more complex reasons than dominant narratives about deviant street kids or about youth internet addiction suggest. For one, the money he spent at the *cabina* threatened the everyday physical survival of his family by affecting their ability to buy basic necessities. Furthermore, his *vicio* entailed a use of public space that kept him (and, in turn, his sister) on the street at night, physically away from home. I became increasingly aware of the effects of his activities on his family's everyday existence in the months following Paco's internment in the *hogar*.

Late one Friday night two months before leaving Peru, I returned home after going out with some friends to my neighborhood bar. I was expecting to exchange the usual friendly greetings with Hugo, my building's doorman, when the generally calm and collected man approached me with a look of despair. "Señorita Leigh," he said in his characteristically soft and serious voice, "your godson and his sister just came by

initially focused on the control of information, which gave way to self-censorship among users (Carstens 2006; Zhou 2006). Several years later, self-policing has proven limited as a strategy of government control. Described by medical experts as "hyperactive and uncontrollable" (Sheridan 2009), the purportedly 24 million (mostly male) adolescent Chinese internet addicts have lost interest in school, ruining their parents' dreams for their futures. Experts contend that internet addiction is both indicative of "family problems" and a "symptom of deeper psychological problems" such as "sleep disorders," as well as "depression, fear and an unwillingness to interact with others" (Macartney 2008). Further shaping this profile of deviance, many such youths are reported to have previously experimented with "crime or drugs" (Macartney 2008). If youth internet addiction points to a failure in the Chinese government's initial vision of the internet as a tool for fomenting nationalism, then its pathologization has also worked productively, inaugurating new technologies for the creation of nationalist subjects. The fact that desperate parents – after futile attempts to get local governments to shut down or regulate the use of internet cafés (Sheridan 2009) – are relinquishing their addicted children to militaristic regimes of rehabilitation in hopes to reestablish familial order underscores the ways discourses of deviant youth upset yet also reinforce the fragile and fundamental link between family and nation. In Peru, youth internet addiction also signals a transgression of proper modes of child discipline and family responsibility key to the way the modern nation is imagined. This carries specific meanings for impoverished youth like Paco, whose transgressive occupation of public space already threatens dominant notions of national order.

looking for you. *Solitos*, all alone.” He sighed. “Kids that young can’t be on the street alone at that hour, *Señorita Leigh*. Please,” he pleaded, “you must talk to their mother.” Trying to register everything, I thanked Hugo for his concern and apologized, imagining how awful he must have felt having to send two children from his own neighborhood back onto the streets alone at midnight. Guilt subsumed me as I lay in bed awake. Not only had I indirectly landed Hugo in a distressing situation, but this was the first time Paco’s “rebellious behavior” had involved me in such a direct way, and I had been unavailable to help. Who knew where – and with whom – they would end up spending the night.

A few afternoons later, Paco and Rosy came over for a planned visit. Instead of energetically grabbing my laptop or asking if I had made fettuccini Alfredo, they made straight for the couch and exchanged glances as if trying to decide who would initiate discussion. Paco adopted his usual confessional tone, speaking in the first person about his late night escapade. “*Madrina*, the other day I slept away from home.” He had been playing games at the *cabina*, with Rosy observing, when suddenly it was too late to catch the last bus. A mere ten minutes from my house, they managed to convince a sympathetic taxi driver to bring them over for two soles, all they had left after spending the afternoon working and the night at the *cabina*. When Hugo informed them that I wasn’t there, they walked a few blocks until a concerned couple in the midst of closing up their snack bar invited them home. “They gave us milk and bread and made us a sleeping mat on the floor of their kids’ room. The next morning, they gave us breakfast, some of their toys, and our bus fare.” I believed that the couple had not mistreated them, but could not avoid thinking that they had gotten lucky. Like my conversation with Paco about internet chatting, I warned the sister and brother about the risks of trusting

strangers, aware, all the while, that I was not saying anything they did not already know.

A week later, they showed up at my house at midnight again. In contrast to the sense of despondency that had overcome me upon learning that Sara had put Paco in a *hogar*, I now felt so helpless that I wished for some sort of magical institutional intervention. After all, what could I really do when I was going to be leaving the country in just a few weeks? In retrospect, I empathized with Sara's decision to put her son in a *hogar* when his internet (or imagined glue-sniffing) problem had become unmanageable. Sara had responded to Paco's *vicio* in the few ways available to her. One extreme, as I discussed in the previous chapter, was "giving up" for a few days and abandoning her children. Then there was the *hogar*, where Paco was miserable. Out of options and with a limited social network, Sara fetched Paco from the *hogar*, swallowed her pride, and showed up, with her three children, on her estranged mother's doorstep.

During their month away, I had no idea where they were until Sara finally called me. We met up the next day at one of the bus stops along her route and Sara explained that she had been trying to mend her relationship with her newly evangelical mother while getting her own life and that of her children in order. She recited her new plan. She was determined to save up money in order to attend to her health problems and enroll the kids in school. With the help of his grandmother's Christian influence, Paco had vowed to focus on school and curtail his video game habit. To achieve this, it was important that he no longer work, which meant that Sara's income would have to suffice. In order to cut down on costs, Rosy was now living with Sara's brother, who had a stay-at-home wife and a young daughter.

In large part, it seemed to me, this reorganization of the entire family was a project of disciplining Paco. I knew that this new structure was going to be difficult to

implement, particularly as it placed Paco's video game *vicio* at the center of what I knew to be an intricate web of deeply-rooted family and systemic problems. But I wanted to support Sara. I strongly encouraged her to consider enrolling Paco and Daniel in a makeshift school that two friends from the working children's advocacy network had recently started with a few small donations. Having grown up in the same district as Paco and participated in grassroots activism virtually all their lives, Pati and Jhon had designed the school as supportive environment for children who both study and work. All three kids were excitedly registered three weeks later (Rosy had quickly grown homesick at her uncle's house, a mixed blessing as it signaled the first challenge to Sara's new plan). I was glad to have helped them find a school where they felt comfortable, but wondered if this was enough.

Thinking back to their negative experiences with the DEMUNA and their previous school, and ahead to my departure from Peru, I worried about the family's lack of support. I had easily convinced Daniel to participate in an NGO-run Saturday morning circus program, but after a couple weeks the commute became too burdensome. Several months later, around the time Paco and Rosy came to my house at midnight, I learned that Paco was at risk of failing the school year.¹⁶ After an uncharacteristically emotional phone call from Pati (who, along with Jhon, constantly kept me updated on Paco's progress in school), I went in for a teacher-student-godmother conference. Perhaps I should not have been surprised that Paco's video game problem was the central object of discussion. Even before Sara lamented that Paco was

¹⁶ In response to the critical attention that has been given to girls' experiences of gender inequity in U.S. schools, some researchers have turned to the question of "failing boys," arguing that we must turn our attention to the unique ways that boys experience hardship in the educational system and beyond (Epstein 1998; Gilbert & Gilbert 1998; Pollack 1999).

spending all his money at the video arcade, Pati attributed Paco's faltering attendance and recent behavioral problems in the classroom to his gaming habit.

I had no doubt that Paco and his family experienced his relationship to *cabinas* as a serious obstacle, but I remained convinced that the root problem was more profound and, therefore, any attempt to address Paco's "rebellions" would entail much more than simply insisting that he give up video games. I had considered bringing him to private therapy, the bourgeois American fallback, but worried that a mental health professional would adhere to oversimplified assumptions about the psychology of the poor, or that Paco would emerge with an unnecessary prescription for psychopharmaceuticals. I knew, however, that if there was a therapist who could understand his plight, it was Manolo, a child psychiatrist I had heard speak at an event organized by the progressive children's rights organization that I discuss in Chapter 5. Manolo had impressed me with his nuanced understanding of child labor and his thoughtful reflection on his own childhood as a market vendor in the Andes. Furthermore, he struck me as an approachable and modest person. My inkling proved right. I met with him and he agreed to bend the rules a bit and see Paco at the well-regarded public facility where he worked. A week later, Paco walked out of his session with a huge smile, quite a contrast from the nervousness that he had demonstrated earlier in the waiting room. "Manolo's cool!" he exclaimed, and told me a bit about his appointment.

After he met with Sara, Manolo called me in to privately share his assessment. He noted that Paco had self-identified as a video game addict. But, rather than dwelling on this, Manolo focused on the big picture, emphasizing the intricacy of Paco's problems but also his resilience. "Paco and Sara are *quebrados*, broken in pieces, three years after the murder," he paused. "Nevertheless they manage to stay *parados*, standing, upright, on top of things." Manolo diagnosed Paco with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder resulting

from the murder and the routine abuse leading up to it. While this may have been a predictable verdict, I respected the doctor's attention to the particularities of Paco's language. Paco had often told me that he liked work "because it distracts [him]" and because he got "bored at home." With Manolo, however, he used stronger words, claiming that he hated his house and dreamed about helping his mother get a new one, somewhere far from the hill. He had also been forthcoming about his insomnia and his wish to "just fall asleep or disappear." Manolo interpreted this as a reflection of the interplay between Paco's obsessive thoughts about the murder and his desire to erase the event from his mind. After listening to Paco's revelations and concerns and, in turn, honing in on the complex factors producing his aversion to his home, Manolo underscored the need to see Paco's *vicio* as part of an elaborate constellation of socially-mediated life experiences, rather than as a strictly medicalized condition to be cured through a standard rehabilitative regime of discipline.

Manolo's holistic approach contrasted with previous professional interpretations of Paco's problems as well as with moral panics over digital technology in the United States and the medicalization of teenaged internet addiction in China. Unfortunately, Paco returned for only one follow-up appointment, as the commute was complicated and the appointment times conflicted with school. I couldn't force him to go back, but at least Manolo had helped renarrate the script that disproportionately blamed Paco for his family's problems. By decentering Paco's relationship with internet games and thus focusing not on his purported object of *enviciamiento*, the primary symbol of his failure, but rather on the effects of his past traumas, Manolo cast Paco in a more complex and sympathetic light than previous characterizations that all-too-easily framed him as a deviant adolescent improperly utilizing public space. In avoiding the sorts of moralizing discourses that the *hogar* utilized, Manolo did not altogether discount the relationship

between Paco's dependence on *cabinas*, his labor, and his everyday occupation of public space, nor did his attention to the murder and the abuse leading up to it box Paco into a category of "traumatized child." Instead, Manolo opened up the possibility of framing Paco's struggles situationally. I suggest that, in contrast to previous reductive approaches, focusing on the ways that Paco's *vicio* and the narrative around it intersected with his particular condition as an adolescent boy contending with structural poverty offers a productive way to understand his plight. At a broader level, Paco's life circumstances, combined with Manolo's insights, beg us to ask how the pathologization of internet addiction may elude a deeper analysis of the social worlds that produce the desires and practices associated with *enviciamiento* or addiction.

* * *

If Paco's *vicio* was not a direct cause of working on the street, dominant explanatory narratives influenced the categorization of his behavior and his own performances of deviance. Indeed, if *enviciamiento*, like addiction, is above all a powerful discourse, it was also a painfully real experience for Paco.¹⁷ An unlikely candidate for a gang, petty crime, or glue-sniffing, Paco nevertheless agonized over his inability to pull himself away from, or "give up," the *cabina*. Before moving on to situate his feelings of *no poder* in the context of his particularly stressful transition to adult masculinity, I will first consider what exactly the video games, and the *cabina* itself, may have offered the struggling adolescent. Drawing on Manolo's observation that Paco maintained a deep aversion to his home, a site of trauma, it seems feasible that the *cabina* may have offered the already anti-social teenager a private way of occupying a space otherwise understood as public. If the physical space of the *cabina* provided Paco with a unique

¹⁷ In the wake of the boot camp fervor, polls showed that 42% of Chinese youth "felt" addicted to the internet (Macartney 2008).

form of privacy, then what about the virtual space of the video game itself? I began to seriously contemplate this question once I returned to the United States and attempted to reconcile my fieldnotes and memories with the preoccupation that I felt for my difficult-to-access *ahijado*. During the time I was conducting research, I followed the cues of Paco and his social network, concerning myself not with what was happening on the computer screen, but rather with how the time and money Paco spent at the *cabina* affected his family members' everyday lives.¹⁸

Since the turn of the millennium, scholars and journalists have pushed beyond generic panics about the harmful effects of video game content on kids, offering important insights about the relationship between the medium of the video game and postmodern subjectivity.¹⁹ Just as the video game differs significantly from other objects associated with youth deviance, it also contrasts in important ways with other visual media, such as television and film. Media scholars Mark Wolf and Charles Bernstein emphasize the unique communicative possibilities that the video game extends by hailing the user as a participant rather than simply a spectator (Wolf 2001; Bernstein

¹⁸ Another reason I did not make an effort to directly observe Paco's video game playing was that I felt uncomfortable encouraging a practice that he and his family considered to be a problem. Furthermore, despite my skepticism about dominant addiction discourses, part of me felt that asking Paco to play video games in front of me would be a form of enabling. In large part, however, my minimal attention to his gaming practices emerged from the fact that it was not until after finishing my official fieldwork that I became keenly aware of the centrality of Paco's *vicio* to his everyday life. A final reason may have been that video games have simply never interested me as an entertainment medium. I have gleaned, however, that, like his movie-viewing preferences, he enjoys a wide range of games.

¹⁹ Although they tend to assume a bourgeois subject in the global North, authors have nevertheless made significant advances in thinking about the universal lure of the video game. Tom Bissell recently wrote an autobiography on the subject (Bissell 2010), whereas Talmadge Wright, Erica Boria, and Paul Breidenbach conducted ethnographic research on how video games simulate the forms of communication that dominate our increasingly technological world. For first-person "shooter" (FPS) games, they argue that what gives meaning to the medium are "the social mediations... between players" (Wright, et. al. 2002: 12), which media scholar Charles Bernstein calls "simulated company" (Bernstein 2001:162). I would add that the video game can also add new dimensions to already existing embodied relationships. When the children I worked with in La Molina entered the *cabina* together, they each sat at their own computer simultaneously played games in which they competed directly against one another. My impression is that Paco's only non-virtual company at the *cabinas* was Rosy, who did not play but rather observed her brother. This could simply have been a matter of circumstance, or it could suggest a way that Paco performed a heroic role before his younger sister, the very person with whose care he had been entrusted.

2001). In particular, Bernstein argues that the video game gives players a sense of agency and control by presenting “a rational system, a guaranteed return to the same that is unlike everyday life” (Wolf 2001: 165). In this way, the video game’s predictability provides players with a uniquely “pleasurable release” (165). Similarly, Wolf contends that the video game gives players not only “a stake in the navigation of space,” but also the possibility of mastering this space, thereby enticing players to return (Wolf 2001: 53).

Anthropologists Charles Piot and Anne Allison approach video games not as separate spaces but rather as continuous with everyday life. They argue that video games (and other visual media, for Allison) containing violent narratives reflect the regime of flexibility and deterritorialization in which postmodern youth live (Piot 2003; Allison 2001).²⁰ In this way, Allison contends, virtual violence can be productive. It can help children “navigate, experience, or conceptualize their own way in this postindustrial world” (Allison 2001: 252) as it “simulates fracturation in their own lives” (253). Bernstein, however, interprets “the dark side” of video games from within his understanding of the medium as a site of “uniformity and control” that contrasts with everyday life. Whereas Allison and Piot suggest that engaging in video games can itself function as a survival strategy, Bernstein argues that the because “controlled anxiety is one of the primary ‘hooks’ into the medium” (Bernstein 2001: 163), video games can be the site through which youth experience “an intense fear of failure, of crashing, of disaster, of down time. Of not getting it right, of getting lost, of losing control. Since the computer doesn’t make mistakes, if something goes wrong, it must be something in you” (164).

²⁰ Piot writes about video games while Allison focuses more on film and television.

