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Women surviving in and out of prison in Quito, Ecuador: weaving alternative lives through the sale of drugs

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

in

Latin American Studies

by

Sofía Lana

Committee in charge:

Professor Nancy Grey Postero, Chair
Professor Dennis Childs
Professor Leon Zamosc

2016

The thesis of Sofía Lana is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Women surviving in and out of prison in Quito, Ecuador: weaving alternative lives through the sale of drugs

by

Sofía Lana

Master of Arts in Latin American Studies

University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor Nancy Grey Postero, Chair

This investigation focuses on women's constrained exercise of agency, gained through the sale of drugs in Quito, Ecuador. The global surge in female incarceration through the '80's and '90's produced a myriad of studies that attempted to explain their participation in the drug world. However, only recent publications have focused on understanding this phenomenon outside of a structuralist approach. In a context of a failed drug war and re-drawing of anti-drug policies, it is important to understand why women continue dealing drugs after incarceration, outside of the 'economic necessity' discourse. I argue that, in a multiply constrained context, the ten Ecuadorian women I

interviewed did not only seek to sustain their children through drug dealing, but also to define themselves outside of motherhood. The sale of drugs allowed them to negotiate with the available state and culturally imposed narratives to attain wellbeing. This study is based on ethnographic fieldwork that took place from July to September 2015 in Quito and surrounding areas of Ecuador. I conducted 35 semi-structured interviews and participant observation during my stay. I conclude that women's lived experiences reveal their resistance to the state imposed exclusion from leading *purposeful* lives. If the state and society continue avoiding women's assertive (and not only victimizing) narratives explaining their incursion into drug dealing, any future changes in penal policy (as they relate to drugs and "reinsertion") will fail to curb the incarceration of women on minor drug offenses.

Fue como si la tierra
Se hubiera abierto y me tragara
Me sentí morir
The day of my entry
I felt like the earth had opened up
And swallowed me
I felt myself die

You are detained
What? For how long?
You feel you don't belong to yourself
when being human rests on provoking fear

I want to scream
I cannot tolerate these walls, this confinement

¿Is the woman that was outside the same as the one inside?
Not I.
My heart is half stone, half meat.

Delinquent, excluded
A faceless being
You punish yourself
Responsible for your children
Fighter.
(Poem composed of fragments from various testimonies of incarcerated or previously incarcerated women in Ecuador)

Introduction

As human beings, we are both inscribed by narratives and authors of our own collection of appropriated, rejected, and negotiated narratives, building ourselves in relation to, against or with others. At times we are able to alter them, at others we are able to change them; a slow, collective or power-driven process that institutionalizes a novel way of creating ourselves. There are moments when we are unable to recognize them, and therefore subjugated by them, or passively live by them. Convenience may drive us to choose certain ways of describing ourselves, but then so could the need to survive. The state imposes a myriad of identities on its population, gendered identities, ethnic or class identities, consumer-citizen, mother, father, enemy, abnormal, insane. A query that has

plagued scholars of a wide range of disciplines is one of agency. Within a context of structures upon structures that are products and producers of a circular relationship between individuals and structures, it is difficult to determine the scope of choice that an individual has in determining their life narrative (s).

I spent three months working in prisons in Quito, Ecuador during the summer of 2015, hoping to understand why some women continued dealing after prison while others did not. In our current era, men continue to greatly surpass women in prison populations, where around 90-95% of incarcerated individuals are men and 5-10%[1] are women. Lost in the overbearingly male presence in prison populations, however, is the steady and pronounced increase in global female incarceration over the past three decades. (Reynolds 2008) The ‘80’s and ‘90’s recruited both men and women born and bred in the impoverished margins of society to join the perilous yet profitable ranks of the drug trade that became readily available to sell and transport as part of the *crack* boom in the ’80’s. Women generally occupied, and continue to do so today, the lower rungs of the *narco* world, acting as consumers, drug expenders or *mulas (*peripheral couriers). These are considered the most exploited roles in the drug trafficking hierarchy: high risk and low profit. As opposed to men’s incarceration, the increment in the female prison populations has been (and continues to be) disproportionally affected by anti-drug policies.[2]

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[1] The variation accounts for global differences.

[2] Although men make up around 90-95% of the prison population, the percentage of men incarcerated on minor drug offenses is much lower (around 50% if not less) than that of women. (Nuñez Vega 2006; Torres Angarita 2008)

Over three decades after the incipient participation of women in drug dealing, the percentage of women incarcerated on minor drug offenses remains high across Latin America[3]. ("Women, drug policies" 2016) Albeit the fact that Ecuador is not a drug producing state, but a country where drug transits from its origin to its destination, it has firmly adhered to all the requirements the United States has dictated within the frame of the 'drug war'[4]. An initial punitive, prohibitionist approach to dealing with drug trafficking, in turn, has led the country to hold a high percentage of women incarcerated on minor drug offenses, which continues to increase despite concerted attempts to curb the percentage in the past decade by president Rafael Correa[5]. (Nuñez 2005: 151)[6] Whereas this percentage hovered around 76% in 2005, in 2014 in Quito's Female Social Rehabilitation Center 'El Inca' it hovered around 80%. (Pinos Calderón 2014)

The OAS's (Organization of American States) recent plea to meet, for example, was centered precisely on the high percentages of women on minor drug offenses that

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[3] A recent event hosted by the OAS (Organization of American States) attempted to tackle this pressing issue within the scope of Latin America: "In Argentina, Brazil, and Costa Rica, more than 60% of the female prison population is incarcerated for drug-related offenses." ("Women, drug policies" 2016)

[4] Initiated in the late 1970's by Richard Nixon, former president of the United States, under the logic of 'prohibition', this 'fight' against the drug industry was meant to target the cultivation, production and distribution of drugs in order to reduce the flow towards the United States under the umbrella of protecting national security (Pontón & Torres 2007: 62). Even though reality and time have shown this strategy to be a failure, as drug cartels have adapted and become more flexible to the obstacles the United States has created, it is still the way in which anti-drug enforcement policies are framed. Latin American countries have been the primal targets of U.S. intervention for drug-related reasons since 1980's, especially those in the Andean region (Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela).

[5] The clearest manifestation of blind acquiescence to drug war policies by Ecuador was the approval of the 'Law 108' or the 'Law of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances' in 1991 (Pontón & Torres 2007: 63)[5], denounced as one of the most "brutal drug laws of Latin America." (Edwards 2010) However, all of this must be re-evaluated in light of President Correa's presidency, which steers away from his predecessors in foreign policy, as a way of reaffirming national sovereignty, especially in matters of security with the United States. For example, 2000 mules were pardoned in 2008 as a way of reducing the prison population. The recent reform of the penal code [5] has acted specifically on modifying some of those draconian measures related to drug-crimes, through rationalizing the sentences and typifying the crimes with their respective sentences.

[6] All translations done from Spanish to English are my own.

characterize prison populations across Latin America: "the use of prison as a response to drugs has had a disproportionately negative impact on women…Many of them have little education, live in poverty, and are primary caregivers of dependent persons-children, youths, older persons and the disabled." ("Women, drug policies" 2016) Within this framework I wondered: what factors motivate the recruitment of men and women into the drug world, even after being incarcerated? Is it solely the pressing need to survive?

Women's participation in illegality has resulted in an array of hypotheses over time. I expected that the narratives of the women I interviewed would fit those aligned by feminist criminological theorists, especially Latin American feminists who have generally relied on the *Mariana/*prostitute binary[7]. As Torres Angarita (2008) forewarned in her thesis on female *drug mules* and romantic love, I anticipated that women would mold their stories into a *victim* narrative when confronted by a young, foreign, female graduate student, thus appropriating the *Mariana* motherhood narrative to explain their incursion into selling drugs. This, I realized, would take me no further than other case studies related to women and drug sales in Latin America, where precarious livelihoods marginalized by the intersection of race/class/gender would rely on the sale of drugs to sustain their families and survive.

Upon delving into the fieldwork, however, and spending considerable amounts of time conducting in-depth interviews and participant observation both in and out of prison,

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[7] This traditional dichotomous framework inherited from the Spanish Colonization is a useful way to understand how women are socialized in Latin America. *Marianismo* links femininity to motherhood and a superior morality. The opposite, 'prostitute' (or Eve) refers to the sinful woman who has gone against the *Marianismo tenets*. I will elaborate on this in the theoretical framework.

I realized that the narratives where neither as linear nor as dichotomous as I had been led to assume. Criminology theorists have spoken more forcefully of the multi-causality of criminal activity since early 2000s, but their ultimate response has been that women were economically marginalized and that that, in and of itself, was the greatest push factor. I do not intend to discount the truth or force of this statement, but more so hope to explore beyond the confines of economic necessity[8].

As I focused on the lives of ten women who were imprisoned multiple times for selling drugs, I realized I was unable to fit my interviewees' responses in the narratives available in the literature. I say this despite the fact that these women are of indigenous and African descent and their lives are perilously suspended on the edge of survival. This is reminiscent of Crenshaw's (1991) claim, when defining *intersectionality* as the "multilayered and routinized forms of domination that converge" (2) to marginalize 'women of color' (gender, class and race). The author posits that, perhaps, the delineated differences that exclude a group of people are not only 'intrinsically negative frameworks' but can also be potential sources 'of political empowerment and social reconstruction'. (1) The women that I encountered, whether aware or unaware of the intersecting structures limiting their choices, appropriated their decision to change the course of their lives through drug dealing. They were not passive receptors conforming to

[8] The only author that recently mentioned agency and structure when looking at women and crime (who published her work as I was concluding my own fieldwork) is Lisset Coba Mejía (2015). She attempted to trace stories of women who deal or traffic drugs and "locate the knots that secure their loss of prestige on the map of exclusion." (Coba Mejía 2015: 5) Although her work largely focuses on the state and the judicial system as it relates to these women's lives, she insists that women who deal drugs are "knowledgeable women, warriors…fighters who rise in the midst of life's most extreme hardships." (Coba Mejía 2015: 4)

the workings of greater economic, political and social structures, but more so "loosely structured actors", as coined by Ortner (1989: 196), capable of reacting to, coping with or conforming to their culture and context. All women spoke of the responsibility of motherhood, economic necessity, and romantic love, but also of power, respect, desire, vengeance and independence.

I do not intend to say that the women I interviewed were unconstrained and free individuals who enacted and disposed of narratives at will, but more so that within their horizons of subjectivity, within the world that they knew, their decisions were not overly determined by structures. The inherent interaction between structures and individuals cannot be ignored. As Giddens (1979) stated when conceptualizing the duality of structure, "rules and resources are drawn upon by actors in the production of interaction, but are thereby also reconstituted through such interaction". (71) Given the palpably visible counter narratives and alternative trajectories that underlie these women's stories, as opposed to the stories of 'non-deviant' or 'good' women who do not choose to commit crime, I questioned: why did these particular women form a particular interest in selling drugs and continued doing so after being imprisoned?

My findings led me to wonder why scholars have so decisively focused on framing women's narratives through the motherhood *Mariana* narrative[9] and have not re-

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[9] Borrowing Ortner's (1989) theorization of practice theory, the cultural schema of motherhood is an ordering schema for women in Ecuador "shaping interactions in a particular way, endowing them with particular meanings and setting them up to unfold along more or less predictable lines". (60) As the catholic, patriarchal model of 'family' dictates, men are expected to be sole providers of the family as well as the rational, level headed, dominant force in the home, the *paterfamilias*. Women in Ecuadorian society,

appropriated the ‘prostitute/witch’ schema to speak of women’s participation in crime. I understand that there is a desire to dissociate women’s actions from the stereotypical idea of women being inherently or biologically perched between sin and sainthood, of the criminal woman being more evil and violent than any man. The negative connotations historically associated to the concept of a ‘witch’ have haunted women, quite literally, for centuries. However, we cannot shy from the fact that the image of a ‘witch’ is that of a powerful, *agentic*, independent woman. Aren’t we reproducing the dichotomous view of women as passive victims of greater structures (good mothers, good daughters, good wives) by excluding the, perhaps uncomfortable yet necessary, discussion of women as both mothers and ‘witches’? Is it not telling that women in various situations of economic marginality have discursively and strategically portrayed themselves as mothers in order to receive attention or aid from the state or non-governmental organizations? (Juliano 2005; Lind 2005; Torres Angarita 2008)

The neoliberal state continues to portray women as mothers, consumers and caretakers who are ever more responsible for the education and safety of their children and extended family members as the struggle to survive is increasingly privatized. (Lind 2005) Women who do not fit into the ‘modern woman’ consumer citizen narrative are

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and especially in impoverished rural and urban margins, are expected to become good, responsible, self-sacrificial mothers and faithful, forgiving and subservient wives. Regardless of how strongly these ideals of man and woman are engrained, they have begun to clash with the restructuring of the economy. This refers to deindustrialization, structural violence and poverty, shifts in women’s rights, opportunities and gender norms, in both rural and, especially, urban settings since the late 1970’s and ‘80s. Women have been treading thin lines along the public spaces they can now inhabit, still bound in different ways to archaic gendered, expectations yet sometimes resisting or changing when performing them.

either punished or excluded by the state.[10] (Schild 2000; Hahn 2012) Women are not expected to be 'irresponsible', to choose pleasure or their own desires and aspirations before that of their children, or to choose a combination of both. Men, however, are not placed on the same moral pedestal as women: when they engage in social activities outside of the home, as drinking and socializing instead of raising their children or doing domestic chores, we do not chastise them. It is 'men being men'.

The question that arises, therefore, is what fails to be captured by more victimizing explanations of women and crime, such as deterministic hypotheses or the plot narrative of motherhood. So I ask: within a neoliberal and patriarchal society, in a determined socioeconomic context that sets boundaries on horizons of opportunity, are women living on the margins of society forming alternative narratives to motherhood through the micro-sale of drugs in Quito, Ecuador? If so, how are the narratives being altered?

In the case of the women interviewed, I argue that fragments of their stories escaped the plot narrative of 'motherhood', within which they framed their decision to sell drugs (as single mothers to support their children). They spoke in defiance of a trajectory that rendered them submissive to a patriarchal and neoliberal order, searching for respect and legitimacy outside of the preordained path, actively countering their "structural victimization." (Bourgois 2003: 142) My analysis draws on women's

[10] Veronica Schild (2000) and Clara Han (2012) provide in depth analyses of the protective and punishing function of the state and NGO's towards poor women who conform or not to the neoliberal 'gendered consumer citizen'.

ambivalence about the available motherhood narrative and ways in which they circumvented the culturally defined plot to (perhaps) become a 'good woman and mother' (this could have been a discursive product of being interviewed in front of me and not reality).

It may be either an unintentional coincidence or a spontaneous discursive consequence that, on the street, those who are one step above the immediate dealers (and less frequently low-level dealers) in Ecuador are referred to as either *brujas* or *brujos* (witch or wizard). This linguistic curiosity becomes more symbolic when compared to both indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian myths (imbued with biblical references) that tie powerful, dangerous and sexually driven women to *brujas* and *mulas*[11]. As both Grimm Brother fairytales and the myths that inform past creed, witches' power is short lived and their fate is generally one of terrible death. The women I interviewed were bound to prison over and over again; escaping from the schema, in the end, had terrible consequences, both for them and their families.

In search of an equilibrium between individual action and both oppressive and enabling socioeconomic and political structures, it is important to recognize the patterns I traced in their life stories that seem to be, in large part, a direct and intersecting result of their sex, race and socioeconomic class. The interviews reveal their existence and how they have affected and interacted with these women's choices. All women interviewed were single (divorced or separated) or in loosely defined relationships (with someone

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[11]Drug mules are men and women who transport drug nationally and internationally on or in their bodies.

other than their children's father), with 2-6 children[12]. Their ages range from 23-55[13]. All women lived in the most violence-ridden, marginalized, poor neighborhoods of Quito, X[14], Y, and Z. (Pontón & Rivera 2013) Violence (especially sexual violence) and subjugation were palpable aspects of their realities, usually beginning in early stages of life and later affecting their decisions. Before engaging in illegal activities, they were earning around 350-400 dollars a month[15], either working as domestic workers, laundry washers or in informal street activities, such as selling produce. This sum is lower than the basic food basket (USD 678.61[16]), placing them below the poverty line, with the other 7.87% poor in Quito, and 23.28% (UNDP 2016) nationwide, out of a population of 14.48 million people.

These women mainly sold *pasta base*[17], marihuana, or a combination of both, in common selling points D[18], E and F, across the city, acting as low-level dealers or sellers[19] (direct relationship with consumer) at the bottom of the drug-trafficking chain,

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[12] According to the data retrieved by Pinos Claderón (2014) from 'El Inca' prison in 2012, 84.61% of imprisoned women had children. The majority of women in prison were heads of household. A small percentage, around 15.38%, did not have children but were responsible for caretaking of other family members. (65)

[13] According to the data retrieved by Pinos Calderón (2014) from 'El Inca' prison in 2012, 43.58% of the female prison population was between 18 and 30 years old. Around 35.89% were between 31 and 40 years old. A smaller percentage corresponded to women between the ages of 41 and 50, and 51 and 60. (63)

[14] In order to protect my interviewee's confidentiality and anonymity, I will refrain from specifying the geographic details of their neighborhoods they live in.

[15] The minimum monthly wage is 366 USD. ("Salario Básico Unificado" 2015)

[16] El Universo published this sum on March 4th, 2016. ("El INEC asegura" 2016) According to the UNDP profile on Ecuador, the sum is 673.21 USD. (UNDP 2016)

[17] This is not to be confused with crack. It refers to the crust that remains in the pot once cocaine is prepared and is composed by the plant's alkaloids without refinement or purification.

[18] I will refrain from specifying the names or composition of these neighborhoods to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of my interviewees.

[19] Pontón and Rivera (2013) argued that the role of a low-level dealer is the most risky, dangerous, competitive and low-earning role out of the entire drug-world hierarchy. Despite women and scholars

selling small quantities of drugs, with possibilities of earning from 20-120 dollars a day. All of the women interviewed have been imprisoned two to four times for selling drugs on the streets. The available data on the rate of multiple imprisonments was scarce, if available at all, but added another dimension to these women's lives: criminalization and incarceration[20]. As Nuñez (2006) reflected, declining or fluctuating levels of prison populations may mask the rapid and recurrent entry and exit of men and women. This became apparent in my own fieldwork and inability to obtain fixed prison population numbers and the rate of women who had been imprisoned more than once[21]. The rate ranged from 0.1% to 40%, depending on whom I asked (institutional authorities or imprisoned women/employees at prison, respectively).

Their interviews unearth stories of women who have worked toward the survival and wellbeing of their children and of unforgiving structural violence. However, as Bourgois (2003) reflected in his ethnography of crack selling in East Harlem, when faced with painfully raw lives on the edge of survival, I also had to catch myself from blaming greater socioeconomic structures entirely for these women's plight. Upon interviewing

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framing this activity as one of 'easy money', it cannot be thought of as 'easy'. Drug dealers probably refer to it as 'easy' because it is liquid and immediate.

[20] Nuñez (2006) wrote that, once men and women are incarcerated, police vigilance and prison become incorporated into their everyday reality and can easily lead to multiple imprisonments.

[21] Whereas the Ministry of Justice ignored my multiple petitions (in person and through formal letters, as requested by their administration), the Public Defender's Office disclosed that the rate they had registered was very low, around 0.1%. Given that they had also refused to hand me the statistics they had gathered on the prison population in Ecuador (arguing that it was poorly gathered and quantified), the rate seemed unreliable. This became even more evident when interviewing women within prison, as they would easily point out those who had returned multiple times and contended that a large percentage of women in prison would go back to their illegal activity upon release. Antonia, a psychologist who had been working with the female prison population for the last 5 years (first in El Inca and currently in Latacunga), stated that around 35-40% of women recidivate. If her estimate is grounded in the reality of these women, who reportedly observed the same rates of return to prison, then it would seem to point to a greater structural issue of criminalization of poverty.

and intimately living with them during fieldwork, I wanted to avoid the details of how they hurt themselves and their loved ones in their struggle for daily survival. Yet, I cannot escape the fact that they chose, at some point, to sell drugs, to risk incarceration and the (possible) abandonment of their children. I do not intend to set a moral ground to judge their decision, to condone or congratulate them, but more so to explore how, within a very limited scope of alternatives, they chose to counterclaim what society expected of women living in these marginal neighborhoods.

Within this investigation, I also wish to acknowledge the fact that these women's defiance to patriarchy and neoliberalism, perhaps unbeknownst to them, speaks of a raw, grassroots form of feminism. As Giddens (1979) theorized, those that are in dominant positions in society may be less prone to questioning the structures that have placed them there and may, in the end, be more imprisoned by them. For that reason, it is not implausible to think that in certain circumstances, those in less powerful positions in society might penetrate the conditions of social reproduction more than those who would otherwise dominate them. (71)

This thesis, therefore, will explore whether women, constrained by overlapping structures of poverty, violence and discrimination, were able to exercise or acquire agency through the sale of drugs by escaping the traditional cultural schemas. The next section will outline the main lines of thought that sought to understand women, crime and drug dealing from the fields of Criminology, Anthropology and Sociology. The second will present the methodology employed on the field and the particular challenges that

emerged, that are inherent to ethnographic method. The third will elaborate the theoretical framework that will be used to interpret the life narratives of the women I interviewed in prison.

Section 1. Literature Review

The theoretical underpinnings of female criminology [22] have been mostly developed within the United States and Europe. The bulk of publications from Latin American scholars began to emerge in the 1990's, but remain until this day fairly limited in range and scope. More importantly, the topic of multiple imprisonments, within and outside of Latin America, has only been investigated as 'recidivism' in the context of analyses of alternatives to prison or the improvement of 'rehabilitation' practices[23]. In seeking to understand whether women who are imprisoned multiple times for selling

[22] Given that the focus of this investigation is on women, and that authors that have written on this topic have usually done so from a gendered perspective, I will not be analyzing men's involvement in crime. There is a general consensus among scholars against homogenizing motivations and contexts for crime across gender, for reasons I will later describe.

[23]Under the assumption that cultural schemas continue to shape and enact different horizons and ways of being for men and women (gendered notions), it is important to understand how women's involvement in crime, that is, their motives and experience, differs from that of men. Most of the writing on 'multiple imprisonment' is either homogenized across genders or not specifically focused on the structural and contextual differences shaping men and women's lives and motivations to sell drugs. 2) The "return" rate is highly variable in Ecuador and other countries, signaling that it may be higher than most countries would like to admit. The available data on the rate of 'return' was scarce, if available at all, but added another dimension of marginality to these women's lives: criminalization. Pinos Calderón's (2014) recent study of rehabilitation programs in Ecuador pointed out the same inability to determine the "recidivism rate", where as she wrote, "the imprisoned women themselves mentioned that a high rate of women entered, left and returned to prison systematically, for drug trafficking and other related charges." (69) 3) Men and women who have experienced incarceration and return to an 'illegal' activity are aware of the consequences of doing so. Most of the scarce literature on 'returning' points to two views: that prison is correctional or that it is inhumane (Nagin et al 2009; 123), therefore functioning either as a "preventive deterrent" (Nagin et al. 2009) or as "criminogenic" (pushing or pulling people to or away from crime). However, these individualistic approaches neither consider the structures shaping the contours of their existence or the unforgiving reality people face when they are released.

drugs in the context of Latin America are able to gain agency, I argue that it is important to explore the interaction between structure and agency. As dominant theories have argued since the '80's and '90's, intersecting structures, such as class, gender and race, are fundamental to understanding what is pushing women towards selling drugs after prison. Behind a shared narrative that pointed to economic necessity as the primary factor that led them to deal drugs, however, there was another story that spoke of agency, a concept I will define more thoroughly in the theoretical framework. I will argue that, within a constrained context of opportunities, women gained agency or 'autonomy' through the micro-sale of drugs.

In its incipient version, female crime was theorized as directly related to the female sex, i.e. crime was related to some inherently biological fault or abnormality and was, in women, seen as more perverse, and dangerous, than in men. (Lombroso and Ferrero 1898; Pollack and Friedman 1969; Barrera 1942-1943) The ideas that stemmed from Positivist criminology persisted throughout almost the entirety of the 20th century, until Second Wave feminists in the 1970's first attempted to 'de-essentialize' and 'de-mystify' criminological thought. Notwithstanding the intent of the authors, their theories, such as the 'Liberation theory' (Adler 1975) or 'Masculinization theory', roots of the 'opportunity theory' (Simon 1970; Simon and Landis 1991), only reproduced gender stereotypes of women involved in crime. Counterarguments emerged through the 'economic marginalization hypothesis' during the 1980's and 1990's (Naffine 1987; Smart 1979; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992; Miller 1986; Heidensohn 1968; Steffensmeier and Hoffman 1980; Carlen 1985) which introduced a structural argument

that un-gendered criminology (given that structures affect both men and women and their involvement in crime) while at the same time establishing the need to study crime separately for men and women.

The *crack* epidemic, which opened up more 'lucrative' job opportunities for those living in the deindustrialized, impoverished urban margins of society, led to global increases in female incarceration (where, for the first time, the rate of women incarcerated on minor drug offenses compared to the total population of incarcerated women was comparatively greater than that of men). Despite the majority of scholarly articles arguing through the structural lens of the economic marginalization hypothesis (Chesney-Lind 1992; Maher 1991; Lagarde 2003) there is a small but real push to de-victimize the discourse on female criminality. (Lopez et al. 2009; Campbell 2008; Anderson 2008; Miller 2001) The current theoretical lines of criminological production are no longer as clearly defined through this initial divide. Recent authors have tried to open and mix the range of explanations that lead women to commit crime. (Del Olmo 1998; Torres Angarita 2007, 2008; Coba Mejía 2015; Aguirre Salas 2010) Instead of relying solely on structural or 'opportunity' based arguments, they dispute that a multi-causal approach should be employed when thinking of women and crime. As Campbell (2008) argued, a feminist approach is conducive to understanding "'multiple intersecting inequalities' that push or pull women into drug crime, as well as the ways that women, within specific cultural contexts, exercise agency." (240) However, the literature that has explored agency in female criminality has generally done so in the context of the United States and tied to the consumption of drugs or gang membership from an individualistic

perspective. The setting and the particular situations in which agency is exercised in these studies make it difficult to fit my own queries of autonomy.

In the process of delineating these argumentative strands, it is important to consider how the suppositions that build these hypotheses may not apply to the Latin American case. As Rosa del Olmo (1992) has stated, "any attempt to explain female criminal activity requires that characteristics of the socialization of women and her opportunities as such be taken into account." (40) The way in which a woman is socialized will vary across countries and societies. Del Olmo (1992), thus, criticized Latin American scholars who have relied solely on accounts written about women and criminality in the U.S. or the U.K. because both the socioeconomic contexts and socialization are different. I will point out why, in considering some theories authors have put forth, they are not generalizable to all women who have been imprisoned on minor drug offenses. I turn now to a more extensive review of the literature on women, crime and drugs.

Positivism and Criminology

Criminology was initially built upon the idea of a criminal man as the exclusive subject of inquiry. By the end of 19th Century, the incursion of women into criminal activity was theorized from an anthropological or psychological perspective, where the motivation to commit crime was born out of some biological or psychiatric deficiency or abnormality. Cesare Lombroso (1895), founder of Positivist Criminology, and often considered the father of the field, claimed that a criminal was atavistic or savage, and

could be identified by 'anthropological anomalies', physically marked and doomed to break the law. (xv) According to his theory of anthropological criminology, Lombroso and Ferrero (1898) wrote in *The Female Offender* that women who entered crime had to physically resemble men, because otherwise women were child-like, uniform and incapable of performing like men in any respect. (111-112) They wrote that "a strong proof of degeneration in many born criminals is the want of maternal affection" (1898: 151) and this "becomes comprehensible", for example, when the union of masculine qualities are taken into account, which "prevent the female criminal from being more than half a woman." (1898: 153)

The first attempt at theorizing criminality scientifically in Ecuador was through Dr. Jaime Barrera's work, which revealed the strong influence of positivist criminology in the mid 20th Century. One of the author's main conclusions regarding female crime was that, at its base, the link was sexual: female crime was motivated by passion. (Barrera 1942-1943: 85 as cited by Torres Angarita 2008) According to Positivist Criminology, therefore, a determinant biological element leading women to criminal behavior was sexuality[24]. Women were either seen as 'good' and 'normal' (abiding to gender norms) or bad and abnormal (not acting according to gender norms). The first were considered vulnerable and in need of protection. The second, who were masculinized or thought to lack femininity, were criminalized. The arguments that characterized this period are reminiscent of Medieval thought linking women, deviancy

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[24] Following Lombroso's death, criminological theories reproduced his writing until the Second Wave of Feminism. In regards to sensuality, he wrote that it "has multiple and imperious needs which absorb the mental activity of a woman and, by rendering her selfish, destroy the spirit of self-abnegation inseparable from the maternal function." (1898: 153)

or transgression and witchcraft. Powerful women of "savage femininity" (Knox 2002: 27) were considered disruptive to the patriarchal order. (Ewan 2002: 118) Early-modern social and religious authorities considered "all women as essentially or at least potentially transgressive." (DesBrisay 2002: 137) Foucault later describes the proliferation of discourses on sexuality in the 18th and 19th century: "Doubtless acts 'contrary to nature' were stamped as especially abominable, but they were perceived simply as an extreme form of acts 'against the law…sacred…established for governing the order of things and the plan of beings…what came under scrutiny was sexuality of children, mad men and women, and criminals…" (Foucault 1990: 38)

Second-wave Feminism

In the 1970's, there were concerted attempts to reject biological and essentialist explanations. These overlooked and excluded women in mainstream criminological theory while at the same time sexualizing or demonizing them. The 1980's, however, mainly produced texts that either victimized women who entered criminal activity or likened them to men. As a point of reference, gender is a "socially constructed cultural ideal through which masculinity is defined against a feminine 'other', which supports a patriarchal order and legitimized social order and patriarchal power." (Tickner 1992: 7) Gender assigns a set of characteristics to masculinity, as courage, decisiveness, strength, rationality, against the feminine 'other', inferior, weak, irrational, and emotional. Adler (1975), known for her seminal work *Sisters in Crime*, wrote one of the first feminist attempts to un-gender and de-victimize the discussion on crime and women. In an era of

'liberation' for women in many countries of the Western world, where they began to occupy spaces outside of the home and the workplace, Alder (1975) asked: "Is it any wonder than once women were armed with male opportunities they should strive for status, criminal as well as civil, through established male hierarchical channels?" (11) The author attributed women's participation in crime as part of the liberation process. A "gradual but accelerating social revolution" was beginning to close social and criminal gaps that separated women from men. According to the author, "the closer they get, the more alike they look and act" suggesting there are no 'inherent' differences between men and women. (Adler 1975:30)

However, though her intent was to read women's activities as autonomous, her work has been largely criticized for being unable to escape the biological or androcentric trap. She attributed women's liberation to a consequent 'adoption' of masculine characteristics and conduct. (Torres Angarita 2008; Hunnicutt and Broidy 2004; Campbell 2008; Chesney-Lind 2006) This has also been referred to as the 'masculinization theory', where as Pollock (1950) explained, the forces that have led men to violence will increasingly do the same for women as they are freed from their gender constraints. (as cited in Chesney-Lind 2006: 11) These theories, along with that of Simon's (1975) laid down the ground for the 'liberation' or opportunity theses. Simon (1975) rejected both the masculinization and the liberation theory, but argued that as women entered white collar jobs in greater number and their opportunities increased, so would the opportunities to commit work-related crime, such as fraud.