The language with which these scholars discuss the social significance of video games resonates in many ways with Paco's situation. While no one anywhere in the contemporary world is free of unpredictability, instability, flexibility, or symbolic violence, Paco maintains a uniquely intimate and intricate relationship to violence. Anthropologist Diane Nelson has explored how, watching horror movies is a way for Guatemalans to not forget the years of violence that they managed to survive but that took the lives of their loved ones (Nelson 2009: 89). Paco, in addition to contending with the structural violence of poverty and the effects of his father's extreme physical violence, bore the burden of having witnessed a battle that resulted in his mother murdering his father, leaving him lying in a pool of his own blood, knife sticking out of chest, on the floor of their family home. If, as Allison argues, video games can provide a way for "dissimulating...pain and isolation" (Allison 2001: 253), and if, as Piot argues, violent video games enable youth to "explore new subjectivities they find exciting and enhancing and... enable a re-imagining of human possibility and action in a post-contemporary world" (Piot 2003: 361), perhaps they gave Paco the possibility of abstracting an all-too-tangible pain.

Given the centrality of his home as a symbol of violence and pain, it makes sense that Paco's fantasies would involve physically and emotionally distancing himself from this particular site. Hence the dream to buy a new home for his mother, which he had expressed to Manolo after commenting on his struggle with insomnia and his desire to "just disappear." From the start of our relationship, Paco conveyed his aversion to his house and emphasized his preference for working on the street, an activity that simultaneously confirmed his affective commitment to his family and physically distanced him from home. Paco's increasing obsession with the *cabinas* as a site of

retreat, however, suggests that his relationship to his labor and to the space of the street was more fraught than he explicitly acknowledged.

Like most any laborer, regardless of social class or national origin, Paco's work produced pleasure and represented a burden. Like other public children in Peru, Paco experienced the double-strain of having to constantly justify his work before a skeptical and moralizing public, while aware that his individual labor was indispensable to his family's survival. Adding to this pressure, Paco's co-breadwinning role was a constant reminder of the particular traumas his father's absence represents. If his street work inspired feelings of pride and distanced Paco from a physical space of pain, it never entirely released him from the chaotic and violent aspects of his life. If staying at home felt oppressive, Paco's mobility was never fully liberatory. In addition to bearing the pain of his personal history wherever he went, the nature of Paco's work and the very streets of Lima – themselves chaotic – always carry an element of unpredictability. It is in this context, I suggest, that the *cabina* itself and the video game emerged as an alternative. Perhaps the video game's excitement countered both the purported boredom and the particularly painful insomnia Paco experienced at home; indeed, the times that I asked him to describe the games he liked, his speech accelerated beyond comprehension. Following Bernstein, perhaps the video game offered Paco the possibility of navigating a space in which he was (temporarily) accountable to no one other than himself and free from the responsibility of having to produce (Bernstein 2001: 168).

Yet, despite the sense of control that the medium may provide, Bernstein reminds us that it can also inspire feelings of failure. This extends to Paco's life outside the *cabina* in multiple ways. Once he emerged from the alternate space and time into which the *cabina* and video game transported him, Paco had no more money and his bus

line had stopped running for the night. His desire was fulfilled: he could not go home. But, as I have explained, there was a cost to this—one that was not simply monetary, but deeply emotional. If playing video games afforded Paco a modicum of the kind of control that existed only precariously in his everyday life, the practice also exacerbated feelings of loss-of-control insofar as Paco experienced it as a *vicio* and understood it as the source of his family's continued struggles. In this way, the discourse of *enviciamiento* worked as another site for articulating the contradictory sentiments of pain and pleasure enabled by video games, allowing him to express the pain of being unable to control his relationship to his object of pleasure.

Paco's problem, as I have emphasized, was consistently framed by himself and the members of his social network, in terms of the addictive behavior permitted by video games and the negative repercussions of such behavior on his and his family's wellbeing. It was not framed in terms of what he might be seeing on (or doing with) the screen. In contrast to the ways the US public imagines violent visual media as the cause of teen violence and therefore a threat to the myth of bourgeois security, the people who cared about Paco knew that the violence of video games was no greater than the violence of everyday life, or of his particular life. In contrast to the controlled mobility of bourgeois children whose primary sites of movement are the clearly demarcated school and home, Paco's role as an economically productive family member required that he constantly move through public space and engage with strangers. This specific form of childhood responsibility, experienced only by the poor, carries with it a burden of responsible consumption, making it especially problematic when the money Paco made on the bus went to feed his *vicio* rather than his family. For these reasons, in addition to examining how video games produce a sense of pleasure and control in a world where

survival is a universal challenge, it is important to also consider the specific ways this object functions as a vector for individual feelings of powerlessness and loss-of-control.

During a long, cathartic tape-recorded conversation as my fieldwork was drawing to a close, Sara gave me a sense of how she and Paco, together, grappled with his *vicio*:

The night before last I was making *arroz a la cubana* in the kitchen, to have for the next day, and I came out and saw that Paco had come home and was crying. I had told him not to go out and work that day, but he insisted: "It's that *no puedo quedarme*, I can't stay home, mom. *No puedo*. I can't." I had told him to rest, to stay home, but he went anyway. So when he came home sobbing, I was worried. "Sweetie, tell me, why are you crying?" I asked him. "It's that *no puedo alejarme*, I can't get away from it! I can't get away from the Internet! I want to get away, but I can't," he cried, desperately. I tried to encourage him: "Come on, you have to do your part. Put all your strength into it to be able to *dejar eso*, give it up. If you say '*no puedo*,' 'I can't,' then you'll never be able to, son. But if you say, 'I'm not going to go,' then you won't go, and then the next day you won't go again, and then you'll stop going. Don't cry." I console him. I hug him. I kiss him. I console him. I give him water to drink.

The sorrow with which Sara recounted her attempt to reassure and reason with her distraught son enhanced my own feelings of despair. What was worse, I wondered to myself: Paco's experience of *no poder*, or the utter lack of viable solutions or alternatives? If he followed the dominant model for rehabilitation, based on the rules of normative childhood, Paco would have to give up his primary relationships to public space. This would land him either at home, his primary site of trauma, or inside of an institution unresponsive to his particular needs. For an impoverished family like his, appealing opportunities for structured extra-curricular activities are in short supply. Aid programs, whether state- or NGO-sponsored, are scarce and, as I have discussed in previous chapters, rarely address the structural and psychic violences that make everyday life so challenging for their target populations. I had been trying to connect Paco and his siblings with the few institutions and individuals whose work I genuinely admired, but still knew that the structural roots of their everyday crises were beyond

anything that even the most committed activist could resolve in Paco's lifetime. In the meantime, Paco's language of *no poder* was a way for him to assume individual responsibility for the family problems that, according to this framework, stemmed from his personal failure to overcome his draw to *cabina*-based video games.

In her work on structural violence and everyday life in Honduras, anthropologist Adrienne Pine cautions anthropologists against taking informants' "assessment of [their] own culpability at face value" (Pine 2008: 69). Self-blame among the Honduran poor, she argues, reflects the dominant mode of subjectification whereby the government and the media exploit people's "fear of increasing violence" by making them fear each other more than "the repressive neoliberal State and industry" (62). In particular, she shows how the Honduran appropriation of the Alcoholics Anonymous model, like discussions about gangs and everyday forms of violence, promotes a discourse of individual failure and an ideology of achievement that reveal the link between the structural violence of poverty and the symbolic violence of self-blame.²¹ Pine's study demonstrates how addiction narratives fall within the "globalization of methods of class control." Indeed, such processes reveal themselves in contexts as seemingly divergent as policies towards street addicts in the United States (Waterson 1993; Maynard 1996) and Chinese households where parents seek to normalize their internet-addicted children by turning them over to violent institutions.

Paco's *vicio* discourse reflects the dominant mode of subjectification that Pine describes as it diverts the critical gaze away from the systemic production of deviance and poverty.²² The idea that overcoming his *vicio* is a matter of individual willpower

²¹ For more on structural violence and social control, see Kleinman 2000; Wacquant 2009.

²² I would argue for Peru, however, that the achievement ideology coexists with the general conviction that the system privileges the rich over others, a topic I discussed in Chapter 2.

glosses over the vast networks of violence that act upon Paco's family (and contribute not only to his condition, but also to Sara's construction as a bad mother). In contrast to what Pine describes for Honduras, however, the members of Paco's social network – in particular, his psychiatrist and his teachers – understand the structural underpinnings of Paco's struggles. Why, then, does Paco consistently default to a script of individual responsibility, whether describing his *vicio* or convincing bus riders to *colaborar*? I argue that Paco's identification as an *enviciado* responsible for his own problems is productive for him as it lends a kind of coherence to a subjectivity that he experiences as uniquely fragmented. There is a gendered dimension to this. By internalizing the addiction narrative and identifying as unpowerful, someone who "cannot" (*no puedo*), Paco relieves himself of the productive role traditionally associated with responsible adult masculinity, the role that he paradoxically embodied as a boy. Therefore, it is not simply that playing video games helps Paco navigate the violences and burdens of everyday life, or that addiction discourses reproduce dominant modes of power through narratives of self-blame. Rather, the *enviciado* discourse, like the video game medium, represents both a struggle and a release that corresponds to the particular predicaments experienced by poor teenage boys in Peru.

* * *

In late 2007, during an initial conversation about the baptism, Sara nonchalantly posed the topic of whether Paco needed a *padrino* (godfather). Aware that traditions had become increasingly flexible, such that it was not unusual for a child to have a single godparent or even a godmother and godfather that were not a couple, I told Paco and Sara that I felt comfortable going it alone but was open to other options. "Or," I joked, "I could take out an ad saying that I'm seeking a *novio* to be a *padrino*!" Sara burst out laughing, only to be quickly quieted by her son. "What's the point of you getting a

boyfriend if he's just going to beat you?" Paco was not in a humorous mood. I was accustomed to him displacing his fears and experiences onto others, but something about this particular intervention disturbed me. Even if his comment was a reference to his father's relationship with his mother, did Paco think that all men beat women? If so, how did he conceptualize his own masculinity as he began to transition into adulthood?

My future godson's rhetorical question demanded an engagement far more complex than the simplistic response I hastily pulled together: "Certainly, Paco, there are a lot of bad men, men who beat their wives and even their children, men who are violent towards others. But not all men are bad; I know a lot of men who aren't violent. One day you're going to be a man and you have to decide if you're going to be good or bad." As I silently chided myself for framing the issue as one of individual decision-making based on a good-bad dichotomy and a rigid notion of gender development, Sara chimed in with a gesture of support: "That's exactly what I've been telling you, Paco! Not all men are bad!" Indeed, I would soon learn that Sara was beginning her first relationship since killing her children's father in self-defense, and that Paco disapproved: "Whenever a woman and a man get together, the woman ends up pregnant and then the man leaves her."

I thought back to my initial visits to the hill, during which I had been struck by Paco's fixation on violent events in the media, ranging from the Virginia Tech massacre to the death of a popular Peruvian folk singer in a traffic accident and the subsequent death of her mother, rumored to be a suicide.²³ He had also demonstrated particular concern with the topic of male sexual violence towards women: during a conversation

²³ In April 2007, immediately after I first met Paco, a Virginia Tech student opened fire on campus, killing thirty-three people including himself (BBC 2007). The following month, Muñequita Sally was killed in a traffic accident (Comercio 5/28/07) and, a few days later, her distraught mother died in the same location (Comercio 6/7/07).

about working as a live-in maid, he broached the topic of rape; and on our way to the *cabina* the day I helped him set up an IM account, he contemplated prostitution and the exploitation of women's bodies before telling me of his father's death. Recognizing that such experiences produce "traumas," he avoided reference to anything personal, only occasionally gesturing towards his father's violence. Although it is no surprise that a boy who had been exposed to the kind of domestic abuse Paco had would express interest in these topics, I began to wonder, over time, if his fascination with male violence was also an indication of his individual anxieties around his own gender role. Indeed, as we grew closer and Paco increasingly made me into the object of his concerns, his inability to imagine a non-violent masculinity became more apparent. As his godmother and an adult authority, I was supposed to nurture and guide Paco. So, over the next several months, I exposed him and his siblings to adult male role models, like my friend Iván, a single father who seemed to have a picture perfect relationship with his ten-year-old daughter. I also made an effort to correct Paco's misconceptions about sex after he asked me to confirm that HIV could not be transmitted between spouses. But, as my *ahijado* would make clear, our moralizing relationship was not one-sided.

Paco's disconcerting assumptions about adult masculinity, like his struggle with his video game *vicio*, became more evident to me once I was no longer in Peru full-time. My first visit back (during which I would learn that Paco had never used *terrocal*), in December 2008, came as a surprise to Paco and his family, as I had no way of communicating with them beforehand. Sweaty and trembling, I knocked on the cardboard door. Nervousness about whatever tragedy might have befallen the family in my absence besieged my excitement about the reunion. Within seconds, a shrieking, giggly Rosy was in my arms, unknowingly assuaging my worries. Quickly, however, my heart sank, as a strangely awkward Paco, now almost my height, appeared from

behind the bedroom curtain. Instead of elatedly dashing towards us, he stopped in his tracks several feet away, glanced towards the doorway, and cringed. “*Madrina*, you don’t have a boyfriend, do you?” I offered a simple “no” and he joined the embrace, nearly knocking me over in excitement. “*Así mejor, madrina!* Better this way!” And in a surprisingly jocular tone, “because if you had a boyfriend, *madrina*, he’d take the attention away from me!” Now it was my turn to let out a momentary sigh of relief. Was this not, after all, a crisis over masculinity, but rather petty jealousy?

Once I was free to walk, they led me to the bedroom where a bedridden Sara exuded a sense of shame reminiscent of Paco after having spent a night away from home. “*Metí la pata*. I did something wrong, like any human being,” she confessed. “My children are going to have a little sister.” Sara was eight months pregnant, meaning that she was already four months along when I had left Peru in August. I finally understood why she had been avoiding me in my last few weeks there. I worried about how Sara would take care of the baby, and even more about the conditions that had produced Sara’s pregnancy. I reassured her that I would never judge her, but remembered Paco’s seemingly exaggerated warning, a year before, that men just impregnate and abandon women. Indeed, the mysterious father had shirked responsibility. The child would bear the last name of Sara’s dead husband, to “be on equal footing with her siblings.”

While I was unlikely to ever show up with a baby in my belly, and I enjoyed reminding people that it was possible for a woman to be happy without a baby or a man, I wondered what would have happened if I had shown up with a *novio*. Whether his anxiety about my own relationship status revolved around competition for attention or a fear of male violence, it was important to me that Paco could conceptualize that I could date a non-violent man and that this man would not replace him. Apparently, however, I too preferred avoidance and, several months later, asked the person I was

dating to act like we were just friends when he met Paco. Everything was going according to plan until an ever-so-subtle touch of the hand provoked Paco to stand me up the following day. So I headed for the hill and, as if she had been awaiting my arrival, Sara sat Paco and me down on the bed for a conciliatory talk. I listened as she explained that Paco had come home agitated because “my *madrina* has a *novio*.” Without giving me a chance to intervene, Sara continued. “I told him that you’re allowed to have a *novio* if you want, that it’s a normal thing and that it doesn’t mean you’ll forget about Paco.” Ignoring his mother, Paco reminded me that “men are no good. He’ll just hurt you and abandon you.” Again, I ended up asking Paco what kind of a man he hoped to be. And, again, he had no answer.