According to Torres Angarita (2008), some Ecuadorian criminological explanations of the '70's and '80's were framed as founded on 'class struggle'. In an attempt to survive through difficult economic times, unemployed and sub-employed workers found an outlet that provided them with the means to live through drug trafficking. The analysis supported a structural and 'victimizing' discourse, positing that women were "used by the great drug traffickers", specifically those women who are suffering at the hands of socioeconomic structures, that is to say: unemployed or sub-employed women, or single mothers who are part of a disintegrated family, or of numerous and poor families. (Vega Uquillas 1986-1987: 107)

Parallel to this structural approach and contrary to Adler's (1975) feminist effort to celebrate female liberation, the morally fraught, positivist argument persisted, linking liberation to crime. Maldonado (1960), for example, claimed that "the home is the most favorable environment for a woman to develop her personality" and when she breaks away from home, "she is exposed to the deviations, with all the social and psychological degradations that entails, as a consequence of the disequilibrium and irregular make up of the family." (3)

With the rise of female criminality in the '80's and '90s due to women's precipitated involvement in the drug world (Anderson 2008; Torres Angarita 2008; Coba Mejía 2015; Bourgois 2003), two main lines of thought became consolidated in relation to women and crime. The first one dates back to Adler's (1975) liberation hypothesis, (as women gain ground on men, women are also growing closer to men in criminal activity),

and the second, known as the economic marginalization hypothesis, is a structural explanation that, despite its validity, renders women as passive victims of a greater system.[25]

Economic marginalization hypothesis

Theories of liberation were elaborated to explain criminality as a form of gender norm transgression. Women were described to be as violent and aggressive as men (therefore as 'able' to be criminals as men), which reproduced gender stereotypes. Theories of opportunity fall short in interpreting the motive as merely instrumental without providing a context. For this reason, some feminist criminologists have been concerned with constructing women not as criminals but as victims of criminalization. In outright rejection of the liberation and opportunity theses, Radosh (1990) argued that "women who commit the bulk of crime cannot be characterized as liberated and independent. Instead they are poor, working class women who have always worked outside of the home" (as cited in Hunnicutt and Broidy 2004: 132)

This argument is still widely supported today. Official statistics in certain countries reveal that typical women who engage in illegal activities are lower class women who tend to commit 'traditionally female' crimes, as minor drug offenses or petty theft, and are generally extremely poor, belong to a minority and single heads of

[25] Although many men and women who deal drugs also consume, I will not be addressing literature on drug dealing for the sole purpose of consuming because it exceeds the purposes of this thesis.

households taking care of more than two dependent children[26]. (Gilfus 1992; Miller 1986; Zietz 1981; Chesney-Lind 1997; Steffensmeier and Allen 1997; Heidensohn 2012; Del Olmo 1997; Carlen 1992)

Despite the weight of this explanatory variable, contemporary feminist scholars have tried expanding the range of factors leading women to commit crime. As part of an ongoing effort, dating back to second-wave feminism (1960's-1980's), to 'un-gender criminology', authors have tried to break with the inherent victimization of women that has tended to imbue most of the literature on women and crime. However, many authors have agreed that the degree of autonomy women have when committing crime is limited and relational (thus linked to 'feminine' expectations). Sometimes it is connected to men and love, other times heavily determined by lack of viable economic opportunities and the need to survive. Further, the role of a low level dealer is a disempowered one. No matter how much 'control' a dealer seems to have, it is the riskiest and most exploited (and dispensable) position in the trafficking ring. (Lagarde 2003; Campebell 2008; Pontón 2013)

Multi-causal arguments

Campbell (2008) worked with women who smuggle drugs across the US-Mexico border. He argues that upper and middle level women's motivations to traffic are more

[26] The umbrella concept that serves to explain these women's situation is known as feminization of poverty. (Chant 2007)

related to the ability to gain power and build an identity through fashion (both factors that work in tandem with gender norms) whereas lower level women are concerned with 'putting food on the table'. (242) One of the most recent publications by Anderson (2008) presents an alternative to what she calls the "pathology and powerlessness" discourse on women and crime, focusing on women's active and necessary, although largely subordinate role, in the drug economy, exercised through 'relational' power. The author argues that whereas men retain more structural power (domination and control) through their participation in crime, women obtain relational or transformative power, which is rooted in "empowerment or the ability and competence to influence and achieve a desired outcome, and agency, which benefits the self and others." (Anderson 2008: 16) By constructing a multidimensional approach and focusing on women who consume and/or deal drugs, the author contends that women have power in and contribute to the illicit drug world. I agree with Anderson's (2008) attempt to distance herself from the 'pathology and powerlessness' narrative. However, I am also sensitive to the dangers of gendering the forms of 'power' that men and women can exercise, as Anderson contends in her separation of 'power-over' and 'relational power'. Both women and men may exercise either form or objective of an interaction or relationship, depending on the context.

Bourgois (2003) argues that, although women who deal drugs may invert patriarchal norms, they wind up reproducing and succumbing to them. The case study that the author details narrates how 'empowerment' was not appropriated as her own but

expressed through the romantic involvement with a man[27]. (Bourgois 2003: 226) Other authors, such as Torres Angarita (2008), have tried to understand the concept of choice outside of the "pathology and powerlessness" narrative as well. The aforementioned author studied the concept of romantic love as a factor that pushed women into crime alongside their partners in Ecuador, whether as a self-sacrificial act towards a future together or as a way to support or mend said relationship. The author argued that, perhaps, it is the "absolute absorption of social norms (where gender, class and race play a role) and not the transgression itself that may explain their present situation and incursion into crime."[28] (18)

As I will detail more thoroughly in my theoretical framework, none of these proved to fit my interviewee's responses. Without discounting the importance of the economic marginalization theory, it is necessary to continue exploring other possibilities within the framework of women's existence, or as Coba Mejía (2015) has phrased it, their "horizons of subjectivity", when looking at crime.

In an attempt to better understand why women continue micro trafficking after being incarcerated, it is necessary to ask whether it is mainly a matter of economic necessity or if there is another variable that is pulling and not pushing women to commit crime. Building on this scholarship, in this investigation, I hope not to obscure women's choices to participate in crime. Bandura's (2006) articulation is useful, where he states

[27] When the female character, Candy, los her lover Primo, Bourgois (2003) argues that she began acting like a man, neglecting her children, and displaying acts of violence, jealousy and revenge in public.
[28] In understanding gender and love through social constructs and discourses, one is not attributing their crimes to the female sex (biological explanation) or to a 'feminine essence'.

that "to be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances. In his view, personal influence is part of the causal structure...people…are not simply onlookers of their behavior. They are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them." (164)

Section 2. Methodology

The investigation is a qualitative, descriptive case study, conducted in Quito, Ecuador and surrounding area based on interviews and participant observation conducted in August 2015. In order to triangulate the main in-depth interviews, I worked with the Public Defender's office and interviewed Professors, NGO members and family and friends of (ex) prisoners. Throughout the three months of research (from late-June through early-September) 35 people were interviewed. Research was conducted within prison for a span of two weeks, and at other NGOs, the public defender's office, and universities in between. Given the difficulty in accessing such a marginal population, as well as the low availability and reliability of quantitative data on prison populations and drugs, (especially given how highly politicized the topic was upon my arrival), the idea of doing any form of quantitative study was out of the question.

I attempted to gather quantitative data from the Ministry of Justice itself on more than one occasion, as well as from the Public Defender's Office, Professors and the prison's administrative staff. Despite petitioning the data formally, as the Ministry of Justice instructed me to do, the request was never followed through. My other recurrent

visits yielded no results. The Public Defender's office shied away from handing me any data, first claiming that it was embarrassing given the poor methodology employed when gathering it, and later saying that they actually did not have what I was looking for. The data I have been able to assemble from some professors or interviews with various others is inconsistent and contradictory. The failure to find any reliable data for my thesis is, I believe, in direct relation to the turmoil that the government was experiencing during my fieldwork. Rafael Correa's authority was being contested by various sectors of the population, including the large indigenous population who mobilized themselves *en masse* from Loja to Quito, the southernmost province. In response, the government was applying harsher persecutory laws targeting political activists. The new penal code, or COIP (Código Orgánico Integral Penal), and the construction of the new prison that I worked at, completed and published in August 2014, were part of the punitive veer of the state.

I was not interested, however, in analyzing and comparing the greater patterns of female imprisonment, but more so in grasping why women continued dealing drugs after being imprisoned and what else was behind their more immediate motivations of survival or consumption. I am not attempting to generalize my conclusions, but more so to trace patterns in the particular lives of these particular women that might be able to point out or reveal greater issues and patterns elsewhere. Given the nature of cultural relativism, the investigation itself cannot be imposed on other similar populations either, but more so act as a guide or as an alternative way of approaching similar issues. I opted for the most

qualitative of all forms of research: ethnography- in-depth interviews and participant observation- or to be intimately involved with the people we 'ethnographers' study.

I employed the snowball method outside of prison when interviewing professors or members of NGO's, where my interviewees would talk to their friends or colleagues and later formally put me in contact through e-mail. Within prison, I presented myself as an independent social scientist, distancing myself from the Public Defender's office and the government. I announced I would be interviewing Ecuadorian women who had been imprisoned multiple times on minor drug offenses. I stated that I would be doing one-hour interviews in a private classroom in the workshop area of the prison with no cameras or microphones where only the interviewee and I would be together. The guards did not circle this area, but the outside courtyard and did not pose problems to activities done in the workshop. I did not ask that they be taken out of their cells for said purpose, but rather would approach them when they had a break and were out in the courtyard. I recorded, transcribed and translated all interviews conducted within prison from Spanish to English. Their names, as well as any information that could link my interviews to their persona (geographic or demographic), will remain anonymous and confidential.

Despite efforts to minimally tamper with the context one invades as an ethnographer, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent interviewees' responses are transparent or slightly modified for my ears. I remember when I first entered prison; I went to the Public Defender's Office in the women's pavilion where Dr. Gómez was helping some women out with legal issues. As she tried to resolve their cases, two other

women came in and asked what I was doing there, if I was a lawyer; their eyes sought for answers and traces of hope. I muttered, searching for words that wouldn't create so much distance (more than already existed) between them and I. In the past, when women were imprisoned in the Center for Social Rehabilitation in Quito (known as *El Inca*), they constantly received visitors: religious organizations, international human rights groups, curious individuals, and investigative bodies. According to Torres Angarita (2008), the regular influx of outsiders had made women grow weary and tired of 'well intentioned' people who never brought any changes to their imprisoned realities.

However, my entry into prison was quite different than Torres Angarita´s in El Inca in 2008. Whereas 'El Inca' was right in the city of Quito, the new prison or center for social rehabilitation 'Latacunga' is anywhere between an hour and a half and three hours from the capital (depending on traffic and mode of transportation). Given the new five-step rehabilitation program, women are only allowed a visit every fifteen days, at very specific times. Additionally, the entry of organizations and outsiders into prison is much more regulated than in El Inca, where people circulated almost every day and visitors were allowed to spend the entire day within the women's cells if they so desired. The women I interviewed in 'Latacunga' who had been imprisoned before had spent time in 'El Inca' and consistently said they understood now what 'being imprisoned' was like: they feel lonely, isolated, ever more hardened, distrustful, abandoned and worthless. The isolation and abandonment is compounded both by their location and stricter governmental policies regulating both incarceration and the information the government

wants to reveal about Latacunga[29]. My presence in Latacunga, one of a young, foreign woman who neither made promises or belonged to a particular organization, was not one that they were mistrustful of or indifferent to. The following excerpt form my field notes on that first day supports this:

> *I stepped outside the office for a second and began chatting with a woman who was waiting for a friend outside, and had asked me what I was doing. She told me desolately "we never get any visitors" and started crying when she said it. To which all I could do was lay my hand on her as consolingly as possible. I wasn't there to visit either, not really. After a while of chatting in the (Public Defender's) office, it was time to interact with the incarcerated women. They were piling up outside the barred window, observing me; I had invaded their monotonous space and would not go unnoticed. I walked outside and saw some women sitting on an over-turned goal metal looking structure, lounging after eating their tinned- packed lunch.*
>
> *As I approached them, I barely had a chance to ask more than their names, as they began firing questions at me: where are you from? Are you a lawyer? Why are you here? You work for the government? Aren't you scared of us? Ah! Argentina! At that point, I introduced myself formally and my interest in Ecuadorian women who had been imprisoned multiple times on micro trafficking charges in Quito. As soon as I mentioned reinsertion and rehabilitation they went crazy. Denunciations and stories of human rights violations swallowed the space around me: labor exploitation within prison, bathrooms with no doors, freezing cold-water showers at 5 a.m., worms in their food, 'lies, lies, lies'…There were other things that couldn't be ignored, like the supposed fact that 30 out of 850 women are employed in prison. Some of the workshops themselves either have no more room or insufficient material, or classes are cancelled for several days for example. The conversation quickly attracted more curious women, whose experience had now turned them into sole experts in my eyes; their knowledge was valuable to someone. Our conversation flowed from criticism, to laughter, intimacy and sexuality. They spoke of losing themselves in the harsh, timelessness of their daily living, of the*

[29] Thanks to my foreign investigator identity, I was able to access meetings with high-profile personalities within prison as well as a ceremony for graduates of educational programs within prison that revealed the importance of maintaining an image in regards to the promised five-step rehabilitation program. My experience in prison and interviews with imprisoned women and others, however, quickly disproved the government's 'success' discourse in regards to the recent transfer and inaugural rehabilitation program to reduce crime.

> *unknown whereabouts of their children, of the lack of cosmetics and jewelry, of men they missed and women they dated, of rice-fermented alcohol, rage and sedatives to sleep at night.*

My presence in prison, therefore, broke with the monotony of their daily living: a context where they barely had visitors, and also lacked other informers of routine and time, such as clocks and newspapers that made them feel completely disengaged with society and life. At the same time, the fact that I had been allowed to enter their highly monitored environment gave them hope that their existence wasn't completely forgotten. On another note, as part of the new rehabilitation policy, they weren't allowed out of their cells every day. In order to 'curb violence and corruption in prisons', they had very few resources to makes something of their time and wouldn't even allow women to have pens or pencils. Lack of resources and large amounts of time spent in one space with the same women had increased the level of stress, jealousy, rage and anxiety. The P.D. sketched out a room for me, where twelve cots fit that are shorter that the size of a median adult. The size of the room was most likely three by three meters, and usually shared by six or eight women. In their words, prison had turned into survival of the fittest, and where favoritism still persisted, so did anger and want of revenge.

When Dr. Gomez showed me around the courtyard, she pointed to the pavilion for women with priorities, which should be for older women, or women with health issues or lower sentences. In reality, according to the Public Defenders and the incarcerated women, money and power governed the selection process. Pavilion F was assigned supposedly to women who had committed 'medium' crimes (such as drug trafficking or

petty theft), and G for the truly violent crimes (homicide). Some of the women I interviewed mentioned preferring to keep to themselves because they were afraid of flying into a violent fit of rage, of bottled up tension, or simply to avoid any problems or gossip. All women spoke of a growing sense of mistrust and fear, where solidarity, camaraderie and companionship were generally harder to come by than in El Inca. They all wanted to talk, to have a moment of respite and share their stories, but they couldn't find someone (generally) with whom they didn't have to feel guarded or cautious.

As a researcher, I needed to distance myself both from figures of power and groups that they associated to assistance (such as religious groups), so as to not create any false expectations. I told them that I hoped to help them indirectly, by exploring the question of why women return outside of a deterministic explanation. This would be used by the Public Defender's Office as a guide when disputing forms of 'rehabilitation'[30] as well as reforms to the penal code that may adversely affect women's lives, as well as that of their families. The benefit to them, of course, is indirect if it ever reaches them. Despite establishing myself from the onset as an investigator who could neither help them with immediate resources or legal issues, I was someone who was there to listen. No matter how many times I repeated who I was, where I came from and what my ultimate goal was, they still presented me to their friends as the *gringa*[31] psychologist and were generally helpful and willing to provide as much detail and information as possible.

[30] It is important to keep in mind that a void rehabilitation program does not imply that the prison experience was inane or benign, but a thoroughly degrading one.
[31] This term is used in Latin America to refer to a foreigner, especially a white foreigner, specifically from the United States.

A woman, for example, took it as her job to go around the courtyard and cells spreading the word of what I was doing there and whom I was interested in interviewing[32].

After reading Torres Angarita's (2008) account of her experience in 'El Inca' as a researcher, I had expected to be immediately rejected by the incarcerated women. After all, I was just another curious spectator, a social scientist hoping to do more than 'add' to the existing body of knowledge on women, criminalization and drugs. My 'public defender assistant-researcher-psychologist-young Argentine woman' identity proved to be malleable and innocent enough where I did not pose a threat to anyone and was able to establish very profound and seemingly transparent conversations. It is important to mention, notwithstanding, that each interview varied in depth and length, depending on the disposition of women to speak and trust, as well as the prison schedule that regulated and constrained our time together. Torres Angarita (2008) stated that women were very suspicious of her intentions in El Inca and did not want to speak of the reasons that lead them to traffic or act as mules. According to her, the subject of drugs was taboo, one that made them feel guilty and they wished to forget. (21) In order to ask her interviewees about their experience as mules, she had to ask them indirectly and read between the lines and euphemisms. In her words, "fear and reticence to speak in prison have two explanations, one of external projection and the other of internal character" (22) and both were affected by the entry of organizations. On one hand, they wished to portray

[32] As an interviewee who had filmed a documentary in prison mentioned, having a task, no matter how petty, anything to occupy the mind and time, is essential to mental health when incarcerated.

themselves in a certain way through their narratives in order to receive more help and attention, and on the other, they were tired of unkempt promises.

In my experience, however, where they rarely received outside visitors, they did not care about my intentions but more so my willingness to listen. Despite the tears, pain and heartache that interwove all interviews, women's comments at the end made me believe the experience was almost cathartic for them; as though my seemingly non-judgmental, foreign persona served as the perfect medium to purge and confess. They mentioned feeling much better, as though weight had been lifted off their backs. Although I agree with Torres Angarita's (2008) comment about a relationship of unspoken hierarchy or authority between my interviewees and I, given my place as a student of higher education and theirs as prisoners (not one that I endorse of course, but one that they might have felt existed), I positioned my interviewees constantly as the sole experts of their experience as women and as prisoners. They were all perplexed when I expressed real interest in their lives, and repeatedly said they didn't know anything and had nothing to offer.

The first question I asked, therefore, was open-ended: *tell me about your life* and *how would you describe yourself?* In the process of answering such undefined questions, narratives that initially seemed scripted (as Torres Angarita noted), became more detailed and sincere. I thought I would have to practice more caution when approaching topics of drugs, as Torres Angarita had done, but, quite surprisingly, I did not find the topic to be unspoken of at all. In fact, the majority of women were in prison for drugs and had no

problem speaking of their incursions into drug dealing. Whether in private or public, women spoke from a place of power and agency, appropriating their *know-how* and reputation. Others, of course, spoke of guilt and shame, but did not necessarily position themselves as victims of greater structures in their narratives.

This became especially apparent when I had the opportunity to speak with women on parole that had to spend three days in prison as part of their transition to liberty. The subject of their entry into drug trafficking was clearly taboo, and even one of embarrassment at some level; when I asked them about their experience, they focused on denunciating the terrible living conditions in Latacunga (prison). When I questioned their incursion into crime, they opted for the 'victim' narrative, either blaming their incarceration on a supposed friend, boss, or sheer necessity. And despite the realness of necessity, I later learned from a social worker in prison that the stories these women were telling me were crafted and modified. As an example, I spent around three hours with a woman who had supposedly been handed a suitcase with drugs (to which she was oblivious to) and had been unjustly incarcerated. We shared a stroll in the park, food and a long, and what I thought was, honest conversation. However, upon interviewing a social worker, I learned that this woman belonged to an extremely powerful family that had made a business of selling drugs. The seemingly benign, sweet woman was also well known for exerting violence and treating her costumers aggressively, to a point where even the social worker spoke with caution and fear. The difference in both depth and transparency, and the appropriation of agency in women outside and inside of prison made me uneasy about comparing both. From a distance, it made sense for women on

parole or outside of prison to tread carefully when sharing their stories; they had no intentions of marring their transitions to freedom. For this and other reasons, I decided to focus on my interviews with women who had been imprisoned multiple times on micro trafficking offenses.

Section 3. Theoretical Framework

The focus of this thesis is not on the 'drug war' or the underpinnings of the drug world, or about the carceral institution per se. It is about the dialectic relationship between agency and structure that these women's narratives reveal in relation to selling drugs in a multiply constrained (by gender, class, race) environment.[33] As fleshed out in the previous section, the greater part of literature on women and crime has either spoken from a deterministic or overly individualistic theoretical standpoint, where the structural argument generally prevailed. Recently, however, scholars have attempted to explore women's incursion into crime from a multi-causal perspective, where reasons outside of the economic marginality hypothesis are incorporated. This chapter will first describe the discrepancies between the narratives of the interviewed women and recent literature. After, it will briefly summarize the main tenets of practice theory before focusing specifically on Ortner's (1989) theorization of practice theory and 'loosely structured actors'. The second section will focus on understanding how the motherhood and romantic love schemas are formed in the Latin American and Ecuadorian context. The

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[33] This thesis only attempts to understand men's roles in relation to women's lives, constraints and decisions. Lagarde's (2003) exposition concerning the debate about un-gendering female criminal theory is relevant to this point, as she cautions that the "circumstances and meanings of crime committed [by men or women] is different and determined by gender"(648).

third section will explore the flipside of maternity, ‘witchery’, and its applicability to my findings.

Discrepancies in the literature

As detailed extensively in the previous chapter, Hunnicutt and Broidy (2004) initially contended that the liberation (or opportunity) argument, based on Simon (1970) and Adler’s (1975) theories, should be re-conceptualized in tandem with the economic marginalization hypothesis. The authors believed that, as more women entered the labor force (pink collar), who had been previously marginalized (with a growing sense of ownership of equal rights and opportunities as women *vis à vis* men) their material reality could not match their idealistic reality. This, in turn, led them to enter crime as a way of acquiring full citizenship and harmonizing their material reality with their ideal reality. Despite the tentative yet inconclusive results of their argument, where the hypothesis of economic marginality most likely interacts with other factors, the women I interviewed were not part of any workforce, white or pink collar, nor were they in contact with feminist references. They worked in informal labor, as domestic workers or fruit vendors. Despite being acutely aware of their lack of material power, it was not narrated from a feminist ‘liberation’ perspective.

Torres Angarita (2008) also attempted to move beyond the economic marginalization hypothesis by suggesting that the ideal of romantic love is one that strongly motivates women to traffic drugs across borders. In appealing to these ideals, the

author argues, we should not disregard their agentive capacity, but more so appreciate it. As Mahmood (2005) reiterated, just because women embrace the “romantic love” narrative as a path to “self-realization” (i.e. being good mothers or good women), doesn’t exclude their agency. She argued that “agentive capacity is entailed not only in those acts that *resist* norms but also in the multiple ways in which one *inhabits* norms.” (Mahmood 2005:16) Although the women I interviewed did not transform their reality through the enactment of the schema but more so escaped it, Torres Angarita’s (2008) findings are both relevant and helpful to interpreting my findings. The women I interviewed had appropriated the romantic love schema before it shattered and they escaped it.

Anderson (2008) proposed an alternative to the “pathology and powerlessness” narrative, arguing that women played fundamental roles in sustaining the drug economy through the exercise of relational power (instead of ‘power-over’). This doesn’t help me interpret my findings because the women I interviewed did not generally consume the drugs they sold, nor were they working for or because of their partner. Moreover, they did not only exercise one form of power, associated to their gendered conditioning (‘relational power’ vs. ‘power over’).

Campbell (2008) argues that high and mid-level female drug smugglers will generally seek to acquire ‘power-over’ (material power that exceeds satisfying immediate needs). Low-level smugglers, however, will generally smuggle to survive and rarely seek to gain any other form of power. Despite suggesting that low-level drug dealers could gain independence from male control (234), he does not delve further into the

possibilities of agency for these women. This text is not conducive to understanding my interviewee's experiences. The lives of the women I interviewed, low-level dealers, embraced the independence afforded by drug sales and rejoiced living without a man, a freedom that had been denied to their mothers and their mothers before them. Autonomy and wellbeing proved for these women to be 'addictive', thus suggesting that Campbell's statement is neither profound nor conclusive.

Finally, Bourgois' (2003) chapter on inverting patriarchy through drug sales is appropriate to some extent, but falls short in explaining why the women I interviewed did not narrate their triumphs in selling drugs through their partners. Bourgois' interviewee, Candy, is a strong character who clearly gains power through her own work. When she speaks of overcoming depression and 'getting ahead', however, she explains it through a new romantic relationship. My interviewees suffered heartbreak, and love was an important component of their involvement with drugs, but in quite a different manner than both Bourgois and Torres Angarita argued. Notwithstanding, their work has been pivotal to understanding the underlying themes of my interviewee's narratives.

Practice theory

Before going further in exploring the workings of agency as I hope to conceptualize it, I'd like to briefly discuss the predecessors of practice theory. The relationship between structure and agency is one that transcends the history of social science. Structuralism (i.e. Lévi-Strauss) or functionalism (i.e. Durkheim) agree that

structure is superior to action, as object is to subject, where individuals are overly determined by the system they are part of. Individualists believe that humans are capable of intervening in a "potentially malleable object-world."(Giddens 1979: 56) Despite agreeing with a more voluntaristic as opposed to deterministic theorization of social sciences, classic scholars of cultural anthropology, such as Giddens (1979), contended that a proper account of human agency couldn't ignore the relation between structure and action. The author criticized that deterministic approaches to social science fail to acknowledge that social actors are conscious (to some extent) and have some (if not complete) information about the conditions of reproduction of the society they are a part of. (Giddens 1979: 5) As Berger and Luckmann proposed: "Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product."(1967: 61) No matter how subordinated the actor may be in a social relationship, it will always be of a dialectic nature, as the very fact of involvement in that relationship gives him or her a certain amount of power over others. (Giddens 1979: 6)

Therefore, the 1970's introduced a new paradigm of thought called practice theory, where theorists conceptualized the interaction between structure and agency not as oppositional but dialectical. Social and cultural constraints were intrinsically and contingently in dialogue with practices of social actors. Structure, according to Giddens (1979), is "not to be conceptualized as a barrier to action, but as essentially involved in its production" (70), as constraining *and* enabling agency. Within practice theory, a myriad of scholars have contributed their knowledge to expanding the field, such Bourdieu, Geertz, Foucault, Scott, and Williams, to name a few.