For the first time in our relationship, my worries about Paco had transformed themselves into frustration bordering on anger. Was this what Sara felt like in those moments that she ceased to be understanding and just gave up? Why was it impossible for Paco to simply state that he would not be “bad,” even if he didn’t mean it? I knew many children who, regardless of the eventual outcome, at least expressed their intent not to replicate the violence that had characterized their families. Many had violent, absent, or – in the words of their mothers – “useless” fathers and impressed me with their ability to understand not only the results, but also the roots of their father’s emasculation. Back in the highlands, they would explain, their fathers had farmland, extended family, and community. Upon migrating to Lima, however, they had to either start up informal businesses that never generated enough profit, or become Jacks-of-all-trades, willing to settle for any available day labor.²⁴ Some fathers channeled their

²⁴ The now-classic ethnographies of Roger Lancaster and Matthew Gutmann contributed to retheorizing male violence among Latin American men as a product of men’s frustrations with their inability to fulfill socially prescribed gender roles (Lancaster 1992; Gutmann 1996). Lancaster showed that in Nicaragua, men often act violently when their wives threaten their masculinity by “behaving like the man of the family” through “active” practices such as drinking and disciplining (Lancaster 1992: 39). In Mexico, Gutmann

frustration through physical and verbal violence, while others abused alcohol, and others still converted to evangelical Christianity. While these teenagers stopped short of radically challenging the normative gender structure of which they were a part, they identified a common crisis arising from the disconnect between lived experience and the enduring model of patriarchal masculinity. Whether reflecting on their fathers' struggles or articulating their own sense of "*no poder*," they cast doubt, if not explicitly, on the idea that masculinity is a straightforward, monolithic, or biologically-determined category.

Countless scholars have shown that masculinity, like other identities, is a flexible concept whose complex meanings reflect the interplay between social forces and individual experience (Awkward 2002; Connell 2002; Kegan Gardiner 2002; Carrigan, et.al. 2002; Adams et. al., eds. 2002; Fuller 2002; Bourgois 2003; Lane 2009). Yet patriarchal masculinity, as a model, is based on a strict binary between masculine and feminine, in which the former is expressed through the ability to provide and produce. It is because this model is at once hegemonic and in permanent crisis that men have long devised ways of "proving" their masculinity.²⁵ Paco and the other adolescents I came to know beg us to ask how such performances may be changing as failure and impotence increasingly define the way their generation understands adult masculinity.

found that domestic abuse occurred frequently in families where men felt that their hard work was somehow insufficient in keeping their families afloat. He also found young men to be more violent than their older counterparts, a tendency I observed in Peru, suggesting that youth feel a particular pressure to achieve hegemonic masculinity.

²⁵ Pointing to an emerging kind of masculinity that revolves around sexual potency in the absence of financial power, some authors show how men are finding ways to perform masculinity in a world that lacks the structural means for men to be breadwinners yet continues to demarcate clear gender roles. In his ethnography on street life and the drug economy among Puerto Ricans in New York City, anthropologist Philippe Bourgois argues that one way men respond to their lack of traditional economic power in the household is by "freeloading" (depending economically on their female partners) and flaunting their sexual prowess as the primary resource they have to offer women (Bourgois 2003: 301). Denise Brennan describes a similar tendency among Dominican men who enter into romantic and sexual relationships with female tourists from wealthy countries willing to assume the economic costs of the partnership (Brennan 2004).

Even those teenagers who surprised me with their empathy towards their fathers lamented the undue stress and suffering their fathers had caused their families, especially their mothers. Yet, as I discussed in Chapter 2, the moral imperative to reconstitute the patriarchal nuclear family continues to prevail in policy as well as everyday discourse in Peru. Indeed, pioneering anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski provided the basis for comprehending paternal power as a social construction intended to make up for the biological uncertainty of fatherhood (Malinowski 1964).²⁶ Second-wave feminists made a similar point when suggesting that fatherless domestic arrangements, insofar as they maintained the mother-child bond, upheld the functional family structure at some level, despite also signaling deviancy (Collier et. al. 1982). Yet, at the practical level, the inability of adult men to fulfill dominant standards of paternity burdens women by leaving them to perform domestic and income-generating labor. In the context of Peru, this influences the ways boys perceive the link between their sense of unity with their mothers, their own productive labor, and their transition to adulthood.

Child labor, like other childhood activities, is both implicitly and explicitly associated with motherhood in Peru. It is far more common to observe children working on the streets and buses alongside their mothers – or mothers working with children on their backs, as I described in previous chapters – than it is to see children laboring in public with their fathers.²⁷ Even children who worked independently tended to justify their labor in terms of their mothers. Although the street performers in La Molina could

²⁶ Of course the DNA-age and the availability of paternity testing have unsettled many of the assumptions upon which traditional models of family were based.

²⁷ In La Molina, there was an entire nuclear family – mother, father, three daughters, and a son – that came to the intersection together. But even in their case, dominant gender norms applied, as the father also had a job in the kitchen of a nearby restaurant and the mother sometimes stayed home to do laundry.

not verbally communicate with their car-driving publics in the ways bus-vendors could, they always invoked their mothers when talking to me about their work juggling under the traffic light.²⁸ Thus by drawing on the familiar model of the mother-child affective bond, they, like Paco on the bus, justified what would generally be considered a deviant activity for children.

Paco's identification with his mother also indicates proper gendering, as a boy who helps his mother economically holds the promise of becoming a responsible and productive man.²⁹ According to feminist scholar Judith Kegan Gardiner, the idea of improper gendering rests on the myth that absent fathers produce an inevitable crisis in masculinity, which is based on the assumption that "only fathers and other men, not mothers, can properly develop masculinity in their sons" (Kegan Gardiner 2002: 101).³⁰ In this context, I suggest, if Paco's masculinity was linked to sharing a breadwinning role with his single mother, his gendering was also reflected through his relationship to his siblings. By working alongside small Rosy, Paco emphasized his responsible role within the family, an identity more appropriate than that of pitiable child as his deepening voice begins to mark him as no longer a boy.³¹

Paco's masculinity, I argue, is also constructed through the way his mother imagines him in opposition to his feminized younger brother. In stark contrast to Paco,

²⁸ Early on in my fieldwork, when I asked them to write letters of introduction to potential tennis ball donors, most included a variation of, "I work to help my mother."

²⁹ Although Paco was young to assume such a role, it is traditional in Peruvian families for the eldest son to have the responsibility of making sure that the mother is cared for.

³⁰ Although writing in response to the largely white, middle-class New Men's Movement in the United States, her attention to the misconception that "man" is defined exclusively in opposition to "woman" or "gay" (what the heterosexual father is not) is important for thinking about the tension my research interlocutors experienced between the desires that normative models of family produce and the gendered realities of everyday life.

³¹ Paco has increasingly been phasing away from working on the bus because, in his words, "*ya soy muy grande para eso*," or, "I'm getting too big for that kind of work."

Daniel liked staying at home to play and hated working on the street, where he found the pollution intoxicating. Seemingly carefree and innocent, Daniel was also resourceful and nurturing, making toys out of garbage and adopting stray animals that he showered with affection. While not particularly attentive to the domestic chores for which he was responsible, his presence at home provided some security for the family, for he always had one eye on the house even as he busied himself playing with the neighborhood kids. Given his young age, Daniel's lack of participation in income-generating activities was hardly a sign of emasculation. If anything, his proclivity for play was a sign of normative boyhood. Yet his feminine corporal gestures and obsession with imitating female singers led his mother to code him as feminized. "*Parece mujercita,*" she would say, often with a chuckle that indicated ambivalence towards her son's transgression. At times Sara boasted about her gradual progress "correcting" Daniel's feminine conduct. Other times, however, she boldly stated, "he is my son and I'll still love him even if he turns out homosexual." Her intrigue seemed to border on a subtle desire for her son to be gay, suggesting that Sara's apparent discomfort with his effeminate behavior was a reflection more of the social stigma associated with homosexuality than of her own wishes. I wondered if imagining Daniel as gay provided a way for Sara to conceive of a non-violent future for her family insofar as it represented an alternative to the violent masculinity she associated with heterosexual, reproductive men. Sara often referenced her relationship with her husband as a repetition of what she had experienced as a child, indicating her understanding of violence as something that reproduces itself generationally. Could Daniel's potential homosexuality represent a promise of stability as Paco slowly sabotaged the responsible and productive family role he had embodied since his father's death?

* * *

A century ago, anthropologist Margaret Mead argued, in a groundbreaking study, that the notion of adolescence as a “period of stress and strain” described a uniquely Western experience that failed to map onto “simpler” societies like Samoa, where individuals enjoyed a relatively harmonious transition from childhood to adulthood (Mead 1928). In the 1960s, Victor Turner recognized gendering as a main aspect in the ritualized processes through which children became adults, but emphasized the cultural specificity of such rites-of-passage (Turner 1967). Also concerned with problematizing universalistic assumptions about life stages and the transitions between them, Meyer Fortes argued that, in contrast to the chronological age system of Western societies, tribal societies differentiated individuals based on maturity, generation, and the physiological ability to contribute to everyday tasks (Fortes 1984). Anthropological studies like these contributed important insights into the diverse ways that ideas about age and gender structure social experience. Yet their assumptions of non-Western cultural purity and structural coherence have been discredited by contemporary scholars concerned with the ways postmodern subjects negotiate identities in a world characterized by deep inequalities, cultural hybridity, and chaos. A century after Mead set out to prove that adolescence was not everywhere a period of stress and strain, I explore, instead, how the pressure of everyday life in contemporary Lima has produced a generation of poor adolescent boys for whom stress and strain represents a fundamental condition of being. As I have shown, gender deviance, if built into the system, articulates itself in specific ways for those whose lives are disproportionately marked by poverty and violence.

The predicaments faced by adolescents already contending with the everyday challenge of survival as they negotiate their transition to adulthood emerges from the unique ways Peruvian understandings of adolescence articulate with global processes. If

gender is predominantly framed according to a binary in both Peru and the United States, there are important divergences in how the passage from boyhood to manhood is imagined in each national context. For example, by working independently in public space while also demonstrating intense physical affection towards his mother, Paco behaved in ways that would be considered both prematurely adult and regressively childlike by dominant US standards: if the former practice reflects a characteristic of adult masculinity, the latter indicates Paco's failure to properly distance himself from femininity. Yet among middle-class and wealthy Peruvians, there is also a strong tradition, in contrast to that of the United States, for unmarried children to live in their parents' home while attending university and even after finding steady employment.³² This reveals that ideas of autonomy and maturity, and their relationship to the process of gendering, vary according to not only class, but also national context and other categories of difference.

Dominant models for the transition from childhood to adulthood are being put to the test in diverse geographical contexts. Anthropologist Jennifer Cole argues that in Madagascar, prolonged financial dependence on parents has provoked a situation of extended youth, rendering "normative paths to adulthood either irrelevant or impossible to traverse" (Cole 2004: 574). In response, young women have challenged traditional gendered models of power and respect by turning to transactional sex as an economic survival strategy and a "new way of attaining adulthood" (585). Meanwhile, newspapers report, college graduates in the United States, known as "boomerang kids" (Ludden 2010; Plemon 2010), have begun to move back in with their parents, while

³² Throughout the years, I learned from close friends that there is virtually no social stigma associated with being a forty-year-old male who continues to live with his mother, despite having accumulated cultural and social capital. There are of course variations to this model: I have many female and male friends who, desiring what they describe as "independence," have moved out of their parents' homes at what is considered a young age in Peru.

Asian “parachute kids” (Alison 2010) enjoy unlimited long-distance access to their parents’ funds while receiving primary and secondary education in the United States.

For Latin America, cultural critic Martín Hopenhayn argues that even as access to education and information has improved, job availability and access to power have diminished, producing youth who have greater expectations of, yet fewer possibilities for, achieving autonomy (Hopenhayn 2004). Furthermore, he contends that while new opportunities for cultural consumption – particularly those provided by the audiovisual industry – offer youth the possibility of creatively uniting around universal symbols, they have produced fragmented identities that further alienate youth from the adult world that confers social legitimacy. A tension thus emerges between self-determination and agency, on one hand, and precariousness and demobilization, on the other, resulting in what he calls a generation of “prolonged youth,” similar to the concept of “emerging adulthood” proposed by psychologist Jeffrey Arnett (Arnett 2000; Marantz Henig 2010). Recalling media scholars’ discussion of video games as providing an engagement with the “now” (Braidenbach 2001), Hopenhayn argues that today’s social world has produced a generation concerned with the immediate gratification of desire.

Indeed, the idea of postponing the future and remaining in state of limbo seems relevant to Paco’s experience with the medium of the video game and the space of the *cabina*. If video games offered Paco a virtual space and time in which to exist, then it is the experience and discourse of *vicio* that mediated fantasy and reality by providing him a way to articulate a sense of impotence in his interactions with the real world. In other words, what is important is not simply what he did in the *cabina*, but the way that his relationship to the *cabina* enabled him to express his struggles to an outside world that had particular expectations of and assumptions about him as a teenage boy whose entire life had been marked by extreme hardship.

Paco's self-proclaimed *vicio* allowed him to express not only the traditional struggles of adolescence and the specific conflicts associated with deviant youth, but also his particular contradictions as a male family member who was both a remarkably responsible producer and a destructively irresponsible consumer. Paradoxically, then, insofar as his transgressive use of public space corresponded to the already scripted role of the improperly socialized street child, Paco's performance of deviance offered him a way of obtaining legibility. Paco's struggle with his video game *vicio*, in light of the dominant Peruvian model of adolescence and in the context of the particular violences that characterized his life, I contend, reflect a crisis that prevented him from transitioning into adulthood. This seemingly permanent state of liminality, I suggest, is not an exception, but rather itself a model of masculinity – one that emerges in a context in which symbolic violence and structural poverty govern everyday life. According to this model, whose central feature is *no poder*, it is no wonder that boys like Paco internalize a discourse of individual failure before even having the opportunity to become emasculated in the way their fathers were.

Paco struggled with his transition to adult masculinity not simply because he lived within a system that had already marked as marginal, but also because he imagined manhood as necessarily violent. While he knew that this was an undesirable outcome, he suggested that he was unable to imagine an alternative. The only way Paco talked about his future was in terms of two (potentially compatible) concrete plans: to continue working in order to help his mother, and to move to the United States with me to study. Both fantasies imagine a future self that is productive, responsible, and nurturing. While the idea for me to take him to the United States reflects a certain desire to be nurtured, it could also be a way for Paco to position himself as my protector. Indeed, this seems an attractive way for Paco to inhabit a non-violent role towards a

woman, particularly given his concern about my relationships with men and his family's normative assumption that young Rosy, whom he had always protected, would one day find a man and start a family of her own. Having seen his mother abused and abandoned by men, the form of nurturing that Paco could provide to Sara was mostly material. Perhaps he saw in me an opportunity both to help his family progress and to protect a woman from his mother's fate. Even so, Paco avoided having to actively assume a non-violent masculinity, revealing his continued struggle over how to transition into adulthood and, in particular, how to think future relationships with women beyond those who nurtured him as a child.

Chapter 5. The Identity Politics of Child Labor in an NGO Age

Child laborers' subjectivities, I have shown, are formed in their work spaces as well as by disciplining institutions like schools and group homes, and in the everyday experiences of poverty. In this way, children who work are subject not to a single gaze or regime of power, but rather to multiple, overlapping ones. While institutions and everyday encounters work as mechanisms of control, children also learn to engage these sites strategically. In this chapter, I move my ethnographic focus to one organized initiative for change: a social movement called MANTHOC (The National Movement of Child and Adolescent Workers – Children of Christian Laborers¹). A grassroots group almost four decades old, MANTHOC functions as vehicle through which working children and adolescents, who call themselves NATs (Child and Adolescent Workers²), demand recognition as social actors. Like the other children in my dissertation, NATs are poor. Yet, in contrast to the labor activities I highlight in previous chapters, most NATs work helping parents with home-based informal labor or in MANTHOC's technical training workshops. With the guidance of adult collaborators, NATs seek legitimacy by directly challenging the orthodox ways that the Peruvian state and transnational development institutions, like the United Nations, seek to stigmatize and eradicate child labor.