Bourdieu dedicated the bulk of his professional life to developing the notion of *habitus* or internalized dispositions. These are the "structured structures, generative principles of distinct and distinctive practices...different classifying schemes of classification principles, different principles of vision and division." (Bourdieu 1996:17) In other words, it is a doubly practiced structure that is both lived in or embodied in a public world, in the world of ordered forms, and an "enduring framework of dispositions stamped on an actor's being." (Ortner: 13) Foucault (1980), on the other hand, put forth a notion of discourse with established notions of culture that creates multiple unequal interactions between actors. The author's "paradox of subjectivation" states that the "very process and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the means by which the actor becomes a self-conscious identity and agent." (Foucault 1980 as cited in Mahmood 2005: 16) The circularity between structure and agency, however, as Ortner (1989) discusses, results in a central problem in practice theory: how can actors be such products of their own sociocultural context and transform their own existence, other than by accident?[34] (14)

Dialogue with Ortner (1989) and Mahmood (2005)

I found Ortner's (1989) theorization about practice theory particularly helpful to building a theoretical framework for my thesis. In confronting this central problem of

[34] This is closely tied to the notion of intention, in soft and hard definitions of agency, where the intention is either central or marginal to the exercise of agency. Giddens (1979) argues against this centrality, as retrieved by Ortner (2006): "too much focus on explicit intentions often obscures the fact that most social outcomes are in fact unintended consequences of action." (134)

practice theory, Ortner (1989) argued in *High Religion* that the founding of monasteries and rituals in Sherpa communities in Nepal were grounded on a common underlying structure. Thus, the author contended that cultural schemas or ordering patterns "order the ways in which people play conventional and historically novel encounters". (60) Ortner's theorization largely coincides with Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, an acquired system of generative schemes, a product of history that produces history that makes the "free production of all thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in particular conditions of its production." (Bourdieu 1990: 55) Yet, Ortner (1989) also makes a point of acknowledging that people are "always reinterpreting their situation, acting on it in their own terms and making the most they can-materially, morally, etc.-out of it." (100) As she reiterates, the challenge for practice theory is explaining how structures "may constrain actions and events without 'programming' actors". (126)

Perhaps, as Ortner (1989) wrote, it is because the ways in which schemas operate in any given context is flexible: "some actors are manipulating it, some are driven by it, some are moved by the logic of the moment and some use it to interpret the behavior of others." (142) Thus, there are many ways of 'enacting' (holding or being held by) the schema or culture, none of which exclude the possibility of agency. It may be, however and as I hope to put forth, that by moving beyond Ortner's (1989) insistence on understanding transformation through the schema, and exploring the porousness of "loosely structured" actors, we can understand how and why the women I interviewed escaped it.

Can practice theory and feminist theory aid us in understanding women's decision to sell drugs? Ortner (1989) posits that if actors are self-interested actors, then they 'use' culture but are not shaped by it, whereas if they just internalize and enact culture, a number of problems emerge. So how should the relationship between the interviewed women and their structure be conceptualized? In *High Religion,* Ortner (1989) wrote that structures pose problems to which actors respond to: "cultural schemas' are standard plots or structures that reappear and portray actors pressed by the contradiction of structures but also finding ways to resolve them that generate both *personal satisfaction* and *social respect*." (196) How do the women I interviewed resolve those contradictions?

In an attempt to better understand why women continue micro trafficking after being incarcerated, it is important to ask whether it is mainly a matter of economic necessity or if there is another variable that is pulling and not pushing women into committing crime. Contemporary criminological theories have moved towards assuming women are able to reflect and reason on their circumstances, rather than being conditioned objects. (Naffine 1996 as cited by Fili 2013) Building on this scholarship, in this investigation, I hope not to obscure women's choices in their incursion into crime. For these reasons, it is most appropriate to use practice theory as a framework to understand why these particular women chose to sell drugs.

Contrary to what Ortner (1989) develops throughout her book, the women I interviewed did not transform their reality grounding their behavior in the underlying structures. Though it could be argued that what is different and produces varied results is

the shift in context, the majority of women who lived in the same circumstances as my interviewees and had similar conditionings, had chosen to not sell drugs. Bourdieu (1990) wrote that because the habitus is a product of a particular class of objective regularities, it generates all 'reasonable', 'common sense' behaviors. (55) Given that the habitus may produce an infinite number of practices, the practice may be unpredictable but also limited in diversity. According to the author, it is *doxa,* or those deeply founded, learned, unconscious beliefs and values that are inscribed in our bodies. Embedded within us as self-evident universals that inform our actions and thoughts in a given context, doxa is "embodied history internalized as second nature and so forgotten as history." (56)

Mahmood (2005), for example, builds upon the notion of *habitus* in relation to the revival of the Mosque Movement in Egypt, by stating that a central topic explored within the scholarship has been the following: "do women contribute to reproducing their own domination and how do they resist or subvert it." The women she encountered were acting not to subvert a system that defined them as inferior to men but to reproduce it through their adherence to, practice of and engagement with the system and others, emphasizing their *femininity*.

Tradition, according to Mahmood (2005), must not be seen as a set of symbols and idioms that justify present practices, or an unchanging set of cultural prescriptions in contrast to what is modern. Instead, the "past is the very ground through which subjectivity and self-understanding of a tradition's adherents are constituted." (115) Agency may be dismembered from the duality of resistance and subordination and

instead seen as the "capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create and enable." (Mahmood 2005: 18) In the case of the mosque movement, it could be argued that women were able to become moral beings through the habituation to everyday practices, through the embodiment of rituals. There is a practicality that is embedded within the idea of their subject formation. As Mahmood (2005) states, "they viewed socially prescribed forms of conduct as the potentialities, the 'scaffolding'…through which the self is realized." (148)

In unraveling the 'self-willed obedience' of these women, Mahmood emphasizes especially the difficulties of separating the external pressures from a subject's own desires, when, in the case of the women of the mosque movement, it is this submission that allowed the self to achieve its potentiality. This allows us to understand Torres Angarita's (2008) argument about women acting as drug mules, stating that "…many times, women who violate the law are really adhering or appealing to their condition of gender…although economic motive could explain, by itself, the incursion of women in drug trafficking...this acquires more meaning if understood as a way to…fulfill the role socially assigned." (121)

In her research, drug trafficking (the response to contradictions) is performed on common underlying structures. They are transporting drugs for their lovers (acting as the submissive, giving wife living for others), in order to reach self-realization through *romantic love* and motherhood. Ortner (1989) argued that the foundation of monasteries were transformations on a common underlying structure through which both small and

large actors gained legitimacy in society by partaking in a heroic act. Those in high positions used it as a tool of legitimation, while those who had been denied that possibility were using it as a counterclaim, an instrument of self-empowerment and social assertion. (150)

In the case of my own research, however, women did not readily embrace the 'prescribed forms of conduct' to achieve 'self-realization' through motherhood. The 'resistance' or 'rejection' for the lack of a better word was instigated by the betrayal of their partner and the shattering realization that their own life projects of motherhood and romantic love were compromised. In unraveling what these interviewed women did (that is, sell drugs) it is necessary to understand the cultural and social patterns, as well as the historical processes, that moved them to act in a certain way. More importantly, it is necessary to ask: under what circumstances are *doxa* shaken? How are the alternative paths found? What are the available and alternative cultural materials that these women have access to?

The alternative path that these women chose is not grounded on a common underlying structure and this is the problem that I hope to explore in my thesis. These women escape the schema; they do not, as Bourdieu (1990) would say, "make questions on intention superfluous…in their production, but also in the deciphering of practices and work" (58) If anything, their choices bring forth the notion of a "loosely structured actor" that Ortner (1989) proposes as a conclusion to her book. In her words, this actor is

prepared "to find most of his or her culture intelligible and meaningful", but might "not necessarily find all parts of it equally meaningful in all times and spaces." (199)

Juliano (2005) once asked, in her seminal work on prostitution in Spain: "what are the real work options available to women within a certain age range, education level, ethnic group, in a determined geographic area?" (165). More specifically, she inquires: "What are the limits to individual projects that society establishes for 'good women'?" This question resonates with a central contradiction in the lives of poor women: how can they be expected to be 'good wives' and 'good mothers' when they are deprived of the material conditions to be able to satisfactorily fulfill that role? In the case of the women I interviewed, they are single mothers, posing an additional obstacle in their path towards being good women. As Juliano (2005) stated, maternity is a blessing when married and with the support of a male figure; single maternities are a disgrace in the eyes of society.[35] (82)

So, the question remains: how do women generally resolve the contradictions posed by their lack of material power and opportunities to gain an adequate income, and the demands of being a good mother and a good wife? What strategies do women employ within the common underlying structure, to reach some form of self-realization (through

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[35] A woman interviewed by Camacho (2001) in Quito, Ecuador mentioned "Una nació para sufrir…todas necesitamos del marido, aunque nos maltrate, pero es protección. Por los hijos y sobre todo por las hijas mujeres…porque los hombres ven una mujer sin padre y entonces piensan que es cualquier cosa y que puede ser cualquier cosa como la madre." (we [women] were born to suffer…we all need a husband, even if he mistreats us, because it is protection. For our children but especially for our girls…because men see a woman without a husband and they think she is a prostitute and that her daughter can also be one, like her mother. (148)

motherhood or romantic love)? It is not the majority but the minority of women living in the margins who resort to selling drugs. Out of a population of over 2.5 million people in Quito, roughly only 0.03% of the female population is in prison for selling drugs. As Bourgois (2003) mentioned in his book on crack selling in East Harlem, there is a 'culture of terror' dynamic that silences the peaceful majority of such impoverished neighborhoods and the media that distorts reality, sensationalizing crime to mainstream society. In order to understand how these women escaped or broke the schema, it is important to explore the schema itself. That is, the dichotomy of "good/bad woman" in the Latin American and Ecuadorian social imaginary, the obligation/blessing of motherhood, the concept of 'romantic love' and the meaning of agency.

Section 2. Motherhood and Romantic Love

In Latin America, women have been historically categorized across a traditional binary, inherited from the Spanish colonization, of virgin/prostitute, mother/witch (Camacho 2001). This traditional, dichotomous (and determinant) conception of gender has been highly contested for a myriad of reasons. However, the binary proved helpful in structuring my thesis and understanding the particular lives of the women I interviewed in their particular context. The following section will trace in detail the development of the legal and legitimizing plot, as well as the alternative plot narratives, available to these particular women in this particular socioeconomic and cultural context.

Motherhood

According to Lagarde (2003), the traditional, normative society in Latin America conceives the female body (at the core of a woman's condition) dually: as the maternal body that gives birth to others and as the erotic body that gives pleasure to others. In both cases, the body does not belong to her but is fragmented into bipolar positions that value it differently according to its use (morally positive if maternal and negative if erotic). (Camacho 2001: 153) Womanhood, therefore, is defined through motherhood; a woman is for others. Montecino Aguirre (1988) wrote the following regarding maternity in Chile:

> Being a woman is configured through maternity and this characteristic will frame her future and her relations to the world; she will assume the power of her presence in the quotidian and private world of reproduction, will attempt to find legitimacy in her role as a procreator within matrimony or will assume her maternity as 'single'…but she will always be the parent, the giver of life, the *mater*. (as cited in Camacho 2001: 155)

In this context, matrimony is considered the only socially accepted way through which a woman can earn a living, from which derives the sole social justification for her existence. This implies the following: giving children to the community, being under the protection of a husband, satisfying his sexual needs and taking care of the home. Through maternity, a woman realizes her 'natural vocation', given that her body is made to "perpetuate the human species." (Beauvoir 1954: 297) Additionally, the ticket into the world of maternity and matrimony is a woman's virginity. The social conception of

female sexuality as a taboo can be traced back to the *Genesis*, where Eve is punished for leading Adam to sin: "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you." (Genesis 3:16)

From that moment onward, female sexuality was seen as the basic 'error' in women, an error that distinguished women from men and justified their inferiority *vis à vis* men. According to Bunster-Burotto (1985), the different schemas that men and women are expected to abide by in this context can be understood as *machismo* or Marianismo. Marianismo is the worship of the Virgin Mary: she embodies both maternity and chastity, therefore being spiritually superior and teaching other women that her morality surpasses that of men. *Machismo* is the cult of virility, described as "exaggerated aggressiveness and intransigence in the interpersonal relationships between men, as well as arrogance and sexual aggression in the relationships between men and women." (Bunster-Burotto 1985: 299; Montecino Aguirre 1988; Camacho 2001; Torres Angarita 2008)

Against this background, it is possible to understand the Catholic standards that guide gender in the Ecuadorian, urban population, remnants of the Spanish Colonization. (Herrera Mosquera 2001; Camacho 2001; Torres Angarita 2008; Aguirre Salas 2010; Coba Mejía 2015) Second generation migrants (from rural to urban areas) and inhabitants of cities such as Quito live in a patriarchal society, built by the Christian-Catholic

tradition that characterizes most of Latin America. Carmacho's (2001) study of gender and abuse in poor urban sectors of Quito in the '90's further validates the statement that a binary continues to divide gender constructions in Ecuador. According to her findings, the key to understanding why battered women stay in their relationships is because 'without a man', not only do women have to confront multiple social challenges (charged with stigma), but also commit an aggression against their own 'self'. Given that women are constructed for 'others', either their children or husbands, it is difficult or impossible for them to construct an identity without them. She writes: "women have not only been constructed as 'beings for others', but more so through others, which means that we [women] exist and 'are' through the presence, affection and support of others." (148)

Romantic Love

Thus far, I have attempted to unravel part of the hegemonic schema of 'good woman'. Maternity, however, goes hand in hand with a modern idea of love known as *romantic love*, where the couple (the companionate marriage, the love relationship) acts as a mechanism of individualization. In studying the concept of modern love as an idea of emotional intimacy that is binding, it is important to understand how this is shaped not only by culture and emotions but also by structures of power.

In the seminal book *Modern Loves,* Hirsch and Wardlow (2006) explored the modern concepts of companionate marriage and romantic love across the globe. They argued that "to study gendered relationships, it is necessary to attend both to socially,

politically and economically structured inequalities within which couples negotiate…" (2) In a similar vein, Jimeno (2004) states that love is built on a relationship of power, where gender identities define the nature of the love relationship. Embedded within these identities are instructions for women about how to *be, feel and act.* Hirsch and Wardlow (2006) describe *companionate marriage* as a marital ideal in which emotional closeness is both one of the measures of success in marriage and a practice through which it is constructed and reinforced. According to Torres Angarita (2008) and Lagarde (2003), not only do the authors' ideas fit the greater Latin American cultural landscape on love, but also the Ecuadorian one

Familial ties are now subordinated to conjugal ties and the aim within this ideal is not reproduction but more so *individual fulfillment* and satisfaction. (4) Schmuckler (1984) has argued that the importance of affection in familial relationships (the core of companionate marriage) is built on a "mystified model of patriarchal dominance that develops in light of analysis of the process of social construction of a new concept of love between men and women: romantic love." (53) The instrumentalization of love to attain *personal legitimation* in turn purports a function within the social order.

In realizing oneself through the other, with the notion of constructing a future together built on companionate marriage, there is also an affective and existential dependence on the 'other' that cannot be ignored. As Schmuckler (1984) argues, in a romantic relationship, the 'other' becomes the means through which self-validation and self-realization are accomplished. In this ideal relationship, men are still expected to

economically support women, and women to exchange their own emotional or love services. The role of exchanging emotional services comes with a new morality for women, constructed on the idea of self-sacrifice, where a woman's needs are secondary to that of others.

Companionate marriage or love relationships are consolidated as elements of familial cohesion. However, as Jimeno (2004) sustains, the conception of a modern subject within such a system embeds the roles of emotions, love and life of a couple within personal identity. (22) Whereas the concept of romantic love is meant to lead to self-realization and respect from others, given its relation to an ideal of an adult's social identity, it can also be read as a more subtle form of subordination of women. (Lagarde 2003) Despite Hirsch and Wardlow's (2006) statement about individual agency and the companionate ideal (understood as "the product of deliberate strategizing on part of the self-conscious actors" (11)), this new concept of love cannot be divorced from the unequal power roles that forge such relationships of love. (Fraser 2005) The author argues that there is an idea of sacrifice underlying love relationships, where conventions related to it expect women to make their interests secondary to those of whom they love. (10) Furthermore, popular culture, media and other institutions foster a discourse that makes it difficult for women to exist outside of love relationships because love is endorsed, or accepted as, the central reason for living. In tandem with the idea of self-realization is Ussher's (1997) "fantasy of romantic salvation" where women see love as the main vehicle for liberation, as a force that will set them free.

What happens when the ideals of romantic love crumble? What if a woman wants to reach some form of self-realization outside of love or motherhood? In a neoliberal state, self-worth is typically defined by employment; work is the mode through which we reach self-fulfillment. (Juliano 2005) However, not everyone has the same opportunities to study or to be employed at a job that makes one feel valuable and knowledgeable. As Bourgois (2003) remarks, the lack of opportunities or cultural capital to acquire a job that provides some sense of personal dignity can be morally degrading, to say the least. So, what other options are available to women of certain demography, living in certain poor, urban neighborhoods in Quito?

As a point of departure, it is necessary to highlight that the "horizons of subjectivity", borrowing Coba Mejía's (2015) concept, are limited in a myriad of ways, especially in terms of legitimate and legitimizing narratives that women can choose from. As opposed to higher educated and middle-high income women in some societies, women in the lowest socioeconomic brackets of Ecuadorian society cannot choose between being a 'career' woman and/or a mother. Women can either be categorized as *Marianas* (idea of almost saintly, moral superiority), prostitutes, or mad/hysterical. (Torres Angarita 2007, 2008; Coba Mejía 2015)

Despite the increase in female participation in most, if not all, sectors of the economy in Ecuador ("La mujer ecuatoriana" 2014), over half of those women work in

the informal sector.[36] (Granda & Feijoó 2015) Juliano's (2005) remark on the options available to those living in the poor margins of the economy is useful to this discussion, as she writes about the 'puritan ethic' that guides our notion of work as a place of self-realization: "It is evident that satisfactory labor that allows for continuous personal development continues to be limited to certain creative activities, relatively autonomous, while the greater part of jobs imply precarious conditions, long hours, scarce wages and unsatisfactory labor relations." (127)

Périlleux's (2008) characterization of the Ecuadorian labor market and its development from the '80's onwards also points to the 'fragmented' cultural references of labor (in the incipient neoliberalism of the '80's) that led to a model of 'immediate personal satisfaction'.[37] (26) Deindustrialization, liberalization[38] of the labor market and the 'radicalization of individualism', according to the author, have created a workplace that no longer offers the same opportunities to conquer a sense of personal identity, especially in the case of women. (Périlleux 2008: 28) This is compounded by the fact that women were pushed into the market during the '80's, adding tension to the traditional

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[36] The economically active female population approximates 5,786,000 million women. However, only 3,019,000 million are currently employed. According to INEC (the National Institute of Statistics and Census in Ecuador), the informal sector is recognized as "a group of units of production that…form part of the household sector as household enterprises; that is, enterprises that belong no those households and are not constituted in society. Specifically, the informal sector is composed by: enterprises where at least 10 employees are hired; and 2) enterprises and do not have an accounting record or 3) don't have an identity number (RUC)." (Granda & Feijoó 2015: 26)

[37] Chavarría (--) specifically points to the 'politics of subjectivity' of the work space, pointing to a "method of programming human life that transforms professional competencies into 'human capital', which turns the work space into a place where each one must exploit their resources, capitalizing in this way human existence." (as cited in Périlleux 2008: 26)

[38] The liberalization of the labor market in the neoliberal period refers to labor policies installed to 'reduce unemployment' through non-regular contracts. These do not have social security benefits or health insurance.

family model where the father was the sole provider and the mother was the caretaker/homemaker.

The feminization of poverty speaks of the dismemberment of families that has led many women to occupy the role of head of household. In addition to being caretakers/homemakers, now many women have to be sole providers. In this context, therefore, the jobs available to women that have not had higher education are either in the informal market (i.e. selling items such as fruit on the streets, public transportation or neighborhood markets, or washing clothes for others), domestic work or unskilled employment in the service or industrial sector. It is not, as Juliano (2005) remarks, possible to say that these labor options imply freedom, as they would not have been chosen as an element of self-realization had the immediate need to survive not been in the way. (127)

The 'professional career path' to self-realization, therefore, may be closed to women living in poor sectors of society. However, what of the counter to the binary? That of a witch or prostitute? Although not recognized as 'legal' or valuable, there are alternatives available to women outside of unskilled labor/homemaker role that are more profitable, but morally stigmatized and of great risk. Cárdenas and Undurraga (2014) recently argued that women in Chile who sell drugs on the street find this activity to be an alternative way of socially integrating. (293) In the 1980's and 1990's, in an epoch of unemployment, high inflation, and restructuring of society and the economy, men and women quickly joined the ranks of the drug world in hopes of securing higher profits. As

I reiterated in the previous pages of my thesis, the question that I am posing is if women deal to primarily support their families or if they are able to acquire a sense of 'personal fulfillment' or legitimation through the illegal activity.

In opposition to the image of *Mariana* is that of Eve, synonymous to sin, eroticism, but also curiosity and want of knowledge. Interestingly enough, the social imaginaries constructed around 'witches' and 'prostitutes' that are associated to Eve are of dangerous and *active* or *agentic* women. Lombroso and Ferrero pointed this out more than a century ago in their book *Female Offenders.* Chesney-Lind (1991) stated, on this topic: "harsh public punishments of a few 'fallen' girls and women as witches and whores has always been integral to the enforcement of boundaries of good girls and women's place in patriarchal society." (5)

Ortner (2006) recently wrote along similar lines, arguing that, consistently, "active female characters in tales are wicked-wicked stepmothers and witches who have evil projects and seek by evil means to carry them out". (140) Carlen (1985) has also remarked that any assessment of female criminality has generally been given in terms of a woman's failure to adapt to the 'biological' destiny of motherhood/wife. (1) Del Olmo (1998), writing from a Latin American standpoint, further confirms this duality as important to criminological theory, positing: "from the end of the 19th Century onwards, the mysterious powers attributed to the witches of earlier centuries have been attributed to the scientifically diagnosed female criminal." (23) In this context, the woman is the

'imperfect' yet 'seductive' therefore 'dangerous animal'.[39] (*The Witch's Hammer* 1484) Women are always treading a fine line between sin and sainthood, between decency and purity, sexuality and shame. If a woman breaks or transgresses the boundaries established by the schema, then how do they gain legitimacy in society? If they are no longer able to reach self-realization through motherhood or romantic love, and a legal, professional career path is out of reach, what other options are available?

Section 3. The 'Loosely structured' actress: witches and agency

In light of the previous section and the short discussion on witches and prostitutes, I'd like to start with Ortner's (2006) relevant quote about agency and 'wicked' women in fairytales:

> These women are highly agentic: they have projects, plans, plots. Needless to say, they all come to terrible ends…Since she and similar characters have done wicked things, their punishments seem justified on moral grounds, yet within the general pattern of punishing any sort of female agency, it seems fair to suggest that they are punished as much for their excessive agency as for its moral content. (141)

The author continues to explain that women who abide by the gendered expectations in fairy tales, waiting for their 'Prince' in all their beauty, fragility and gentility, are worthy of marriage. Those who transgress these boundaries (witches) are

[39] Women who have opted to be mothers, but not dedicate themselves entirely to the labors of motherhood (or postponed the), are a threat to the social order. Female sexuality is seen as a force that has the potential to destroy social order, an obstacle to harmony. Women are capable of materializing through physical contact. In their bodies, they carry the potential to transmit through reproduction. This implies that their power to reproduce could shatter socioeconomic or ethnic boundaries, for example. According to Chow (2005), "female sexuality can only be allowed to enter a community in its least transgressive and contagious form." (40)

punished. Of course, this is not to say that women in Ecuador can be described through a ‘fairy tale’ framework, but more so to point out the historical and literary (thus social) link that witchcraft and agency have had in our imaginaries. I do not intend to say that to exercise agency a woman has to be a ‘witch’, or that the women I interviewed were not hoping to have a ‘fairy tale’ ending. A general pattern I traced in their life stories reveals that, despite adopting drug dealing as a way of life and as an economic activity, they did not initially act with the same intentionality as the second and third time out of prison. These decisions were at times motivated by their partners, and usually by their obligations as mothers. At the same time, it is important to remember that, as Juliano (2005) suggests, despite the scarcity of options available to these women, they had other options. Not better paying options or more self-affirming ones, but options nevertheless. (128) This adds another dimension, one that, as Bourgois (2003) argues, speaks of a ‘search for respect’.

In the exploration of agency, I wish to differentiate my operationalization of the concept from ‘empowerment’. This concept was elaborated in the 1970’s and 1980’s and used to speak of the distribution of resources through gender by Third World Feminists. Initially, it was elaborated as a relational form of power (or *power to* that speaks of the capacity to incite meaningful change).[40] (Troutner and Smith 2004: 5-6) This form of ‘empowerment’ was interactional in nature, although it had an individual-level dimension as well (*power within* or affirmation of the individual). According to Rowlands (1997):

[40] The dichotomy of power over vs. relational power is reminiscent of that used by Anderson (2008) when speaking of women’s roles in the underground economy of drugs.

> …empowerment is more than participation in decision-making. It must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions…it consists of increases in self confidence and self-esteem and a sense of agency and of the self in a wider context, and a sense of *dignidad* (being worth of having a right to respect from others). It is a form of self-understanding that enables and inspires women to recognize and challenge gender inequality. (as cited in Troutner and Smith 2004: 6)

Despite this definition being useful to the overall intent of this thesis, two problems stem from its use. First of all, it implies a reactionary and collective organizing of women working towards 'meaningful change'. Second, the concept of 'empowerment' has become fashionable in the past decades, becoming diluted and overused, thus giving an impression that empowerment is both connected to economic development and to the top to bottom work stemming from NGO's and international agencies towards poor women (when it was initially constructed as a grass roots term encompassing community based action). For example, the process of female 'empowerment' through economic activity has been debated extensively, mainly steering objectives of international organizations such as the United Nations or NGO's. This was done in order for women to "participate fully in economic life across all sectors [which] is essential to build[ing] stronger economies, achiev[ing] internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improv[ing] the quality of life for women, men, families and communities." ("Women's empowerment" 2011) Inherent in this definition are the overall goals of the neoliberal state that defines humans through the value of their economic participation in society as producers and consumers.

Schild's (2007) research on women as "neoliberal consumers" in Chile analyzes activism stemming from the work of NGO's and other organizations in poor communities. According to the author, it has mainly resulted in new forms of clientelism, posing women as the new clients of the neoliberal state. Further, as Lind (2005) argues in her book on Quito and women's collective organizing, despite there being greater awareness on issues of gender equality and rights, women have also further embodied their roles as mothers in order to survive in the neoliberal state. The author refers to this process as *mothering the crisis,* where women have used their traditional gender roles to "survive economically, to take care of their family; to preserve tradition, a set of values, role of activity; or to challenge traditions, values, and societal inequalities." (95) In this process, she writes, the livelihoods of women have become ever more eroded and their 'struggles for survival' have become institutionalized. The world is growingly governed by neoliberal ideals, such as the *ethos* of reason and profit-seeking, where 'women and men' are 'free and equal, and posited as "full subjects capable of self-understanding, self-consciousness and self-representation." (Mbembe 2003:13) The culture of individualism further privatizes moral responsibility and struggles to survive, freeing the state from its responsibility towards the citizens. In a society where some are denied full citizenship while others are born with it because of their social standing or gender (Coba Mejía 2015), how can women and men in the margins acquire some form of legitimation and participate in mainstream society?

According to Ortner (1989), everyone seeks legitimation, whether big or small. She builds on this idea by bringing forth Foucault's (1980) argument of power as a

matrix, belonging both in the political and social life, where those in dominant positions are not sole owners of power. Everyone is engaged and positioned through the matrix of power with respect to legitimation. (150) Processes of deindustrialization and de-peasantization induced by neoliberal policies have pushed both men and women in the urban decay of Quito to the brink of survival. However, a persistent patriarchal structure that assigns gendered plots and different histories of drug involvement and criminalization makes it difficult to speak for both sexes. For this reason, it is useful to point out Anderson's (2008) remarks on the gendered difference (supported by Bourgois's (2003) earlier study on male crack dealers):

> Motherhood identity is one that consistently anchors women into mainstream society and provides them with a source of empowerment outside of drugs. Because inner city drug using and selling males are largely absent from parenting and lag behind women embracing employment in the secondary labor market, they have fewer resources for identity empowerment outside of the illicit drug world. (27)

Bourgois's (2003) study supports Anderson's (2008) claim. The author wrote of men who had in fact abandoned their former partners and children[41] and lived in the impoverished, decaying inner city. They lacked the cultural capital to enter the service sector and simultaneously rejected the 'unskilled' role assigned to them in the workforce. For this and other reasons, they found a sense of personal dignity (counter to the positive one established by the 'small' Sherpas in Ortner's (1989) book) in the sale of drugs.