MANTHOC's counter-intuitive proposal – that children should have the right to work – has emerged as an object of contestation in the era following the 1989 UN

¹ *Movimiento Nacional de Niños y Adolescentes Trabajadores-Hijos de Obreros Cristianos.*

² *Niños y adolescents trabajadores.*

Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). As NGO influence has risen over the last two decades, MANTHOC has come to represent one side in a debate that pits groups supporting child labor eradication against those that value children's work. Without denying the important points of distinction between the two groups, I suggest that it is more generative to evaluate the production of such difference. This moral dichotomy between eradicators and "valuers," I propose, has itself been constructed by dominant modes of power that not only eclipse the nuanced effects of MANTHOC and other institutions on children's subjectivities, but also preclude a detailed understanding of childhood and labor in a country marked by specific forms of stratification along lines of race, class, gender and geography.

MANTHOC is a site of knowledge production, empowerment, and discipline that works in conjunction with other institutions to shape NATs' understandings of themselves in the world. It is also a theoretical framework and a multi-layered fieldsite, a discourse and an assemblage of people and places. My sustained encounters with the movement over the last ten years have inspired me not only to rethink dominant notions of about children and labor, but also to reconsider the social world through the lens of childhood. While MANTHOC ended up providing me with a set of concepts through which I approached street performers, it was fundamentally a place I went for meetings and developed relationships, leading me to become close to numerous NATs and their families. By moving into MANTHOC's less structured spaces and the everyday lives of its members, I came to appreciate the movement's diverse composition.

In demonstrating that MANTHOC is not a monolithic institution, I seek to deconstruct not only the dichotomy between MANTHOC and eradicator institutions, but also that between NATs and the so-called street kids central to my previous chapters. In particular, I argue that MANTHOC members' reference to street workers as

“non-organized” reproduces a reductive definition of organization that fails to account for the diverse ways child laborers seek legitimation and the multiple forms through which children’s actions are mediated through institutions. It is not that one group *has* and that the other *lacks* organization, I contend, but rather that they respond differently to their own misrecognition within dominant rhetoric about child labor. Seen one way, street workers rely on a survivalist strategy involving performances that reproduce stereotypes, whereas NATs engage a form of activism that explicitly challenges dominant discourses about child labor. A closer look, however, reveals a fuzzier relationship between MANTHOC and development discourse, and between street workers and normative notions of family and children’s proper place. My examination of MANTHOC in this chapter highlights once again the intricate and varied experiences of working children and the shifting, sometimes contradictory, discursive terrain that gives meaning to the idea of child labor.

* * *

In November 2006, shortly after I began my dissertation fieldwork, MANTHOC commemorated its 30th anniversary with a three-day-long conference at the San Marcos University. Peru’s premiere public institution of higher learning and the oldest university in the Americas, the UNMSM had recently inaugurated a Master’s program in The Politics of Childhood in conjunction with several faculty members affiliated with the movement. Hundreds of organized working children and adolescents from all over Lima and Peru convened with their adult collaborators in the underfunded university’s impressively state-of-the-art auditorium. Scattered among the mass of NATs, an array of academics, activists, international volunteers, NGO workers, foreign aid representatives, and government consultants marked the event as a hybrid-of-sorts between an academic conference, a social forum, and a church retreat. Although NATs made presentations

and ran breakout sessions, the majority of speakers were adult male professionals who invoked Western philosophy to reflect on the relationship between their own advocacy work and MANTHOC's contributions to children and society more generally.³ Such speeches reiterated the content of the many publications – often written by these very speakers – that I had bought during my summer visits to Peru and subsequently read in conjunction with my graduate coursework. If the language reverberating from the podium resonated with the organization's teenaged leaders, I wondered, how was the mass of younger children in the audience receiving these theoretical contemplations about the politics of childhood?⁴

To be fair, though, not all speakers waxed philosophical. Adults and adolescents mounted the stage to inform us about timely issues, such as a refurbished Vagrancy Law that would threaten working children's rights. International guests, ranging from representatives of European funding agencies to NATs from neighboring countries, shared their experiences of advocacy and solidarity. Speakers employed terms familiar to members of the movement – such as participation, citizenship, and rights – as they critiqued dominant ideas about children's place in the social order. The conference intended not simply to speak about or for working children, but – much like the interpersonal dynamics I noticed in my everyday encounters with the movement – to promote children's agency by enacting a form of communication that challenged the

³ One professor critiqued Cartesian and Kantian theories of the individual in order to praise the movement's commitment to the collective. In a talk entitled, "Mechanisms of Control," a Foucauldian guest from an Ecuadorian program in Childhood Studies commended working children's movements for resisting subjection by dominant modes of power. The Peruvian and European philosophers who had been involved in MANTHOC's founding blended Hegelian philosophy with liberation theology to reflect on the dialectical and processual character of MANTHOC's commitment to justice.

⁴ My mind went to anthropological debates about translating field-based knowledge into academic jargon and including research subjects in spaces of academic exchange.

conceptualization of adult-child relationships as inherently, or even necessarily, hierarchical.

When, finally, the white-haired man who had drawn me to the movement five-and-a-half years earlier mounted the stage, the room filled with anticipatory squeals reminiscent of a rock concert. Trained as a Catholic priest, Alejandro Cussianovich was a harsh critic of Peru's right-wing dominated Church.⁵ His involvement in Liberation Theology, a movement that sought social justice by organizing the oppressed in an increasingly authoritarian Latin America (Gutiérrez 1973; Smith 1991), brought him to join with a group of working children in Lima and two European philosophers to found MANTHOC in 1976.⁶ Thirty years later, Cussianovich inhabited a position of utter and unremitting reverence within the movement's continually expanding network.⁷ Humble, loving, and passionate, the movement's ideologue opened himself to criticism in a way that enabled him to deflect, if not completely avoid, the personality cult that often forms around men who preside over popular social movements (Starn 1999). Critical and compelling as always, he began his anniversary address rhetorically: "What have we really done in 30 years? Have we really done anything for Peru?"

Cussianovich delivered a cross between a stirring sermon and a fabulous college lecture. The only other anniversary activities that produced such excitement amongst the NATs were the eagerly-awaited *dinámicas* and sing-alongs. To break the monotony and generate energy, an enthusiastic group of NATs would climb the stage every so often to engage the entire audience in an interactive game designed to literally move

⁵ The Opus Dei controls Peru's church-State complex and the elite university just down the road.

⁶ For more on Liberation Theology, see

⁷ Cussianovich also received honorary degrees and different accolades from various Peruvian universities during my fieldwork.

people into action and become more at ease with one another. Sing-alongs emerged spontaneously during breaks, invariably entailing an ex-NAT or young collaborator busting out his guitar and leading a group of giddy NATs in a series of songs that spoke of Jesus's struggle as a child laborer. The Catholic masses with which large-scale MANTHOC events typically concluded involved more prolonged and structured sing-alongs, complete with photocopied lyric sheets. Not religious myself, I learned quickly that MANTHOC did not determine institutional membership on the basis of faith, and that it was grounded in a flexible, liberationist, and counter-hegemonic Catholicism.

Both the structured and unstructured aspects of the conference provided a lens onto MANTHOC's hybrid and multifaceted constitution and proved a perfect segue into my fieldwork. During this period, I would peel away layers of MANTHOC's institutional structure and involve myself in the everyday lives of its members. As it turned out, the audience's simultaneous distraction and attentiveness at the 30th anniversary conference characterized all large MANTHOC events as well as the weekly group meetings that I attended in two different districts. Similarly, the seemingly mundane exchanges that I observed behind-the-scenes – such as the flirtation between a teenaged boy from Cajamarca and girl from Lima, and the jocular rivalries about regional differences in clothing styles – drew attention to the multiple sorts of interpersonal dynamics that emerge within any movement committed to serious social change.

NATs act like ordinary kids in predictable ways. However, membership in MANTHOC also produces a political subjectivity that sets NATs apart from the peers and neighbors with whom they interact on a daily basis as well as from children in vastly different geographical and class contexts. Moreover, the analytical and oratory skills of the children and teenagers called upon to speak at the anniversary conference

and at the multiple formal events I would attended far surpassed those of most adults I had encountered in my lifetime. These NATS, like those with whom I came into contact before I began graduate school, were the movement's mouthpieces. Their poise, authentic yet not characteristic of the majority of NATs, figures centrally in the questions of agency and representation that arose in common critiques of MANTHOC.

* * *

During one lunch break at the 30th anniversary conference, a middle-aged woman, Lorena, who I recognized from a break-out session, motioned for me to join the table where she sat with a colleague who looked around my age. She explained that she and her companion, Diana, worked at a community organization for street kids in a highland city. Diana, a social work student, went almost directly to criticizing MANTHOC. "*No me creo el discurso,*" she bluntly stated. "I don't believe the discourse. It's not authentic. When you ask any of the kids a question, they only ever answer within a predetermined framework." For her part, Lorena suggested that her colleague not throw the baby out with the bathwater. "I think it's good that these kids are so developed, that they have the discourse they do. But I do wonder if it's really *protagonismo,*" she submitted, referencing one of MANTHOC's key ideological positions: that children are protagonists, leaders, agents. "*No es protagonismo,*" she concluded.

Lorena and Diana saw, in other words, a disconnect between MANTHOC's counter-hegemonic aims and its reproduction of the modes of subjectivization that dominant disciplinary institutions employ. In focusing their critique on the question of *protagonismo*, they suggested that MANTHOC's official discourse might overshadow, or even silence, NATs' varied experiences and forms of expression. I understood their observation; indeed, my eventual impulse to expand my fieldsite beyond MANTHOC resulted, in part, from my boredom with NATs' predictable pitches during formal

encounters. Yet I also found it important to explore the kinds of subjectivities that emerged as MANTHOC rendered disciplinary power through an explicitly non-normative discourse.

MANTHOC was a flashpoint for debates about child labor, childhood, development and poverty. Intrigued by the strong reactions often provoked by merely uttering the organization's name to development workers and academics, I came to identify five principle criticisms of MANTHOC and its network. These paralleled, in different ways, critiques of development discourse (Crush 1995; Cowen & Shenton 1995; Escobar 1995; Fischer 1997). The first concern, reflected in the lunchtime conversation and a question of my own, addressed MANTHOC's scripted discourse. Lorena's idea that "this is not really *protagonismo*" suggests – at worse – that NATs were simply cogs in MANTHOC's hypocritical ideological apparatus rather than participants in the creation of a new, child-centered vision for the world.⁸ This assessment, however, failed to engage MANTHOC from the inside, thereby missing the important point that, even as the institution works in hegemonic ways, it both intentionally and unintentionally produces subjects who create new meanings and identities out of it.⁹

A second, and related, critique argues that MANTHOC was "too dogmatic." What the development workers and self-proclaimed children's rights advocates who expressed this perspective found problematic was not necessarily ideological subjection, whether subtle or mechanical, but rather the content of MANTHOC's discourse. Interpreting MANTHOC's proposal as an unethical championing of a practice unsuitable for children, they both failed to consider MANTHOC's "critical valoration"

⁸ The Frankfurt Scholars made a similar argument about the culture industry (Horkeimer & Adorno 1989).

⁹ This recalls the underlying premise of the Birmingham Scholars, who showed how working class teenagers in 1970s England both reproduced and challenged dominant forms of ideological production and subjectivization (Clarke, et. al. 1976; Hebdige 1979; Willis 1977).

of child labor as a rejection of dogmatism and concealed the ideological grounding of their own position. Their reaction, then, was itself dogmatic in its refusal to engage with MANTHOC's critique: that normative understandings of childhood actively ignore the lived realities of MANTHOC members, Peruvian child laborers more generally, and the majority of the world's population.

A third, and perhaps harshest, line of attack accused "Cussianovich and his people" of "using" NATs in order to promote their "unrealistic" but "lucrative" agenda. In other words, MANTHOC and its network of institutions paraded as a site of children's empowerment, when their true purpose was to boost a cult of personality and fill the pockets of other adults. This appraisal resembled the argument that academia and the development industry benefit professionals at the expense of the people they exist to study and serve.¹⁰ If "Cussianovich and his people" have indeed produced publications and created a Masters' Program in Childhood Studies, this critique assumed a false dichotomy between MANTHOC as a site of knowledge production and the children who produce and are produced by this knowledge. Such a framework undermined MANTHOC's labor of influencing social change by generating children and adult subjects who rethink power by problematizing assumptions about the link between age, class, knowledge, and experience.

The fourth critique accepted that children and adolescents were *protagonistas* who benefitted from MANTHOC, but questioned the movement's authenticity by arguing that NATs represented an "elite" group that falsely spoke for the more abject experiences of the masses of child laborers unaffiliated with the movement. This critique rested on a false binary between "organized" working children and the voiceless

¹⁰ In the case of Palestinian state-making, anthropologist Lori Allen has argued that the human rights industry functions as a material infrastructure for the performative work of human rights (Allen 2009).

children whose predicaments were silenced by MANTHOC's narrow representation of the child labor experience. Like the child street workers I describe in previous chapters, MANTHOC members had diverse life experiences and modes of expression, even if their public identities were largely grounded in their participation in the movement. If MANTHOC was indeed able to offer some alternative forms of employment to its beneficiaries, NATs, like their so-called non-organized counterparts, had grown up assuming economically productive roles in impoverished families. That their discourse revealed an unexpectedly articulate analysis for people of their age and educational level spoke, more than anything, to assumptions about class and childhood in Peru. Furthermore, such reductionist critiques failed to account for MANTHOC's diffuse effects on "non-organized" kids and on the social body at large.

The critique of MANTHOC as elitist brings together issues of representation, inclusion, and difference, begging the question of how to (and who gets to) define child labor. The final critique, resting on the idea that child labor is a necessarily reprehensible practice, posited that MANTHOC perpetuates poverty. As the director of the Peruvian Network for a Future without Child Labor claimed when I met with him at his office, "as long as families think it's okay for their children to work, the cycle of poverty will continue. Institutions like MANTHOC contribute to this way of thinking." Reflecting a causality that ignores the structural roots of poverty and their complex relationship to child labor, this logic is ubiquitous, undergirding media representations, municipal poster campaigns, and my everyday conversations about the topic with middle-class friends. Such understandings must be seen within the context of a transnational system in which the UN – through the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) – and the recent Free Trade Agreement between Peru and the United States dictate the terms of Peruvian policies and NGO projects.

Ironically, the staff of the NGO child labor eradication projects I shadowed openly admitted that their interventions typically failed; nevertheless, the development industry's representation of child labor as a moral issue with two clear and dichotomous positions freed them, at the expense of MANTHOC and its network, from having to defend their stance.

I have dwelled on these criticisms of MANTHOC – as well as the very impulse to critique – because they point to the particular ways that children emerge as a site and stake of struggle within a rapidly maturing development industry. In light of the aspects of the movement that the 30th anniversary brought forth, the critiques draw attention to the reductive frameworks through which understandings of childhood and child labor are reproduced, marking MANTHOC as a key site of contestation. Approaching child labor according to a moral binary can lead to simplistic celebrations of the movement as well as eclipse the ideological production of the eradication position. Furthermore, it flattens the experiences of child laborers. Having done extensive fieldwork both within development institutions and with NATs as they go about their daily lives, I reveal the intricate ways that MANTHOC functions in relation to NGOs and aid agencies as well as with regard to the already complex subjectivities of its child and adolescent members. Numerous publications have addressed the ways MANTHOC disrupts the order of things by imagining itself as “an epistemological site from which to rethink childhood” and, moreover, “the relationship between society, childhood and the state” (Cussianovich 2008: 6). Yet Cussianovich demonstrated openness to constructive critique by posing the question, at the anniversary, “Have we really had an impact over the last 30 years in changing dominant representations of what it is to be a child in our society?” Following this line of inquiry, I consider how MANTHOC, as a discourse and an experience, renders multiple effects on its constituents and in the world.