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[41] Varea's (2008) study of adolescent, single mothers in Ecuador reaffirms this notion of differential paths available according to gender. In her words: "adolescent mothers, the majority of times, expect to bring up the children alone with the support of their families…the girl's daughter, the majority of the time, will be absent, he'll come and go: he's replaceable." (67)

If I am proposing that women living below the poverty line in the urban fringes of Quito are opting out of the cultural schema available to them to gain 'legitimacy' in society, is it because they create the alternative or because it is presented to them through media, friends, or counter-hegemonic discourses? When Ortner (1989) presents the notion of 'loosely structured actor', she points out that the theoretical issue is how the alternative perspectives are 'chosen' or interact with the actor, as opposed to the hegemonic one. The author states that a cultural schema will generally be reproduced (if people can't see an alternative or if they do not have power to institutionalize it) or changed (if alternatives either become visible or if actors gain enough power to materialize them). (201) The women I interviewed clearly lacked power to institutionalize an alternative; the possibility of trafficking and selling drugs, however, became a viable work option in the '80's and '90's when the country experienced severe economic crises, political instability and high migratory movements. (Coba Mejía 2015; Torres Angarita 2008; Nuñez Vega 2005)

Reiterating what Ortner wrote, while some actors may be driven by cultural schemas at some moment in time, others may be manipulating or shifting it to find a "fit between personal circumstances and cultural stories." (143) Once these women were incarcerated and abandoned with children to provide for, their means of gaining legitimacy through the good mother and good wife framework were dissolved. Coba Mejía (2015), when writing of criminalized women in Ecuador, states: "biographical memories weave subjectivities from the field of structural violence…and mold moral relations between them…whose fundamental, affective utopia constitutes the symbolic

mother, imaginary Eden and mooring to which one can return…"(6) The women I interviewed, I argue, wish to 'return' to their lair or hideout (that is, motherhood) on their own terms. As Ortner (1989) argues, "everyone seeks legitimation…if everyone in some sense is operating with respect to the matrix of power, then one must also accept the idea that everyone is similarly engaged in, or positioned with respect to, legitimation". (150)

Bourgois (2003), for example, argues that, despite the (self) destructive and violent nature of these oppositional practices, "street culture offers and *alternative forum for autonomous personal dignity*-in defiance of racism and economic marginalization" in the case of Puerto Rican men who sell drugs in East Harlem. (8) The narratives documented by the author are knitted by the historical workings of social, political and economic structures that have pushed Puerto Rican migrants further and further into the impoverished margins of society. Despite living as disenfranchised citizens and unskilled labor, none of the interviewees considered themselves as victims. They constructed their 'selves' as responsible for their plight, shielded by the underground economy (for the most part) from facing the fact that they were "socioeconomically superfluous to mainstream society." (119)

Their aspirations as children, symbols of masculinity (strength and capacity to provide for family), were to work in factories as their fathers had. However, the process of deindustrialization that shifted labor options to the service sector from the '50's to the '80's left second generation Puerto Ricans in a vulnerable situation of income reduction, unemployment, erosions of unions and benefits. The unskilled labor outside of high

corridor office jobs pays minimum (barely livable) wages they were not willing to accept, yet they lacked the "cultural capital" that service sector jobs call for. Moreover, the norms that govern service sector jobs available to them place them in "direct contradiction to the street culture's definitions of personal dignity, especially for males who are socialized not to accept public subordination" (Bourgois 2003: 115)

Therefore, the problem crack dealers face with the legal market is that they can only compete with work that fails to provide livable wages. In this context, crack dealing and unemployment are culturally redefined and worn with a badge of pride, where refusing to work 'honestly' for low wages is defined as dignity on the streets. (Bourgois 2003: 130) Heidensohn (2012), who theorizes male and female criminality, stated that, in a context of poverty and unemployment, men will resort to crime as a way of 'doing masculinity', asserting their 'manliness' when unable to fulfill the role of economic provider. (349) In the same way, Bourgois (2003) concludes that his interviewees did not passively accept their structural victimization: "by embroiling themselves in the underground economy and proudly embracing street culture, they are seeking an alternative to social marginalization." (142)

Just as the crack dealers of East Harlem sought alternative means to reach the ideal of 'masculinity', the women I interviewed traced different trajectories to womanhood, where they did not need to be economically dependent and tied to a man in order to achieve legitimacy (that is, self-realization through romantic love). Whether primarily pushed into selling drugs out of necessity, all women interviewed did not only

seek money (which provided them with material power or economic independence) but also purpose, meaning and wellbeing. Like the drug dealers Bourgois (2003) documents, the women I interviewed were unable to be *Marianas* after being imprisoned, and therefore embraced drug dealing as an alternative method of achieving, at least partly, the feminine expectations of maternity. In being able to earn their own resources without anyone's help, their sense of self-respect and relevance developed and became grounded within them.

Agency, therefore, will be defined as the ability that women have to act on their "own behalf, influence other people and events and maintain some kind of control in their own lives." (Ortner 2006: 142) As the author explains, it is two-dimensional, related to both ideas of power (resistance and domination) and intention (people's culturally constituted projects in the world and their ability of interact with them). (142) I will code these acts of 'agency' as they relate to: resisting the state's imposition of a *bare life* (Agamben 2004) as a good woman and a good consumer citizen, embodying the role of providers, striving to live autonomously, defining themselves as women outside of motherhood, exercising material power and claiming their right to exercise it, and finally, deciding the terms by which they'd like to enact the motherhood schema.

The first chapter will focus on the historical context and intersecting structures that constrain, produce and interact with women's choices. As Juliano (2005) emphasizes, individuals who dedicate themselves to drug trafficking do not do so within a social vacuum. They are pressured by a determined "horizon of real possibilities" (162),

a framework within which their options are legible and become palpable. One must understand the choice of selling drugs (because there are alternatives within their constrained horizons), as an option within other options, or, even more so, as a survival or self-affirmation strategy. (162) The subsequent analysis chapters will explore the following sequence as an alternative trajectory:

- Union/Marriage: consummated ideal of *romantic love*
- Motherhood as legitimizing passage to womanhood in sociocultural context
- Self sacrificial existence: abnegated mother, submissive wife
- Betrayal: partner commits one or several acts of infidelity and leaves woman
- Shattering of ultimate ‘family’ objective: woman enters depression, starts (or continues) selling and/or consuming drugs and alcohol
- Woman is sole provider through drug dealing
- 1st or 2nd Imprisonment
- Continued role as drug seller: woman now adopts role of material provider for children. Gains independence and *wellbeing.*
- 2nd or 3rd imprisonment
- Re-appropriates “motherhood narrative” (in the eyes of an outsider) as road of redemption without male provider, retaining independence yet regaining legitimacy through socially accepted mode of self-realization. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether this will really happen once outside of prison or if it I (as a young woman) acted as a confessional vehicle through which they could imagine an alternative.

In the second chapter, I will argue against the ‘good woman’ and ‘good consumer citizen’ narratives that have dominated scholarly debate on women and drug dealing, analyzing women’s enactment of, but also rejection of, expectations inherent to the schemas imposed on by the state and society. I will build on Schild’s (2000) concept of empowered citizen consumers, where the women I interviewed refused to consume to survive and instead exercised ‘agency’ as mainstream consumers through the sale of drugs. Given that the notion of citizenship in the neoliberal state is tied to participation in

the market, this enabled them ‘to integrate into society’. The third chapter will explore how women enacted the romantic love ideals, defining themselves through self-sacrificial and devotional love relationships to reach self-realization, until they were shattered. I argue that the literature that has explored drug dealing and love (Bourgois and Torres Angarita) cannot explain what followed in these women’s lives, which was a rejection of the traditional gendered schema that relied on a man to regain self-worth. Here, I dispute Ortner’s (1989) statement that the “schema plot” is grounded in recognizable practices of ordinary life, shaping practices as much as practices are constituting the grounds of schema” (74), building instead on her idea of a ‘loosely structured actor’ that appropriates other alternatives and escapes the schema.

The fourth chapter describes how women escaped the traditional ‘woman as wife and mother’ schema, treading on a thin line between the binary of witch and mother. This is expressed in their desire to deal not only to sustain their children, but also to uphold a sense of wellbeing. Agency can also be understood as their perceived sense of competence and skill as drug dealers, unavailable to these women through other employment options. Given that self-affirmation and self-realization are part of agency, and, if acquired through employment, also define our value in society, this dimension of drug dealing will be explored. The last chapter will lead us to women’s ‘tragic end’; as witches, their ‘savage passion’ and autonomous lifestyle cannot go unpunished. I will describe the prison I worked at and the effects it had on women’s sense of self and worth, especially as it relates to drug dealing and their multiple imprisonments. I will close with a rather unorthodox section where women speak of the desire to define themselves as

mothers but also as women who are competent and independent, capable (and deserving) of finding personal meaning in this ever more fragmented and individualistic world.

Low-level dealing, therefore, not only generates more money than their available options, it also adds other dimensions to these women's lives that are products of their new found autonomy. This comes from working a job that requires more skill, that is risky and profitable, that allows them to access goods and services. At the same time, others perceive them as experts in their field, as brave and fierce, as independent and confident. Micro-trafficking, presents an opportunity for women not only to feed and sustain themselves and their children, but also to participate in society as independent agents, who, despite the illegality of their work and the harm that may later come to them and their children if imprisoned, choose to change the course of their lives.

Chapter 1: The historical context and intersecting structures

The following chapter will unravel the historical processes that have embedded structural violence into these women's 'horizons of subjectivity' (Coba Mejía 2015), describing the ways in which structures intersect and interact with each other. The interviewed women, despite differences in their motives and life stories, shared contextual patterns that may have pushed or pulled them in certain ways when deciding to sell drugs. Intersectionality, as previously defined by Crenshaw (1993), speaks of 'intersectional subordination' produced by the convergence of race, class and gender, the "imposition of one burden that interacts with preexisting vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment." (4)

The majority of the female incarcerated population in Ecuador (and in both regional and global accounts) starting in the '80's and '90's belongs to both the lower socioeconomic rung and ethnic minority groups. In the United States, for example, where the female incarceration rate increased by 750% between 1977 and 2004 (doubling the rate at which men are incarcerated), "African American women are six times more likely than white women to face imprisonment." (Balfour 2012: 3) In other 'first-world' countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom, the prison population is equally racialized, where 72.5% of the female prison population is indigenous and 28% are ethnic minorities, respectively. (Balfour 2012: 3) As Balfour (2012) stated, it is not only that the women incarcerated, generally for drug related offenses, belong to ethnic minorities. They are also poor and have extensive histories of physical and sexual violence imbuing

their livelihoods. Ortiz and Barriga (2015) and Cárdenas and Undurraga (2014) affirm that women who sell drugs in Chile (now incarcerated at a greater rate than men) are poor and need "easy money" in order to satisfy immediate needs[42]. Spedding (2008) wrote that the majority of incarcerated women[43] in Bolivia are "economic criminals." The fact that they engage in illegal activity, according to the author, is a direct consequence of structural national and international issues, and not of their own lack of education, antisocial attitudes or lack of abilities. (Spedding 2008: 238) The incarcerated represent a portion of the 'discarded population' of global capitalism that was not absorbed by formal labor.

Both Lind (2005) and Coba Mejía (2015) have mentioned the disproportionally Afro-Ecuadorian and indigenous make up of the excluded population in Ecuador, as well as the comparatively higher female population of African-descent in prison[44]. The population of women I worked with belonged to, as Crenshaw (1993) states, the sites of multilayered vulnerabilities. Not only do gender and race affect their comparatively lower salaries and economic opportunities. (Rivera 2013) An additional factor linked to gender is sexual violence. According to recent publications, an average of six out of ten women are sexually abused throughout their lifetime in Ecuador. ("Diagnóstico de Violencia" 2013) The fact that they had all been imprisoned multiple times is a result, in large part, of the structural violence that permeates their livelihoods.

[42] They do not, however, explore the racial backgrounds of the interviewed.
[43] According to Maldonado (2007), 66% of Bolivians identified as indigenous in 2001, (21) and the impoverished population is either indigenous or *mestiza*.
[44] Around 10% of the total national population is of African descent in Ecuador. 21% of the female incarcerated population is of African descent (Coba Mejía 2015: 4)

This is not surprising given the history of exclusion and exploitation, and the desire to *whiten* Ecuadorians, inherited from the Spanish Conquest. The system of *haciendas*, which expanded over the Andean highlands from the mid 1600's to the 1960's, placed both indigenous people and African slaves at the mercy of the *hacendatarios's* whims and inhumane treatment. It was not until the Agricultural Reforms in 1964 and 1973 (under the military regimes[45]) that the *huasipungado* finally came to an end. Communities of African descent[46] and indigenous communities[47] have historically relied on intense agricultural labor. The re-structuring of the primary sector in the late '80's and '90's in tandem with labor concentration in the urban centers of Quito and Guayaquil, led to higher rates of poverty, fragmentation of families and overall increased precariousness. The economic crisis, dollarization of the economy, destruction caused by El Niño, and political instability compounded the already dire neoliberal state from 1998-2000. It caused intense waves of migration both towards national urban centers and foreign countries, such as Europe and the United States.

[45] The agricultural elites had amassed great power from the colonial era to the 1960's through the *haciendas.* Krupa (2010) argues that there is great significance in the fact that that the reforms were passed by military juntas, given that they were formed by urban middle class families "whose political aspirations had been blocked by highland and coastal elites since Independence." (333) The plan, according to the author, was do centralize power in the state and initiate a plan of national development no loner guided by the particular interests of the traditional, regional elites.

[46]Largely concentrated in the Coastal province of Esmeraldas, one in four of the poorest provinces in Ecuador, where approximately 75% of the population lives below the poverty line. ("Ecuador: Pobreza se concentra" 2014)

[47] The indigenous in Ecuador are disproportionately poorer than white/mestizos. According to Maldonado (2007), poverty as measured through consumption in 2006 continues to disproportionately affect the indigenous population, where 67.9% of indigenous are poor compared to 45% non-indigenous who are poor. This trend can be tracked historically through official statistics. (30)

By the time Rafael Correa took office in 2006, promising to expand the welfare state and end the 'long neoliberal night', poverty had already become structural. He did in fact reduce the national poverty level, increased levels of education, lowered the gender wage gap, and built his regime on protecting human rights. However, his reliance on the oil exploitation and the gradual securitization of the state has revealed cracks in his '21st Century Socialism' discourse. Neoliberalism continues to be a prevalent form of governance. As Harvey (2005) wrote, the "redistributive effects and increasing social inequality have in fact been such a persistent feature of neoliberalization as to be regarded as structural to the whole project." (16)

Rivera's (2013) findings on discrimination and labor based on the economically active population in Ecuador show that, belonging to a minority group, whether indigenous, black, *mulato* or Afro-Ecuadorian, negatively affects salary. Labor discrimination is further compounded by gender. By 2012, "men's average salary was reduced by 3.1% and women's by 7% for belonging to these minority groups." (17) Moreover, women make up around 40.2% of the economically active population in the informal market, a market that is unstable and exploitative. ("Mujeres y mercado laboral" 2014) The crises in the early 2000's increased the number of women in search of labor, who inserted themselves in the informal market as merchants or domestic workers, as prostitutes or drug dealers. Crenshaw's (1993) intersectionality again becomes relevant to this analysis, as it exposes the multilayered dimensions of the constraints the women I interviewed faced.

As Coba Mejía (2015) wrote in her recent book *Sitiadas,* women who sell small quantities of drugs in Quito "live illegality and extreme exclusion" (2) in "territories of alienation" or unstable structures, "products of multiple abandonments and uncertainty as quotidian normality". (my translation) (5) These structured structures of violence are, in turn, invisibilized through their normalization, as Bourdieu (1990) described: "An institution, even an economy, is complete and fully viable only if it is durably objectified not only in things but also in bodies, in durable dispositions to recognize and comply with the demands in the field." (58) The first section will focus on the specific political economic structures that have defined, restricted and formed these women's options and opportunities, introducing the role of neoliberalism in the 1980's. The second will focus on the racial and gendered violence that women suffer in the urban margins of Quito. The third will delve into prison history in Ecuador as it relates to the drug war, and the effects of incarceration on the bodies and minds of these women as well as the repercussions on their families and personal lives upon release.

Section 1: Political Economy in Ecuador

The Ecuadorian economy has historically relied on primary exports, whether it was cacao, or bananas in the 1940's to the late 60's, and later petroleum. Foreign interests began forming part of the economic and political landscape in the early 20th Century, investing in various projects related to mining and oil, and influencing governmental reforms and policies in their favor. Exporting bananas, according to Acosta (2006),

rescued Ecuador from a severe depression in the late '40's and '50's. However, "the trigger [to export] came [again] from outside…external demand drove an activity forward that would deeply influence the Ecuadorian society and economy." (99) The profits rose during the post-World War II period, forging a commercial relationship with Europe and the U.S. through the export of bananas. This moment of bonanza largely favored the commercial and financial sector tied to the export market. The state had no interest in articulating any social demands or instituting a more autonomous form of development, thus providing the means for a new alliance to form, integrating the traditional elite with a 'modernizing' one. (Acosta 2006:112) Hierarchical social, economic and political relations remained intact, mirroring those imposed during the colonization period[48]. It would not be until mid 1960's when the *huasipungo*[49] would finally disappear.