MANTHOC was a fraught site of critique and interesting object of analysis not only because it represented a counter-hegemonic political project, but also, I suggest, because it defied easy categorization as a social form. Even as it incorporated aspects of seemingly recognizable institutions, such as NGOs, grassroots organizations, social movements, labor unions, church groups, and academic institutes, it never did so completely, drawing attention to how, as so many poststructuralist critics have noted, typologizing can essentialize and limit comprehension of social institutions' complex internal workings.¹¹ In an era in which NGOs have become the de facto intermediaries in the management of social problems as defined by the transnational development industry, MANTHOC accepted external support only from institutions and individuals that shared its ideological commitments. This meant generally avoiding US-based or UN agencies and instead seeking funds from sources that approached children's work from a more relativistic standpoint. Having emerged out of the struggles of the working class, and not out of the priorities of the mainstream development apparatus, the movement had maintained a democratic, sustainable structure for over three decades by incorporating NATs into its administration, rather than conceptualizing child laborers as a beneficiary population in need of intervention. In this way, MANTHOC resists NGOs' monopoly over the terms through which social change is thought and sought, just as it has historically differentiated itself conceptually and structurally from labor unions and church organizations, despite certain shared interests.¹²

¹¹ I do not mean to suggest that NGOs are monoliths either. To the contrary, the label "NGO" often conceals the wide variety of groups and ideologies that the designation encompasses.

¹² Similarly, although MANTHOC considers itself a social movement, I see it as more complex than the New Social Movements that have arisen largely to challenge the ways the development apparatus conceptualizes social change. (Schibotto 2006; Alvarez et. al. 1998).

If MANTHOC is a site of radical rethinking, it is not to be romanticized as somehow resistant to the workings of power. A disciplinary institution, MANTHOC joins the family and the school, as well as the prison, the orphanage and the military, in molding children's subjectivities. Poor children, in particular, have been central to diverse projects of ideological indoctrination in Peru, including the Shining Path's brutal effort to dismantle Peru's class structure (del Pino 1998; Degregori 1998), just as working children, more generally, are subject to the gaze of the media, the State, and the individuals with whom they engage in their everyday labor. It is important, therefore, to consider how MANTHOC's deliberate model of ideological inculcation, aimed at generating working children's agency, inserts itself in a social and political context in which children are imagined as moldable "becomings" (James & James 2004) and symbols of the future. In the remainder of this section, I explore both the public face and the everyday workings of this strangely unclassifiable institution to ask how, and to what end, MANTHOC produces children who are at once objects of knowledge, subjects of an ideological apparatus, and social agents.

* * *

Scattered throughout thirteen of Peru's twenty-five regions, MANTHOC's approximately seventy neighborhood-based groups were the primary mode through which its 3,000 members participated in the movement. According to Cristina, whose term as national delegate coincided with my fieldwork, these groups, called bases, were "what give life to MANTHOC." Each base had an adult collaborator and usually two elected delegates who ran the group's weekly meetings, oversaw its annual plan, organized recreational activities, coordinated participation in MANTHOC-wide events such as workshops and marches, and represented the base before regional and national delegates. Through this democratic structure, the movement implemented its lines of

action, including *formación* (formation in the educational sense), *organización* (organization), and *incidencia* (advocacy), on the basis of three foundational pillars: the conceptualization of child, the critical valuation of child labor, and *protagonismo*.¹³

In the 1980s, despite its primarily child membership, MANTHOC established legal status as an adult-run association in order to qualify for monetary donations and volunteers. The association, as MANTHOC's service branch, offers three different programs aimed at an array of child and adolescent workers who do not necessarily participate in the movement. The labor program offers alternative employment through technical training workshops in card, t-shirt, and candle-making as well as baking. The *casas de promoción integral* (outreach centers) provide a physical space for children to gather during their free time and receive food and basic hygienic services. Finally, the schools practice a pedagogy designed around the particular needs of working children.

Initially, the provision of services struck me as antithetical to MANTHOC's ideological underpinnings. The distinction between the movement and the association, I thought, risked dividing working children into active participants and passive recipients. This seemed particularly dangerous in a country like Peru, where the provision of services has been linked to either the vote-seeking handout (*asistencialismo*) model of the Fujimori era or the more empowerment-based but top-down NGO model I discussed earlier. I observed, however, that while the services inevitably reproduced an inner-hierarchy, they maintained a distinctly MANTHOC flavor and at times served as a gateway for participation in the movement. Cristina, whose role as national delegate brought her to Argentina and Italy during my fieldwork, became involved in MANTHOC as an eight-year old who worked at her mother's vegetable stand:

¹³ Information on the institution's ideological foundations and organizational structure can be found on its recently-created website (<http://www.manthocperu.org/contenido/>) and in its extensive set of flyers, pamphlets, and books.

The other vendors' children kept inviting me to a place that they went and played, but I imagined a setup like the neighborhood *comedor popular* (soup kitchen). I envisioned that it was like a long table filled with plates, and you go and pay one sol, sit down to eat, play, and then leave. I never ever imagined that there were workshops, events, marches, people sharing their life experiences, people from different countries, volunteers! It was a space where you are asked your opinion, where your opinion is important. *A mi me cambió el cuadro*, it completely reframed everything for me, changed my life.

Both Cristina and Fanny, another national delegate, emphasized that their incorporation into MANTHOC had been a gradual and unpredictable, rather than an immediate and mechanical, internalization of *protagonismo*. Fanny also became involved in the movement through the services. At the age of nine, she moved from the northern provinces to Lima to join her father and eight siblings. Having previously worked selling popsicles with her cousins, or sometimes yucca with her aunts, she started helping her father with his makeshift furniture workshop, until one day when she accompanied her cousin to check out a card-making workshop. Therein began her long-term relationship with MANTHOC, where she would subsequently get involved in the bakery and, after two years, be elected bakery delegate.

Beyond its internal activities, MANTHOC members took part in advocacy and social justice events with entities as diverse as the national government, foreign NGOs, grassroots movements, and even Peru's leading media conglomerate. Every year, the network organized a May Day parade open to various children's organizations and the general public. Increasingly, MANTHOC articulated itself into municipal politics by participating in projects such as the *presupuestos participativos* and similar meet-the-candidates opportunities. In addition, NATs spoke up at congressional meetings about the modification of the Code for Children and Adolescents and other pertinent issues. MANTHOC, along with a collection of NGOs, civil society initiatives, and transnational donors, joined the *Adios al Castigo* campaign, which sought to end physical abuse through everyday education and policy change. A few MANTHOC representatives even

attended the *Audiencia Nacional del Niño y Adolescente*, a public relations gesture on part of the Comercio, the country's main media conglomerate, to incorporate the voices of Peru's children. Finally, NATs participated in activities aimed at addressing broader social justice issues. These included a grassroots women's march against the rising cost of living; an Environment Day gathering sponsored by a German NGO; the ongoing *Red Jubileo* to eliminate the external debt; and the *Cumbre de los Pueblos* (the People's Summit), which ran parallel and in counter to a transnational economic summit hosted in Peru.¹⁴

* * *

If MANTHOC found support in unexpected spaces, it also contended with the devaluing of its ideological project by followers of the UN's anti-child labor agenda. In my meetings with NGO representatives at the turn of the millennium, they consistently criticized MANTHOC. For its part, MANTHOC made public pronouncements against new ILO conventions and NATs joked that, given my nationality, I was surely an "eradicator." Eventually, I came to see MANTHOC's seemingly oppositional stance as a necessarily defensive response to its interpellation into a moral binary of being for or against child labor that obscures the movement's origins in a pre-UNCRC era. MANTHOC's approach, I contend, was neither reactionary nor utopian, as some argue, but rather grounded in a long history of struggle that has taken on new valences as

¹⁴ In 1986, in an effort to unify the efforts of the different organizations that had emerged to support NATs, MANTHOC helped to found MNNATSOP (National Movement of Organized Child and Adolescent Workers of Peru, or *Movimiento Nacional de Niños y Adolescentes Trabajadores Organizados del Perú*). Other institutions within the network included INFANT (Institute for the Formation of Working Adolescents and Children, or *Instituto de Formación de Adolescentes y Niños Trabajadores*), which performed an advisory role to MNNATSOP, and IFEJANT (Institute for the Formation of Educators of Working Youth, Adolescents, and Children, or *Instituto de Formación para Educadores de Jóvenes, Adolescentes, y Niños Trabajadores*), which trained adults to work with working children. The latter two were NGOs founded by MANTHOC collaborators committed to promoting MANTHOC's principles. The newer Collaborators' Network (*Red de Colaboradores*), in which I participated actively, was a more loosely constituted group of adults who supported working children in diverse ways.

NGOs and the Peruvian state institutionalize the hegemonic notions of childhood articulated in the UNCRC. Peru is also home to the regional offices of IPEC (International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor). Born out of the UN's International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1992, the program aims to "progressively eliminate child labor by building the capacities of countries confronting this problem and creating a worldwide movement to fight against this practice" (IPEC pamphlet). The clear contrast between this discourse and that of MANTHOC prompted me to focus my preliminary research not only on MANTHOC, but also on NGOs executing eradication projects.

Meeting and shadowing NGO personnel allowed me to witness the inner workings and diffuse effects of their interventions. One organization proposed to end child labor at an informal garbage dump in a southern Lima shantytown. While I agreed that the manual excavation of resellable objects from garbage heaps was physically noxious, the NGO's method for addressing the problem struck me as utterly misguided.¹⁵ During our initial meeting, the NGO staff acknowledged that child labor was linked to systemic inequalities, but went on to frame the practice as an individual and family choice. Citing how "difficult" of a task it is "to assume the State's problem," they instead focused on the negative effects of child labor: "Kids who work are discriminated against at school, so they stop going to school and instead turn to violence," Sandro explained. Elsa stated that taking on a "premature responsibility" negatively affects "self-esteem" and perpetuates the "cycle of poverty." Their three-year-long initiative sought to end child labor by sending its middle-class staff to the

¹⁵ MANTHOC members would probably agree that this does not constitute "dignified" work.

neighborhood a couple times a week to “work through the parents” and provide homework help and recreational activities for children.

After I had accompanied them to the project site a couple of times, Sandro and Elsa surprised me by admitting that the project was likely going to fail. But they were already halfway through the venture and apparently it was futile to stop to reevaluate its underlying assumptions. The project staff instead left its mark on its so-called beneficiaries in unexpectedly ruthless ways. On the morning of what was to be my third visit to the garbage dump, a nervous Sandro called me to cancel. “It’s best not to go today. I’m not going to go.” Then, after a moment’s hesitation: “Uh, well, if I do go, it’ll only be to take care of the scandal that’s cropped up.” Earlier that morning, a strange truck had rolled into the neighborhood, carrying orphanage workers charged with the duty of rounding up the children. Although the residents managed to resist the incursion, they linked the event to the exposé that had aired after the NGO workers had escorted a popular news program host to the neighborhood to gather footage. This was not the first time the NGO had sparked the community’s distrust: previously, residents had accused the organization of pocketing an alleged monetary donation from the British pop star who Elsa and Sandro had toured around during a charity visit to Peru.¹⁶

Uncomfortable with such ethical breaches, I decided to cut ties with the NGO. I had already been feeling uneasy with the staff’s efforts to pressure me in my research to show how bad child labor was. On my first long, crowded bus ride from the NGO office to the garbage dump, Sandro had instructed me on how to interpret the testimonies of the kids to whom he was going to introduce me. “At first, they’ll tell you that they work to help their mother and that this makes them feel good. But then, if you push a little

¹⁶ The news host had most likely paid the NGO staff in exchange for access to the neighborhood.

harder, they'll tell you how horrible their first moment working was." Here it was clear enough how NGOs could (or at least wanted to) function as ideological "mouthpieces" (Latour 1987: 71) in processes of knowledge formation.

Before disassociating with the NGO, I met with the director of the Peruvian Network for a Future without Child Labor¹⁷. A close friend of Elsa's, Walter Alarcón was the veritable leader of the MANTHOC defamation campaign. After having collaborated with Cussianovich and the NATs years ago, the sociologist radically altered his position and founded the network. The network, however, seemed more like a one-man show run out of a home office¹⁸—ironic given Alarcón's accusation that Cussianovich uses children to promote his own ideological agenda and fill his pockets. Alarcón related child labor to what he called the "cultural problem of the urban poor." But his work, a kind of rehash of Oscar Lewis's "culture of poverty" thesis, was not well-argued (Lewis 1975; 1998). This sort of thinking was nonetheless strong enough to point the critical finger away from itself and towards MANTHOC and its network. Crucially, Alarcón, like the NGO, critiqued the Peruvian state for ignoring the causes of poverty, yet ultimately adopted the state's reproductive rhetoric by framing child labor as a cause, rather an effect, of poverty. One of Peru's most recent examples of child welfare policy, The National Plan of Action for Childhood and Adolescence 2002-2010¹⁹, prioritizes the need to "prevent and break the reproduction cycle of poverty."²⁰ This is the same

¹⁷ *Red Peruana para un Futuro sin Trabajo Infantil.*

¹⁸ Furthermore, the Network suggests a connection between the ways that members of the professional middle-class and informal laborers survive by systematically creating their own income-generating activities. The difference, of course, is that the former do this at the expense of the latter, with the development industry's institutional legitimation.

¹⁹ *Plan Nacional de Acción por la Infancia y la Adolescencia 2002-2010.*

²⁰ Like with the Moynihan Report, there is an acknowledgement of structural causes, but the "solution" always involves blaming the victim.

reproductive logic that motivated the attempted garbage dump roundup and that materializes in legal documents from the Code for Children and Adolescents to the Vagrancy Law. This discourse is not limited to Peru, but rather transnational in scope; indeed the UN's 1989 CRC and the 1990 World Summit for Children are explicitly named the as the foundation for Peruvian child welfare policy,

I also encountered more flexible positions even among groups leaning towards an eradicationist stance. One NGO director openly admitted that "since eradication is utopian and not based on knowledge of reality, we care more about giving kids an alternative work space." Still, she would squeeze as many funds as possible out of the ILO to run her project. The staff of another NGO also emphasized the importance of alternative labor training (as well as "personal development" workshops) for domestic workers. Despite situating the project in terms of UN classifications and referring to it as "the ILO project," the staff members seemed to share many of MANTHOC's priorities. In this way, the ILO goal to which the project was accountable – that of eliminating "the worst forms" of child labor – was not incompatible with MANTHOC's own goals, suggesting that the anti-child labor discourse is largely performative. Whether each organization's respective use of UN discourse was grounded in a genuine commitment to children's wellbeing or whether it reflected the desire of middle-class professionals to fill their pockets, the discourse produces real and symbolic effects by intervening into the lives of already vulnerable subjects and by interpellating individuals and institutions into a position of defense within a false binary.

In an era in which NGOs are the primary vector through which the development industry exercises power, state welfare institutions continue to work as a powerful vehicle for deploying the paradoxical politics of child labor. With a reputation for

abusive forms of discipline, INABIF (the National Family Welfare Institute²¹) revamped its strategy in the 1990s. Departing from a policy of containment, INABIF was now going to work on the street, with the goal of offering children “an alternative in their own space, without acting violently towards them, without violating their rights, without institutionalizing them, but rather *respecting them, protecting them, and promoting their development*” (INABIF pamphlet, emphasis in original). Similarly, the formation of COLIBRI, a progressive police organization and founding member of MNNATSOP, represented a move away from the round-up tradition and towards a “street educator” model. The program was best known for providing special vests to children who work in busy venues, such as the Central Market, such that they feel identified with an organization, protected by the police, and legitimized before the public.²²

Like the hard-line eradicator stance, however, both INABIF and COLIBRI’s newfound approaches to disciplining and policing reflected the impossibility of truly reconciling structural analysis and ideologies of individual responsibility. COLIBRI’s most vocal and committed officer, a counterinsurgency fighter-turned-sociologist, surprised me by pointing the finger at “neoliberalism” for forcing parents to send their children to work, and by critiquing Vagrancy Laws and different municipal programs for sanctioning “*limpieza social*” (social cleansing). Yet when he went on to state that children who work in exploitative conditions should be institutionalized rather than victimized by bad parenting, he indicated not only a dead-end response to the question

²¹ *Programa Integral Nacional para el Bienestar Familiar.*

²²When I first went to acquaint myself with COLIBRI, internal protocol required me to go through the officer who presided over the precinct. In contrast to the COLIBRI director, he boasted of his experience fighting the Shining Path terrorists. The organization’s seemingly progressive approach did not prevent him from showing off his guns and treating his female colleagues with utter misogyny. Indeed this revealed stagnancy in the underlying structures of State power.

of exploitation (one that also surfaced in my conversations with MANTHOC members), but also an incoherence in his attribution of blame.

INABIF, in an attempt to replace repression with rehabilitation, invoked the ambiguous “culture of poverty” in its new approach to child welfare. “The culture of poverty,” a publication states, “is a grave attack against life, health, and dignity, its most salient manifestations being terrorism, corruption, narcotrafficking, epidemics, and the loss of life’s pleasures” (INABIF pamphlet). In response, the institution “assumes the challenge of constructing an alternative to the situation of the minor, by establishing a *politics of human development* in which the child symbolizes the reclaiming of values, of family and national unity, in order to confront the profound crisis in which we live. This is the way to *construct a new Peru*” (INABIF pamphlet, emphasis in original). In adopting a new tactic, the institution nevertheless continues to assume a particular relationship between family and nation—one in which the idea of unity conceals racist and classist projects. This suggests a limit to the increasingly flexible approach to child labor.

* * *

It should be clear that MANTHOC has come to represent one extreme in a grossly reductive, if symbolically significant, national debate about the value of child labor. Yet the moral binary through which child labor is framed, I contend, dehistoricizes MANTHOC’s contributions to the politics of childhood. Charting MANTHOC’s development prior to the UNCRC and Peru’s NGO boom draws attention to the ways that the movement, like other institutions, has adapted to changing discourses about childhood, labor, and development. The first organization of its kind in Latin America, MANTHOC emerged in 1976 when workers struggling against a military government that failed to deliver its revolutionary promise joined forces with a group of justice-seeking philosophers and theologians. MANTHOC was an outgrowth of the JOC

(Young Christian Workers²³), an “organization of youth without stable employment” that formed in response to the labor reforms of a State that repressed popular protest (JOC website).

Arising as the industrial model was beginning to fail yet prior to the era of mass entrepreneurship, MANTHOC, from its inception, approached “laborer” as a complex identification, encompassing not only people engaged in the productive activities traditionally recognized as work, but also children and adolescents who actively negotiated the hardships brought on by their parents’ labor struggles.²⁴ The movement, in other words, emerged neither as an attempt to “protect” children nor as a “child branch” of an adult or youth organization, but rather as an autonomous entity directed by children and adolescents in collaboration with adults who understood them as “people who have their own way of understanding their lives and their aspirations” (Cussianovich 2003: 38). Indeed, many of MANTHOC’s current collaborators were among the movement’s child and adolescent founders.

During its initial decade, MANTHOC focused on expanding its reach throughout Peru. It formed neighborhood-based groups and influenced the development of liberation theology—particular challenges as the State and the Shining Path attacked social movements from both sides. Following the 1979 International Year of the Child, MANTHOC slowly articulated itself within a transnational framework, participating in several international conferences and receiving funds from Rädde Barnen, a Swedish movement that later became Save the Children-Sweden.²⁵ Yet it was the signing of the

²³ *Jóvenes Obreros Cristianos*.

²⁴ Hence the long-debated decision to include the “H” (for *hijos*, or sons and daughters) in the movement’s name.

²⁵ To this day, Save the Children-Sweden has distinctly different politics from its US counterpart.

UNCRC in 1989 that institutionalized a new transnational politics of the child fundamentally at odds with MANTHOC's vision. Thus, for example, MANTHOC's opposition to events such as ILO's Geneva-based Global March against Child Labor was interpreted as reactionary and anti-human rights rather than a critique of the UN's monolithic approach to children's rights. The movement was forced increasingly to position itself in relation to the wider semantic universe upon which the development industry draws. For example, in a close reading of the UNCRC, Cussianovich contrasts MANTHOC's focus on dignity with the UNCRC's use of the term "decent." Whereas dignity references "a more profound reality that affects the interiority, the identity, the sensibility, the vocation of the human being," he argues, decency refers to "external conditions that define what is socially acceptable" (Cussianovich 2008: 13).²⁶

Even with its critical stance, MANTHOC strategically appropriates and gives new meanings to terms central to development discourse. Upon beginning my fieldwork in 2006, I was surprised to see that the movement had added the development keyword "participation" to its founding pillar of "*protagonismo*," creating the concept, "*participación protagónica*." Similarly, as my fieldwork progressed, I noticed that a new term, "*incidencia*" (loosely translated as "advocacy," or even "lobbying"), began to pervade NGO literature and then make its way into MANTHOC's rhetoric. A British friend who had been working for a transnational agency in Peru for several years explained that *incidencia* refers to the process by which an institution works to insert a particular social or political issue into the public, or governmental, agenda.

²⁶ Also, as scholars have shown, the notion of decency has particularly powerful meanings in Peru, linked to classist, racist, and sexist nation-building projects (de la Cadena 2000; Burns 2002).

During an August 2008 meeting with a few of MANTHOC's adult and adolescent higher-ups, I inquired about the adoption of such terminology. Lourdes, the national collaborator, offered the following explanation:

The period in which you first came was a moment of intense debate because Peru was signing the [UN] Conventions and we [at MANTHOC] didn't want the state to sign them, but they did... The kids had fought so hard, so when they went to Congress [and learned of the ratification], it was very sad. The only response was to keep up the fight, but looking for new strategies, including *incidencia*.

"So is MANTHOC becoming an NGO?" I provocatively asked. "No," she replied. "The NATs have not adopted *incidencia* because it's trendy.... Rather, they've learned that the ILO has the power, and that the ILO and other international organizations influence the State." So the NATs began to demand participation in public spaces. "*Incidencia* was a strategy." Returning to my question about MANTHOC's potential NGOization, she insisted that "with NGOs, it's not the people that make direct contact with the state. MANTHOC is different." In other words, with MANTHOC, there is no intermediary. Cristina, the national delegate at the meeting, agreed and noted that *incidencia* creates a space for NATs to identify new issues. For example, she said, "we've started to pay attention to the reform of the Code for Children and Adolescents. As a result, we've formed a Commission in which we compare the Peruvian Code with that of other countries. So we've been calling on our international contacts to help us understand how the authorities in different places conceive of childhood and adolescence."

After discussing *incidencia's* strategic importance, Lourdes acknowledged that the solicitation of NATs' opinions in spaces such as the *Defensoría del Pueblo*, the *Presupuestos Participativos*, and *Comisiones de Vigilancia* always entailed the risk of tokenism. Cristina added that while so many of the NATs' efforts seemed futile in the face of an unaccountable state and a neoliberal economy, MANTHOC had provided her

with a invaluable critique of power that influenced her engagements with government entities and her everyday social relations.

* * *

Incidencia exemplifies how MANTHOC facilitates the process through which marginalized children acquire the practical and conceptual tools to become critical citizens. MANTHOC's motto that children are "the present and not the future" rebuts the universally-circulated notion that children are pre-citizens and passive sites of ideological struggle not yet capable of acting reflexively in the world. Yet, I began to wonder, if MANTHOC provides an institutional apparatus that empowers children to articulate themselves publicly as agents of change, how does it prepare NATs to confront forms of marginalization that would eventually face them as working adults? When NATs turned eighteen, not only did the nature of their identification within MANTHOC change, but so too did their legal status as workers and citizens.²⁷ Once work became their ethical responsibility and not something they struggled to claim as a right, they found themselves negotiating a whole new system of social exclusion.

My fieldwork and continued relationships with NATs confirmed my initial impression, from formal events, that the movement produces thoughtful, articulate, and self-reflexive individuals with a keen sense of the relationship between their own subjectivities and structural injustice. "Through MANTHOC you learn your own reality," Cristina succinctly stated, reflecting on how the movement has given her a discourse through which to understand her personal experiences of struggle. As I developed a friendship with Cristina, I also gained a sense of how her participation in the movement influenced her everyday life and understanding of the world more

²⁷ Although, if not officially, Peru continues to have a graduated citizenship system that maps directly onto race, social class, and place of origin.

generally. Just as I spent time at her mother's market stall and at their family home, Cristina came to my apartment about once a month, occasionally with family members. Her visits provided her both a respite from her stressful routine and a space for reflection.

Early on in my fieldwork, as I accompanied her to buy gifts for her MANTHOC-related trip to Italy in the markets of downtown Lima, Cristina criticized the Peruvian public education system for not teaching about Shining Path; she had learned about the historically significant and brutal insurgency through a MANTHOC seminar and through her parents, who had given birth to her in a war-torn town in the Andes. On another occasion, she burst through my door bubbling with amazement after having attended an eight thousand-person march organized by women from neighborhoods like hers to protest the high cost of living. It was "their slogans that impacted me," she explained. "When the police was forcing us out, the women kept chanting, 'the streets belong to the people, they don't belong to the government!' They said that [President] García's government has had more negative than beneficial effects on the population." Accustomed to participating in NAT-organized marches and speaking before government officials, Cristina was particularly impressed on this day by the form in which the women voiced their discontent towards the police and government, and by their genuine inclusion of children. What boggled her mind was that these outspoken women were, in so many ways, "like my own mother."

The march, Cristina noted, marked a turning point in her notion of the relationship between political consciousness, anti-poverty activism, and the politics of her own family. She linked this to the strong impact of "participation" on her life. "Not passive participation, but rather participation with energy, with *protagonismo*," she explained. Participation had given her both a lens through which to notice power

hierarchies at home and school and even in romantic relationships among adolescents, and the impetus to voice her opinion in these spaces. The “long process” of assuming *protagonismo*, she claimed, involved learning to “value all the things that MANTHOC did, learning its history.” In this way, MANTHOC provided NATs with a clear institutional identity in conjunction with a language and set of spaces through which to participate in social change. As Cristina observed, it produced subjects who understood their participatory roles as encompassing but also exceeding their identities as working children.

If the concept of participation animated her actions in the public sphere, it also gave Cristina an analytic through which to assess and articulate the frustrating power dynamics within her household. “Like with all Peruvian families,” she responded when I asked what they argued about, “it’s always about economic problems.” Cristina often complained that her father was the main aggravator of this situation. An ex-alcoholic born-again Christian who donates the little money he occasionally earned to the church, Héctor had lost credibility in his household. His daughters and wife mocked his “senseless” references to God and attributed his refusal to labor in what he considered “humiliating *cachuelos*” (day labor) to the emasculating experience of migrating from a place where his family once owned land to a world of fleeting and unstable labor. He was pathetic and lost, rather than ill-meaning. But, still, he wielded power in burdensome and specifically masculine ways. Not only did he continue acting like a harsh disciplinarian at home, but his negligent contributions to the household left Teresa, his wife, having to work day in and day out at her market stand at the base of the hill where they lived. Only sometimes would Héctor accompany her as she woke up at dawn, walked down the winding hill, and took the crowded bus to the chaotic

distribution center where trucks from the highlands dropped off fresh produce for vendors to lug in heavy sacks to their market stalls.

The family's dire economic situation became clear to me when Teresa, Cristina's mother, worked up until the moment her water broke in 2007 and then returned to her stall the next day, newborn baby in sling. The family immediately embraced its newest member, but the unexpected arrival of a fifth child (resulting from the failure of the birth control method that had proven effective for fifteen years) also represented an emotional and economic burden. A mere month later, just before Cristina returned from Italy, the Gómez Quispes's oldest son "went crazy" after overdosing on the "all-natural vitamins" he was selling for a pyramid scheme company that promised him a healthy life and entrepreneurial success.²⁸ In addition to trying to comprehend the diagnosis of schizophrenia, a disease they had never heard of, and becoming perpetually worried about José's wellbeing, the family had to contend with the doctors' bills and the prospect of paying for his life-long supply of medication and occasional hospitalizations.

Despite these obstacles, Cristina managed to carry out her tenure as MANTHOC national delegate and graduate from high school during my fieldwork. Although her position within the movement required that she spend a significant amount of time at the MANTHOC office, located forty-five minutes by bus from her home, she managed to make time for her family, school, and even an occasional boyfriend. Her oldest sister had moved to Cusco, where she was studying and working for her boyfriend's family's tourism business, but Marisa, Cristina's younger sister, lessened Teresa's burden by assuming childcare responsibilities before and after school. Cristina doubled up on work after graduating from high school in order to pay for university entrance exam classes.

²⁸ Such companies, including Herbalife, were increasingly entering the economy and the everyday consciousness of Limans during my fieldwork. For an anthropological study on the phenomenon, see Riveros 2008.

In addition to her remunerated labor for MANTHOC (which included occasional traveling and constant meetings) and the intellectual labor of preparing for the entrance exam, she began waking up at 4 o'clock every morning to work a "man's job" as a fruit hauler at the distribution center where her mother bought vegetables.

Cristina's co-delegate was Jesús, an active member of MANTHOC's adolescent group in southern Lima's Villa El Salvador.²⁹ He too was quick to note MANTHOC's effect on his own subjectivity in relation to his family and broader social network. Known for his high-spirited nature and penchant for leading *dinámicas*, Jesús was undoubtedly the most popular NAT. His youthful exuberance sharply contrasted with his timid yet loving mother's physical and spiritual exhaustion. Although her work as an orange juice seller suggested that his family continued to struggle economically, I was surprised to learn just how trying life had been for this kind and optimistic teenager. Having left Cusco's jungle region in search of better opportunities when he was a child, Jesús, his mother, and his two younger siblings took shelter in the church across from the MANTHOC locale in exchange for maintaining the premises. In addition to helping his mother with the juice cart, Jesús started selling candy and cigarettes to passersby. Work was something that seemed natural to him, he explained. "I've worked since I was seven years old, never in my life have I stopped working."

One day, a European woman standing outside the chapel flagged him down for a cigarette. Peeking inside, he noticed a celebration that seemed to be run by children. The smoker, a MANTHOC volunteer, engaged him in conversation and encouraged him to participate. So began Jesús's relationship with the organization that would make him

²⁹ Villa El Salvador was a shantytown when highland migrants first squatted there in the 1970s. Through grassroots organizing, it has become an urban center of its own. A major battleground for the Shining Path in the 1980s and early 1990s, Villa El Salvador has received a great deal of international attention from scholars, activists, and church groups (Burt 1998).

into an activist. Ironically, the neighborhood church was also the testing ground for Jesús's *protagonismo* in issues unrelated to MANTHOC. During their residency in the room at the back of the chapel, the church authorities always treated his family with contempt, but after an unfounded accusation of theft, Jesús determined that they could not go on living there. Preserving their dignity, he reasoned, was worth the financial sacrifice of renting a room elsewhere. He credited MANTHOC for giving him the ability to recognize that his mother was being mistreated. His gradual emergence as a leader, he noted, contributed to his high regard within the movement and improved the way his family was treated in the neighborhood. "Walking around the streets, people greet me like they respect me. I think they see me as someone who is in solidarity."

Jesús, like Cristina, grappled with his mother's daily experiences of injustice. But both delegates observed that the critical lens provided by MANTHOC had enabled them to respond in productive ways to their mothers' internalized oppression. Jesús reflected:

My mother is a very humble woman. Because she didn't complete high school, she's not very good with words and doesn't have much of a vocabulary, so people take advantage of that. But I think they listen to me since they know I participate in MANTHOC, they realize that it's not just anyone that's talking to them. For example, sometimes they see me talking in public and then they treat me with respect.... I felt awful about the way the priests at the church treated my mom.... But now my mom feels more comfortable. I tell her that she has rights, that no one can mistreat her.... The situation has gotten better.

Jesús suggested that his identification with MANTHOC conferred him with a legitimacy that translated into greater public respect for his family. This institutional stamp of approval, combined with the perspective on the world with which the movement imbued them, empowered Jesús and Cristina to advocate for the people closest to them – most importantly, their mothers. Complicating "culture of poverty" arguments and other mechanistic understandings of intergenerational social reproduction, this illustrates how ideological reproduction is institutional while also manifesting itself through all kinds of personal bonds.

My extensive fieldwork in two of MANTHOC's Lima bases enabled me to see that the trust and other forms of emotional ties that emerged between NATs were often more important than mastering the movement's discourse or complying with its aims. Week after week, the delegate and collaborator pleaded with the young constituents of one of the groups I shadowed to sit still, stop harassing one another, and wait their turn to speak. Regardless of their persistent difficulty adhering to the meeting's formal structure, it was the NATs' clear understanding of the group as a space of belonging that motivated their involvement. In the exclusively adolescent group, a major issue was floundering attendance, yet the constituents nevertheless demonstrated a deep sense of group loyalty. This solidarity is precisely what the group members identified as their key motivator during a weekend workshop that the collaborator and I organized.

* * *

Despite MANTHOC'S strength as an institution, groups could also unravel. And, although many members continued participating for a period of time after they turned eighteen, adolescent NATs experienced the double-loss at that moment – of legal childhood status and of institutional identification – as a crisis. During one of our first encounters, fifteen-year-old Fanny, not yet a national delegate, was already imagining the day that she would no longer be able to be a NAT as “really sad.” A teenager that I met during a national assembly described the rupture as “cutting the umbilical cord,” recalling Cristina's description of neighborhood-based groups as “giving life” to the movement. If NATs tended to frame their coming-of-age hardships in terms of their relationship to MANTHOC, they also faced the same dilemmas that all high school graduates without financial resources encounter upon entering a society in which money, not merit, buys higher education and rewarding jobs. Yet given that NATs had been taught to approach social inequalities in ways not generally expected of children

and adolescents, it seemed that they were in a unique position from which to articulate their concerns into an institutional strategy. Alvaro, the group's energetic and encouraging collaborator, tried to steer the group in this direction, yet the organization's reproductive logic emerged as more powerful than the imperative to address internal crises.

During one of the early 2008 meetings devoted to creating the group's Annual Plan, the members identified the recruitment of new members as a principle aim, specifically naming neighborhood kids who "*vagar*," or hang out on the streets without purpose.³⁰ This implied not only that it was somehow easier for the NATs to externalize their own struggles, but also that they felt a moral authority over other kids their age.³¹ An integral part of the group and, by this point, something of a co-collaborator, I asked why they were so focused on intervening upon others when they clearly had their own concerns. After some discussion, they modified the principle aim: "to work with the municipality to help us get jobs." When I asked what kinds of jobs, they responded, "in factories or wherever." After all their MANTHOC-inspired class-consciousness, what they wanted was for the state to guarantee them the same kinds of underpaid jobs that their parents worked!³² It made sense; after all, what other options did they have?

³⁰ The term "*vagar*" comes from the same roots as vagabond. Translated as "to wander" or "to roam," it is commonly used in Peru to describe people who are lazy and lack initiative.

³¹ The question of moral superiority was a common subtext in my discussions with NATs. During a surprisingly intense one-on-one conversation, Winston, one of the least nerdy adolescents, told me that his school friends had been perplexed when they learned of his participation in MANTHOC. "That's for *saitos*," they exclaimed, using the diminutive form of a term that refers to people with a healthy lifestyle. Separately, Cristina and Federico, another NAT from Villa El Salvador, explicitly assessed their peers' attraction to the Emo subculture as a way of confronting the transition to adulthood in a world in which they will never belong.

³² Indeed, the NATs seemed to represent a Peruvian version of Paul Willis's classic study on how "working class kids get working class jobs" (Willis 1977).

By examining the contradictions that emerge as activist-identified children become marginalized adults, I complicate the critique that MANTHOC's well-cultivated discourse excludes the majority of voiceless Peruvian child laborers—a claim that, while gesturing towards important questions of representation, risks delegitimizing NATs' own life struggles. Reframing Paul Willis's question about the challenging process of social change in a world that reproduces itself from generation-to-generation along lines of class, we can see the possibilities and limits of NAT-style activism in a time and space of what historian Michael Denning calls "wageless life" (Denning 2010). As I have emphasized, MANTHOC is a space of empowerment, a disciplinary institution, and a site of controversy that exists in tension with other forces of subjectivization. If it promotes *protagonismo*, the movement cannot protect NATs from the painful struggles of transitioning to adulthood. MANTHOC thus renders paradoxical effects as it produces agential subjects who ultimately face the same existential dilemmas confronted by Peru's wageless masses.

Regardless of their unified discourse around MANTHOC, NAT leaders in ATSOM and beyond dealt with the crisis of turning eighteen in divergent ways. Cristina made an abrupt break. Being a delegate was the best thing that had ever happened to her, but the commute, the meetings, and the public actions had sucked away all her time, making her feel that she was neglecting her parents and siblings. When her tenure came to an end, her two priorities were to spend more time at home and to work hard to save up for the university entrance exam. Her goal, a difficult one, was to gain entrance to the San Marcos University.

By contrast, Jesús had his hopes set on establishing a career path by studying at a technical institute in Villa El Salvador. After failing to make the mark on the entrance exam, he remained positive: "After all, I know what I'm made of. I know what I have to

offer.” So he decided that the best way to continue his studies was to take a break and work first to save some money. Finding a non-exploitative job, however, turned out to be impossible. Hired first as a book vendor by a man who claimed to work with reputable supermarket chains, Jesús was surprised to find himself among the ranks of street vendors. “It was not the work I had been hired for,” he asserted. He had to be on his feet eleven hours a day, endure the harrassment of the police, pay for his bus fare when the boss ordered him to change locations, and, on top of this, was not paid according to the agreement. Jesús quit and volunteered at MANTHOC while trying to figure out a way to avoid the emotional and practical strain of relocating to Cusco. It pained him to think about rupturing his ties to the organization. “What’s going to happen to the group now that everyone’s doing other things?” he worried. “I wish I could just stay in Lima and continue working with MANTHOC.” Relinquishing his leadership role within the movement was indeed a serious challenge to his identity.

A seemingly promising opportunity presented itself when a MANTHOC peer informed Jesús that the Chilean department store chain where he worked as a clothing-folder was hiring. Despite Alvaro’s jokes about “selling out,” Jesús was pleased to receive a callback inviting him to “join the company team” shortly after submitting his resume. In the end, the job made the book-vending stint look like a dignified option. From the contract-signing experience to the working conditions and the payment process, the experience was wrought with the worst forms of deception and irregularities. I had never seen the otherwise easy-going Jesús as worked up, serious, and outraged as he was when he recounted the experience, detail by detail. Worried about the repercussions of complaining, he stayed silent. When I asked if he thought it would be helpful to talk to a lawyer, perhaps the one who had been advising the NATs on the modifications to the Code for Children and Adolescents, he shrugged and

responded, “But I signed the contract with my name.” I thought back to the many conversations I had had with my non-MANTHOC research interlocutors about why they preferred working on the street to wage labor and other forms of so-called formal employment. Indeed, three years later, Peruvian Ripley workers would go on strike to protest their low wages and generally exploitative conditions (La Mula 8/6/11; Peru21 12/16/12; Habitación 8/7/11).

Federico, whom I had met as a fourteen-year-old MANTHOC participant in 2004, graduated from high school at the age of sixteen and continues to agonize over what to do with his life. Given our long-standing relationship, I was immediately welcomed into his family’s home when I arrived in Peru to begin my fieldwork. I spent many days and evenings with the eight inhabitants of the sparsely furnished two-bedroom house that his parents had converted from a cardboard squat to a brick structure over the course of their thirty years in Lima. The eighth of ten children, Federico was the sixth to graduate from high school.

Shortly after my fieldwork began, Federico asked me to be his high school graduation godmother.³³ Spending so much time with him during the period surrounding this momentous event provided me a window onto the world of impossibility into which such a rite-of-passage initiated him. Some of his friends went on to study technical careers, but the majority, like his older siblings, entered the unskilled labor force as mototaxi drivers, attendants at internet *cabinas*, or workers in various informal businesses. Others joined gangs or developed drug habits. Despite his Nike knock-offs from the neighborhood market that enabled him to pass as a

³³ Traditionally, godparentage is most significant for baptism, but the role extends to different rites-of-passage including weddings, *quinceañeros*, and graduations. While being a godparent always involves both moral guidance and economic responsibility, in some cases it seems to primarily imply sponsorship. For example, at Federico’s class-wide graduation ceremony, not only did each graduate have his or her own godparent(s), but there was also a “cake godparent,” the person who provided the ceremonial cake.

reguetonero,³⁴ Federico was strikingly non-judgmental, making him welcome in every group, from the hyper-masculine *baristas*³⁵ to the sexually deviant Emos and gender-bending *travestis*.³⁶ Sensitive, he concerned himself with his friends' self-destructive mechanisms for coping with violent family situations. He was also very open with me about how profoundly he worried about himself. Despite being a good kid with a high school diploma, a paralyzing sense of fear trapped him in a state of liminality that offered no promise of transition into anything beyond.

I feel traumatized. I don't know what's wrong with me, all my ideas, I don't know how to say them, because I feel fear, I'm afraid. I mean, I'm capable of doing so many things, I know a lot of things, but I don't know how to say them. Like, publicly, I can't. I just can't. I can't *ejecutar* (execute, act, perform, or do something). I want to do something but I can't. I want to *ejecutar*, but I can't. I don't know, something inside of me doesn't allow me to do it. I'm afraid. I'm, like, traumatized. I can't just do something. I don't know why. Something inside of me blocks me. Something says to me, "no, don't do it."

Beyond a doubt, Federico understood his "*no poder*" as a symptom of the childhood "traumas" he had suffered at the hands of his abusive father. But at least Severino's violence had not reproduced itself in him, he reasoned. "I think all my brothers inherited my father's craziness." What about you? I asked, recalling my younger godson Paco's expressions of "*no poder*" in the context of his inability to articulate his own relationship to violence. "I don't like to fight. That's the one good thing I have. I don't like punches. I don't like what I've had to live through." His self-reflexive critique of violence, though, was not enough to provide Federico with the sense that he was capable of acting meaningfully in the world. Even if he knew that his

³⁴ *Reguetonero* refers to someone who listens to *reguetón* music and dresses correspondingly. The term connotes a social identity similar to youth hip-hop culture in the United States.

³⁵ *Barras*, or *barras bravas*, are gangs organized around loyalty to soccer teams.

³⁶ Despite the traditional gender roles that characterized neighborhoods like Federico's, there were a significant number of *travestis*, or cross-dressing men, included in neighborhood activities. Typically they played volleyball with the girls and worked in hair salons.

“traumas” emerged from an external force, he assumed individual responsibility for his inability to “*ejecutar*.” Something “inside” blocked him from “being able.” Fear made him impotent.

Even if Federico could gain some tools to confront his debilitating anxieties, his position within society offered him little in the way of non-exploitative future options. Like with other kids to whom I was close, I had to confront my own inability to help in a substantial way. Landing Federico occasional painting jobs with my friends provided some immediate relief but was only a band-aid. How could I suggest that he apply for employment at the department store chain where Jesús, fully versed in labor rights, had been exploited? As for higher education, Federico was a fine student, but not exceptional enough to get into a decent university. Every so often, his family seemed intent on figuring out a way for him to study graphic design in a technical institute, but such plans were always thwarted by a combination of family crisis (usually an illness) and personal feelings of fear. Meanwhile, Federico continued helping his mother with her home-based bodega and rotisserie chicken business, where competition was fiercer than ever.

A year-and-a-half after I had returned to the United States, Federico e-mailed me to inform me that he had landed a night job as a municipal janitor. During my visit a few months later, we met up before his shift began to eat *anticuchos*, a tradition of ours. He reflected:

It’s strange but it’s not the labor itself that I mind, picking up all the garbage and making sure the lawns look nice. I mean, it’s weird to be so alone in a desolate space, but honestly I just get in a zone. It gives me the chance to think about things. But what’s so weird is never seeing the daylight. I come home just when the sun’s coming out and sleep all day, and then get up for work when it’s starting to get dark. It’s a big lifestyle change not hanging out with my friends anymore. Can you imagine? I never see them! I used to spend all my time with them! But you know what, Leigh? I can’t be like that forever. I need to move on. Oh, and you just can’t imagine what it was like that first time they paid me and I

could help my mom! I gave her my entire check. I know I should buy myself some shoes, but it just felt so good to be able to help her pay for the electricity!

It was impossible not to share his pride, but I wondered how long the job would last, or if Federico would ever work his way up to a living wage, or when he would enjoy the daylight again.

The particular forms of emotional and financial stress with which Jesús, Cristina, and Federico grappled as they transitioned out of childhood reflect individual differences but also common patterns that suggest an underlying relationship between social belonging and the organization of adult labor in contemporary Peru. All three ex-NATs challenged the idea of a direct trajectory from high school education to higher education, and then to career-oriented work. More significantly, their experiences insinuated that what MANTHOC might call dignified adult work is hard to come by even for Peruvians with the conceptual tools – or consciousness – to demand justice in an organized manner. As they become adults, I suggest, the limit to the ability of people like Jesús, Cristina, and Federico to exercise the agency they have always claimed is linked to a disjuncture between the impossibility of combating structural injustice in a country whose every scale is marked by corruption and informality, and the dreams of progress that rest on their individual ability to achieve a social position superior to that of their parents. Jesús, Cristina, and Federico, I have shown, understood their subjectivities in relation to their parents while imagining themselves as possessing a consciousness that set them apart from their elders. Yet as the NATs transitioned into legal adulthood, their commitment to justice increasingly ran up against the uncomfortable demands that an unjust system makes of them, as marginalized individuals. If NATs class-consciousness has always been linked to their condition as

children, what will happen to their subjectivities as they increasingly enter the mass of wageless adult laborers?³⁷

* * *

In a recent article, labor historian Michael Denning invokes the “child in the streets” in contrast to the more popularly-cited “child in the sweatshop” to examine the growing consensus among contemporary scholars that “understandings built upon wage labor cannot... account for the reality lived by the most numerous and wretched of the world’s population: those without wages, those indeed without even the hope of wages” (Denning 2010: 79). Through a genealogy of unemployment and informality, he suggests that formal employment is a historical construction linked to specific state politics. The notion that formal wage labor is the norm, he argues, masks wageless labor as something temporary, transitional, or even pathological, rather than “the main mode of existence” (86), particularly in the third world. Citing development economist Keith Hart’s pioneering effort, in the early 1970s, to question the assumption that urban underemployment and unemployment were inherently problematic, Denning urges a more complex analysis of the vast and diverse world of “self-employment” (93). He uses the example of “informal” workers’ organizations to urge a “map[ping] of their world less by its relation to a formal state-regulated economy than by its workplaces, particularly the street and the home.”³⁸

Stopping short of an ethnographic analysis, Denning insists that de-pathologizing so-called informal labor requires understanding that “the fetishism of the

³⁷ Marx, of course, assumed an adult laboring subject.

³⁸ Denning concludes by urging a rejection of the trend towards seeing labor under capitalism as “precarious” (Denning 2010: 95) or as producing “human waste” (96). Instead, he posits, we must reengage Marx’s concepts of “relative surplus population” and “the virtual pauper” (96), which approach labor from the perspectives of capital accumulation and living labor (97).

wage may well be the source of capitalist ideologies of freedom and equality, but the employment contract is not the founding moment. For capitalism begins not with the offer of work, but with the imperative to earn a living” (80). Indeed, Peru is characterized by the history of rural-to-urban migration that Denning discusses for the third world, resulting in slum-dwellers who produce their own work. My ethnography tries to capture some of the nuances of wageless labor towards which Denning gestures in his call to “decenter wage labor in our conception of life under capitalism” (80). Yet even if wage labor as “normal” indeed corresponds only to a brief moment in Peruvian history and to a small portion of the contemporary population, my research subjects nevertheless contended with the stigmas associated with informal labor (whether street- or home-based) and aspired, at some level, to achieve something beyond wageless life.

Formal labor is a classed, raced and gendered concept in Peru insofar as it is something that the masses have never been able to access or benefit from in a sustained way. It is important also to recognize, however, that even Peru’s so-called formal economy (that which is subject to state regulation) is constituted by irregularities and exploitation—ideas commonly invoked in discussions about informal street-based labor.³⁹ The constant corruption scandals exposed by the media speak to this reality, as do my research subjects’ experiences in the “official” labor market. If Jesús’s book-vending job turned out to be a scam on the part of a boss who falsely claimed ties to the formal economy (“supermarket chains”), his work for the transnational department store demonstrates how even the most seemingly legitimate businesses survive by exploiting labor. Likewise, while Cristina’s “formal” job at the *panetón* factory during Christmas season was crucial to her ability to pay for her studies, it took her over a

³⁹ Whereas words like theft and trickery are used to refer to the poor, terms like corruption are generally used when discussing the government and the corporate sector. Increasingly, however, civil society groups use the term “robbery” to refer to corrupt politicians.

month to receive her salary; working “informally” as a housekeeper, however, offered immediate pay. Even Federico’s maintenance job for a state entity offered no promise of stability beyond his month-to-month contract, nor did it come with the sorts of benefits associated with formal wage labor.

The binary between informal and formal labor normalizes so-called formal labor at the expense of more common modes of labor, overlooking not only workers’ complex experiences, but also the structural determinants of these experiences. NATs’ demand for recognition poses a challenge to this classificatory system and the specific place that children and adolescents are imagined to occupy within it. Yet the ways that NATs differentiated between themselves and other working children, such as those with whom I worked at the intersection, revealed the limits of such resistance. Instead of adopting the formal/informal discourse, MANTHOC members employed an organized/non-organized dichotomy to legitimize their own identities as workers and to mark other working children as in need of consciousness-raising or even salvation.

The idea of MANTHOC’s adolescent group to recruit “*vagos*” spoke to a conceptualization of difference that I consistently observed among NATs. Before even beginning my research, I had been intrigued by the use of the word “*evangelizar*” (to evangelize) in the organization’s pamphlets. I learned what this meant during my first summer of pre-dissertation fieldwork, when a group of NATs invited me to accompany them on an outing one night. We set out in a van to a major intersection where children sold candy and performed for pedestrians and motorists. Although there was no explicitly religious content, the purpose of the mission was to recruit new members to the movement by inviting them to have a snack and play in a park around the corner and talking to them about their commonalities as working children.

The NATs' efforts to relate to other working children did not always come in the form of recruitment. As Christmastime rolled around during the second year of my fieldwork, the adolescent group was contemplating where to hold its annual *chocolatada*, a typical Peruvian holiday celebration marked by drinking hot chocolate. They knew about my other research sites and asked what I thought about bringing the festivities to the intersection. I got approval from the kids in La Molina and while I didn't have any particular expectations for the encounter, it did strike me as curious that the event turned out to resemble an act of charity.

Indeed, every time that I brought the NATs and the other children with whom I worked together, there was a palpable tension. If the age difference between the adolescent group and the kids at the intersection helped to diffuse the discomfort at the *chocolatada*, the decision of the younger group of NATs that I shadowed to make a similar holiday gesture resulted in a more awkward situation. I was away from Lima when this second MANTHOC-sponsored *chocolatada* occurred, but I learned about it during the first group meeting after Christmas, where I encountered the group strangely quiet. The group delegate broke the silence, asking for a volunteer to explain what had happened. The issue was not that the NATs had not known how to interact with the kids—which, according to the kids at the intersection, they had not. Apparently a man had come by in his car, "confused the NATs with street kids," offered them money, and the NATs had accepted. In this way, the NATs had violated the MANTHOC principle of dignity by enabling themselves to become objects of charity.

It was not only their actions, but also the ways in which NATs talked to me about the "kinds" of workers that my other research subjects represented that demonstrated their understanding of difference. Within the MANTHOC framework, any sort of street performance that looked like beggary was akin to false-consciousness

and an impediment to the realization of justice based on human dignity. Yet when I began my fieldwork focusing exclusively on MANTHOC, NATs and collaborators encouraged me to also do research with “street kids” in order to get an “authentic” point of view. Some people offered advice about how to approach “street kids” given their reputation to be “*vivos*” (tricky); and, no doubt, the absence of an institution that could mediate the encounter complicated things on practical and moral grounds. But believing myself beyond the classic anthropologist’s “untouched native” fantasy, I wanted to resist this differentiation.⁴⁰ In the end, however, I recognized that although the organized-non-organized dichotomy did not always hold up, there was indeed a difference – one that can be analytically productive – between NATs and the other children with whom I worked.

MANTHOC’s institutional web provided NATs with a unique space of reflection through which to articulate their struggles. Even if the Municipality of San Isidro’s “Society with Values, Society without Working Children” poster campaign was aimed at children who worked at the street corners, it was the MANTHOC network that enabled NATs to mount a counter-campaign with the slogan, “More Respect! Children Working.” While critics of MANTHOC may point to this as an example of how NATs falsely claim to speak for the entire universe of Peruvian child laborers, I suggest that this response productively calls into question the ways that dominant notions of belonging and value production fail to map onto labor experiences. In this way, the

⁴⁰ During my goodbye ceremony at MANTHOC, Lourdes commended me by saying, “Leigh came to study organization and ended up organizing.” I wondered if she was referring to my heavy involvement in the running of the MANTHOC groups or to my work with the kids in La Molina. While I wanted to resist the notion that what I was doing in La Molina was “organizing,” I had indeed tried to organize the kids in La Molina. Through my involvement in the Collaborators’ Network and the help of Jhon, I had tried to make the La Molina kids into a “group.” After a couple of weeks of enthusiasm, however, the project failed. What did work was spontaneous photo project because it emerged organically through the children, drawing attention to their own forms of organization.

discourse to which so-called “organized” working children have access can render positive effects for so-called “non-organized” working children as well. Another example is how Jhon’s experience as a NAT enabled him to become an adult who founded a neighborhood-based school to reach working children not directly involved with MANTHOC.

Differentiating between organized and non-organized child laborers on the basis of their respective modes of institutional belonging, I argue, underplays productive differences as well as certain similarities among working children. If the children I worked with on the street lacked the critical language through which NATs spoke of their labor in relation to systemic injustice, both groups of working children misrecognized themselves in dominant discourse and struggled to gain social legitimacy through strategies of public performance. If street children, always already marginalized, perform particular (often abject) roles in the public space of the street in order to gain recognition and extract value, then NATs, also from a place of marginalization, perform specific (leadership) roles in the public space defined by *incidencia* in order to demand that they are recognized, or valued, as laborers. Similarly, the 30th anniversary and other formal events were themselves a kind of public performance aimed at justifying institutional existence. The terms of struggle of each group appear different, then, because of the discrete ways that institutions mediate their identities. Yet each group points to the different ways of conceptualizing organization that respond to their unique experiences of misrecognition.⁴¹

I have shown in this chapter how NATs, far from representing an elite, also came from families with severe economic hardships. If NATs belonged to an institution that

⁴¹ MANTHOC is accused of being too much of a discourse whereas kids on street are thought to be “faking it.”

enabled them to articulate their work ethic in particular ways, street performers were also always motivated by an ethic that linked to their family's understanding of labor as both a strategy for progress and a way of making ends meet. In the end, if NATs entered the labor force with a discourse for understanding their exploitation, they became part of the same labor pool nonetheless, once again drawing attention to the ways that marginalized citizens are forced to justify their social legitimacy. This is important given the critique that NATs were not "real" laborers since so many of them engaged in household-based labor with their mothers and other family members. This critique, I suggest, renders invisible domestic labor performed by children in the same way that feminists have argued that the division of labor fails to value women's home-based labor.⁴² By putting children at the center of its proposal, MANTHOC opened up the possibility of conceptualizing children's experiences separately from those of women, the typical object of such discussions about labor.⁴³ For this reason, it is important to follow Denning's call to reconceptualize labor as primarily not wage-based and, instead, to understand street laborers and home laborers as, at least in some significant ways, belonging to the same world.⁴⁴

⁴² Similarly, "help" is often used as a euphemism for the poorly remunerated *empleada*, or maid, in Peru.

⁴³ Labor scholars do not explicitly account for children's labor; even Denning's invocation of children's labor is strictly metaphorical.

⁴⁴ As I have shown in other chapters, street and home are also linked because of the way women are imagined to be the coercive force behind children's street labor. The semantic difference that MANTHOC would make, however, is that the street is often not a dignified place to work.

Conclusion

By exploring the lives of children who work on the streets and live at home, this dissertation has challenged dominant representations of child labor as a monolithically exploitative practice, as well as the narratives of blame and causal logics that obscure the structural roots of poverty. My intention has not been to overlook the injustices often associated with child labor, but rather to shift the critique of child labor from an approach that is overwhelmingly moralizing to one that accounts for contextual complexities. Yet I have also warned against the kind of static relativism that recognizes children's work as a cultural tradition and thus interprets any critique of the practice as an assault to the values of individual communities and families. In Peru, as I have shown, this (partly performative) ideological polarization tends to ignore the intersectional politics of child labor and perpetuate the very notions of difference that undergird child laborers' marginal status.

The concept of child labor, like the idea of childhood itself, is grounded in 19th century Western history. Child factory labor was used regularly during the industrial revolutions in Europe and the United States, only to be outlawed by the early 20th century. Indeed, the abolition of child labor was linked to the solidification of universal schooling and the nuclear family, two institutions that have come to define both modern childhood and capitalism. As child labor has come to be seen in the West as something of the past, it has also come to be seen as something that exists in "other" places – Africa, Latin America, and other Third World spaces. Child labor, in short, has come to be understood as a third world problem that the West must help to alleviate, not because of its role in the production of socioeconomic inequality through colonial and capitalist expansion, but because of its presumed moral authority.

The moral discourse about global child labor has been institutionalized through a transnational legal apparatus that developed after the West abolished child labor, and reflects the intersection of two sets of legal standards that were developed to protect laborers and children, respectively. The ILO (the International Labor Organization) came into being in 1919, as the Industrial Revolution was drawing to a close, in order to protect workers, understood to be adults. Eventually, the ILO became part of the United Nations and adopted two Conventions specifically about child labor: Convention 138, adopted in 1973, set a minimum age for child labor; and Convention 182, adopted in 1999, defined the “worst forms” of child labor. In addition to these two conventions, in 1992 the ILO gave birth to a specialized organization devoted to eradicating child labor: the International Program on the Elimination of Child labor (or IPEC). IPEC defines child labor in two main ways: as something that is “mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous;” and as work that interferes with schooling. As I have shown, this assumed moral binary between work and school was fundamental to the everyday struggles over representation in which the children at the center of my research were forced to engage.

The other major legal instrument that defines child labor is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Ratified in 1989, the UNCRC consists of fifty-four articles that set international standards and regulations on topics ranging from the definition of childhood (an age-based designation), to the torture of children, child soldiers, and the right to education. While conceptualizing children as participants in social and cultural processes, a point anthropologists have been pushing for decades, and making allowances for certain cultural contingencies, the Convention also recognizes that children are in need of a unique kind of protection that can only be guaranteed by specific institutions, namely the family and the school. As some authors have argued,

this produces two kinds of childhood – one that is “normal” or “correct,” and one that is “abnormal” or “in need of correction” – a dichotomy I have addressed throughout the dissertation. Child labor is specifically addressed in Article 32 of the UNCRC. The first part of the article offers a similar definition of child labor to that of the ILO, emphasizing economic exploitation, interference with education, and physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development. The second part addresses implementation, offering guidelines for each state that signs the Convention. My dissertation has considered the ways in which these standards have been appropriated by the Peruvian State and NGOs, and woven into the fabric of everyday life in Lima, in ways that have profoundly complicated effects on the subjective experiences of poor children.

As the children upon whom my dissertation has focused let me into their lives, I became deeply aware of the ways that common assumptions about child labor, poverty, and the use of public space not only failed to capture the complexities of their lived experiences, but also constituted a challenge to their everyday practices of survival. My relationship to MANTHOC had taught me that, contrary to dominant discourses about child labor, work can sometimes be a source of dignity and even encourage political activism among children. Yet if this valuing of children’s work enables the formation of identities that challenge the transnational politics of childhood, most children who work in Peru do so not as a way to claim agency and achieve social change, but rather in response to the powerful forces that systematically marginalize them. Child street labor, at the most obvious level, allows families to obtain the food and clothing necessary for immediate physical survival. Furthermore, and contrary to common perceptions, I found that children’s work both helped to pay the costs of public school and, according to their families, taught children the value of hard, honest work, in this sense an economic and ethical investment in the future. Despite these logics, the children I knew

so well nevertheless were stigmatized as an emblem of underdevelopment and Peruvian backwardness and lack. As the children themselves understood, their parents – and especially their mothers – were special targets of opprobrium, assumed to be forcing their children to labor whether out of ignorance or greed. Such representations were, and continue to be, articulated through development agencies, NGOs, the Peruvian state, the media, and everyday interpersonal exchanges. In this way, perhaps the most subtle yet deeply-entrenched form of labor that poor working children perform is that of creatively responding to the assumptions that are made about them as child laborers.

It remains crucial for the rest of us to try to understand the challenges that these children face, particularly in an age in which we are bombarded with representations of child poverty, and with the message that the privileged few can and should intervene on behalf of those who lack the means to protect themselves from those who are supposed to protect them. This dissertation has been a step in this direction, however tentative and partial. There is much more work to be done. Indeed, as African-born novelist Teju Cole has recently urged the U.S. public, “If we are going to interfere in the lives of others, a little due diligence is a minimum requirement” (T. Cole 2012).

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Biography

Leigh M. Campoamor was born in South America to a North American mother and Cuban father in 1978, but grew up mostly in the United States. During her time as an undergraduate at Brown University, she studied for a year at the Catholic University in Santiago, Chile and traveled for the first time to Peru. Upon receiving her Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Brown in 2000, Campoamor was awarded a Fulbright fellowship to conduct research in Peru's south central highlands. In 2002, she moved to the capital city of Lima to work collecting material for the Princeton University Library.

Campoamor began her graduate work in Cultural Anthropology at Duke University in 2003, with the support of numerous fellowships and awards: a University Scholars Program Fellowship, a James B. Duke Fellowship, and a Duke Endowment Fellowship. Her pre-dissertation research in Peru during the summers of 2004 and 2005 was made possible through two Ford Doctoral Pre-Dissertation Research Fellowships, a Tinker-Mellon Graduate Student Research Award, and a Duke Center for International Studies Research Fellowship. Campoamor's dissertation research in Peru, from October 2006 to August 2008, was funded by a Wenner-Gren Foundation Individual Research Grant, a Duke Graduate School Advanced International Fellowship, and a Duke Graduate School Summer Research Fellowship.

Campoamor has presented her work widely in North and South America, at conferences, workshops and invited lectures. As a graduate student at Duke, she participated in various spaces of interdisciplinary exchange, including the Women's Studies Graduate Scholars Colloquium, the Franklin Humanities Institute Dissertation Working Group, and working groups sponsored by the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies and the Center for International Studies. She also taught several

undergraduate classes, organized various conferences on campus, and worked as the Editorial Assistant for the journal *Cultural Anthropology*.

Campoamor received her Master's Degree in Cultural Anthropology from Duke University in 2006. She will graduate in May 2012 with a Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Anthropology and with graduate certificates in Latin American Studies, Latin American Cultural Studies, and Women's Studies. In August 2012, she will begin a post-doctoral teaching fellowship in Duke's International Comparative Studies Program.