The export of bananas greatly impacted the Ecuadorian economy, much more so than cacao, expanding the agricultural frontiers to new areas in the coast. It incited a wave of migration from the highlands to the coast, and accelerated urban development in cities such as Quito and Guayaquil. (Acosta 2006: 99) This in turn led to the strengthening of the internal market given the diversification of the economy, the emergence of new wage relationships, the increase in public infrastructure and the non-

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[48] According to Krupa (2010), "the political power that *hacendados* exerted over the Ecuadorian highlands form the mid-1600s to the 1960s was tied to their early monopolization of productive lands in the countryside. In the early 1600s, individual Spaniards and clerical orders began to privatize Crown lands and attract indigenous families to them with promises, often fraudulent, of shelter from the heavy tribute and labor demands of the colonial state. As a result…by at least the 17th Century, the hacienda controlled the major part of workable lands and became the axis of society and economy in Quito…the 'majority of Indians had to inscribe themselves in the haciendas in order to reproduce themselves and comply with their tribute obligations' transforming haciendas quickly into hegemonic power over Indian society." (328)

[49] Huasipungo (*Huasi* means home and *pungo* door or entry) is a Quichua word referring to the feudal, exploitative and precarious modality of agricultural work that indigenous communities were forced to do by Spanish colonizers and later their *patrones* in the Andean highlands.

monopolization of productive activities[50]. (Acosta 2006: 99) The revenues that flowed to the government and elite through the export of banana provided the means to attempt an initial 'industrialization'[51] of Ecuador.

As any economic structure dependent on almost solely one product, the 'banana boom' reached its end around 1962 due to poor terms of exchange. Multinational companies went back to investing in Central America in the mid 1960's and Ecuador suffered an economic depression until the early 1970's. Migration patters continued flowing to plantations on the coast, but also began turning north towards the U.S. The detriment of prices not only for bananas, but also cacao and coffee beans, greatly impacted the poor sectors in Ecuador, leading to social unrest and unease.

Given the country's precarious conditions and lack of industrial production, the government approached the IMF in 1958 in search of loans. As the 1960's proceeded, the crisis only worsened, leading to a series of petitions for credit to the IMF. The first and second agricultural reforms (in 1964 and 1973) were part of an attempt to restructure the economy, replacing the traditional *haciendas* with more lucrative activities such as construction, commerce and industry[52]. (Acosta 2006: 113) The economic landscape in Ecuador during the '60's, therefore, was characterized by falling prices in exports,

[50] Despite the advantages of becoming the number one exporter of bananas in the world, Ecuador was ever more linked to the sometimes unpredictable and often unforgiving workings of the global market. Additionally, despite the strengthening of the middle class, the elite in the export sector did not lose their hegemonic place in the political or economic arena.

[51] The state increased investment in infrastructure and bureaucratic jobs, attempting to forge a new modality of accumulation that would 'modernize' the commercial relationships. However, the internal market largely functioned according to traditional, communitarian methods of trade.

[52] In hopes of jumpstarting the economy, the military junta transferred to the urban industrial elites, from the plantations to the cities, from agriculture to industry, from exporters to industrial importers.

economic crises, and debt negotiations with the IMF that introduced rigid economic measures. The interplay of these factors greatly destabilized the democratic foundations of the country[53]. It was not until the country began exporting oil in 1973 that it was able to recover from the recurrent crises and enter the global market while applying IMF's economic recipes.

Over the following years, crude oil revenues would represent 50% of the state's budget. (Sawyer 2004: 10) Ecuador entered the global market with great strength[54] (thanks to the international rise in oil prices) under the authoritarian regime of General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara. 'Neoliberalism' began sweeping the continent, not only as a mode of structuring the economy (*laissez fair, laissez passé* had been present in policies and reforms starting in the early 20th Century), but more so as a way of understanding the individual and his or her relationship to the state and the world. In Harvey's (2006) words, the spread of neoliberalism in the 1970's should be interpreted as a "*political* project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites". (19)

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[53] The Ecuadorian economic scenario is no different than that of other 'Third World' countries in the '60's. According to Harvey (2006), 'embedded liberalism' was initially installed as a form of political-economic organization after World War II, signaling how "market processes and entrepreneurial and corporate activities were surrounded by a web of social and political constraints and a regulatory environment that sometimes restrained but in other instances led the way in economic and industrial strategy." (11) The author goes on to point out that advanced capitalist countries experienced high rates of economic growth throughout the '50's and '60's, but attempts to "export development to much of the rest of the world largely stalled." The U.S. liberally loaned dollars to a large number of 'Third World' countries during these years of bonanza, dispensing with their surplus in countries experiencing severe crises. By the end of the '60's, however, 'embedded liberalism' slumped internationally and domestically. Harvey (2005) wrote: "unemployment and inflation were both surging everywhere, ushering in a global phase of 'stagflation' that lasted throughout much of the ´70´s." (12)

[54] Once again, the exploration and exploitation of a natural resource was driven by foreign instead of national interest and demand.

In this context, the policy of import substitution dominating Latin America led to a forced attempt at industrialization in Ecuador. However, it failed due to insufficient infrastructure to sustain a productive industrial scheme and lack of an internal market dynamic and solvent enough to consume its products. General Lara's regime was handling historically large revenues from oil exports, investing the majority in a poorly and superficially planned attempt at modernizing the state[55]. In 1976, the Supreme Governmental Committee under the military regime substituted Lara. This regime aggressively contracted debt that would gravely impact the economy in years to come. (Ayala Mora 2008: 53) Given the unprecedented influx of revenues into the state from oil, the military dictatorships used "future oil production as leverage for obtaining oil credit." (Sawyer 2004: 10) According to Acosta (2006), the increase in oil exports and the huge contraction of external debt led to a series of transformations in Ecuador:

> …with repercussions in society, in the complexity and expansion of the state's role, in a new process of urbanization and the appearance of new mechanisms that deepen regional and social inequalities. These changes did not affect existing socioeconomic interrelations, the patterns of production dependent on the exterior, the process of accumulation tied to the export of primary products and less so the property structure, characterized by high levels of concentration both in the agricultural and industrial sector as well as commercial and banking. Two decades after the initial oil boom, the country entered a profound crisis that spread misery and poverty across all of society. (123)

[55] The impulse of 'modernization' in Ecuador throughout the dictatorial period was not different than that of other Latin American countries at that time. Dictatorial regimes in countries such as Chile and Argentina forged relationships with the global economy, became deeply indebted with IMF and disregarded the precarious conditions of important sectors of society, as long as the traditional and industrial elites were content.

Notwithstanding the efforts to industrialize the economy, the capitalist sector lacked the capacity to absorb the incrementing mass of unskilled labor. A growing percentage of the population, therefore, began engaging in informal activities, such as selling fruit or other products on the street. In 1980, the 'Jaime Roldós and Oslvado Hurtado' transitional government was the first to lead an institutional response to the debt crisis. At this time, the country was trying to rebuild the economy after the previous military regime's budget and heavy spending problems. The year 1982 marked a strong decline in the price of oil, leading to a halt in the flow of loans from the North to the South. (Acosta 2006:138) Ecuador, whose foreign debt had risen from 18% of the Gross Domestic Product to 60% of the GDP (Sawyer 2004: 10), could hardly make its debt service payments.

During this period, the U.S. incremented the interest rates and reduced loans to 'Third World' countries. It was during this time that the import substitution model of accumulation gave way to a liberal scheme known as 'neoliberalism', through which economic and political elites in Ecuador hoped to modernize the primary-export model dating back to the end of the 19th Century. The IMF introduced neoliberalism into Latin America through the Washington Consensus[56], a series of measures to 'adjust' the economy to the interests of 'developed' countries[57].

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[56] This encapsulated policies of fiscal discipline and austerity, restructuring public spending, tributary reform, privatization of public industries, commercial liberalization, deregulation of financial markets, opening the economy to foreign investment without restrictions, flexibility of labor and economic relations, and guaranteeing private property rights. (Acosta 2006:157)

[57] 'Reagonomics' was a U.S. born strategy meant to overflow borders and influence the capitalist system worldwide, restructuring global order in order to initiate a technological revolution.

As Conaghan et al (1990) point out, however, it was not that IMF forced the measures upon Ecuador against its will. In fact, the authors argue that business elites hoped for an economic and political shift that would reduce the role of the state and increase their influence in policymaking. They considered that neoliberalism would alter the political and economic system in such a way that would retract the reform efforts set in by General Lara. It would break with the previous economic policies and populist past[58], leading to modernization. (4)

Highly limited by the rigid IMF policies[59] and state of affairs of the country, the transitional team of Osvaldo Hurtado was unable to emerge from the crisis, leading the next President, León Febres Cordero (1984-1988) to implement the first batch of harsh neoliberal policies (despite Hurtado having been the first to implement basic stabilization measures). Under the discourse of making 'sacrifices for the country' and 'tightening bootstraps', Febres Cordero promoted a 'trickle down' social program. He claimed that "broad macroeconomic changes in the export and industrial sectors would eventually raise the standards of living of all Ecuadorians, including the poorest of the poor." (Lind 2005:55)

It is important to further situate ourselves in the late 1980's (and also 1990's) given that this point of inflexion greatly impacted the international and national political,

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[58] Lind (2005) argues, for example, that some of the processes underway before the ´80´s, part of the urbanization and mobility towards cities in the previous decade, were dismantled, such as the historical development of the social welfare state.

[59] In Lind's (2005) words, despite the fact that the international aid community is largely responsible for the sizable Ecuadorian debt, the "Eurocentric view of Ecuadorian reality as problematic" has led foreign actors to consider "Ecuadorian debt crisis as an 'internal matter' that Ecuador should 'handle on its own'." (54)

economic and social landscape. As Coba Mejía (2015) narrated, the '80's were a time of structural adjustment and weakening of the scarce welfare system that existed, a time of "depeasantization, urban unemployment and profound poverty…Quito transformed her rurality frenetically: dispossessed peoples scavenged for any job on the streets, extreme precariousness was evident in each ambulatory salesperson, in each new beggar." (2) It was during this time that the 'war on drugs' exploded and trickled down to Latin American, as well as the period during which some excluded and poor men and women began transitioning from the informal to the illegal market of drug sales and trafficking. As narrated in the introduction, it was in the '80's and '90's that the incarceration of women on minor drug offenses surged, largely owed to the structural effects of neoliberalism on the lives of those on the brink of survival[60].

The re-agrarianization and de-industrialization process that Ecuador went through during this period can be identified in other countries outside of Latin America, most of which were suffering from extreme levels of inflation, debt negotiations and political instability in their transitions to a democratic state.[61] The restructuring is equally evident in Ecuador, opening up a new economic and political period mandated by international maneuverings of the IMF and the U.S. and embedding poverty in the structures of the state. León Febres Cordero, the 'articulate champion of free enterprise' as named by

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[60] I will further elaborate on this topic in the second section.

[61] Bourgois's (2003) book *In Search of Respect* traces the historical processes that structured the lives of Puerto Rican men and women living in East Harlem in the late 1980's, stating that the problem of poverty and exclusion was structural. In his words, from the 1950's to the 1980's "second generation inner city Puerto Ricans were trapped in a vulnerable factory-based economy that was replaced by service industries. The restructuring of the U.S. economy around service jobs has resulted in unemployment, income reduction, weaker unions and erosions in worker's benefits." (114)

Reagan, is recognized as having led the 'first right-wing government in Ecuador'. (Krupa 2013: 171) By blaming Hurtado for Ecuador's financial crises and branding him as a communist (despite Hurtado being the first to have implemented neoliberal policies), Febres Cordero was able to pursue a "project of total national reconstruction" through the coalition 'Frente de Reconstrucción Nacional' (National Reconstruction Front). (Krupa 2013: 180) He 'demonized' the role of the state (alleging that it had 'provoked' the crisis) and re-introduced a modality of accumulation based on a 'modern' version of the primary-export model.

The end of the Febres Cordero regime left the country in a state of political instability, precariousness and degradation of work and living conditions[62]. The Rodrigo Borja administration (1988-1992) attempted to work outside of the neoliberal policies delineated by the IMF and World Bank, centering their discourse and efforts on social policy (instead of relegating it to the side as Febres Cordero had done, who prioritized economic growth and efficiency). According to Lind (2005), Borja was able to implement changes on the economic front. He increased state control of the foreign exchange market and shifted resources away from the production of non-tradable goods and services toward the production of tradable goods and services. (Lind 2005: 72) Despite hoping to 'pay back the social debt' through a social reform strategy, he faced the worst inflationary pressures up to that point in the history of Ecuador[63]. Inflation had

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[62] According to Périlleux (2008), the switch from a model of production of 'selling what you can produce' to 'producing what you can sell' led to a growth in unemployment and extension of the informal sector, pressure over the rhythm of work, and intensification of labor. (23)

[63] Febres Cordero had artificially controlled the inflation rate by taking out loans from Central Bank and pumping them into the economy. However, international institutions placed strict conditions on Ecuador for

risen from 33% to 85% from the end of 1987 to the end of 1988, reaching its peak at 99% on March 1989. (Lind 2005: 73) For these and other reasons, critics have questioned Borja's 'poverty reduction' discourse and social reform banner through which he upheld declarations such as "democratization through decentralization". (Lind 2005: 82-82)

The 1990's only deepened the expansion of neoliberalism, leading to staggering increases in extreme poverty throughout the region. (Stiglitz 2003) The subsequent presidencies did not abandon the neoliberal project, but expanded it. As Sawyer (2004) stated in her book on petroleum and indigenous movements in the Amazon, "it was not until 1992 that neoliberalism transformed the country's political economic reality with passion." (11) Despite Ecuador's inability to reach the IMF and World Bank 'standards'[64], the size of the state was effectively decreased (institutions were dismantled) and poverty rates reached new highs. Sixto Durán Ballen's (1992-1996) administration intensified export production and reduced social spending strictly looking at social policy through a "trickle down" IMF-World Bank, "tighten our bootstraps" approach. He increased privatizations in order to tackle the foreign debt (that amounted to $13.2 billion dollars by 1994) and 'modernize' the economy. As part of his plan to reduce the size of the state, 20,000 state employees were laid off in the first two years of his presidency. (Lind 2005: 85)

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it to receive loans, demanding that Borja reduce inflation, further liberalize trade, reform taxes and diminish restrictions on foreign investment. (Sawyer 2004: 10)

[64] Lind (2005) characterized the combination of conventional neoliberal policies and political populism as a form of 'populist neoliberalism'. (63)

The neoliberal expansion that took place in the 1990's further fragmented society, shifting the relations between the state and civil society, individualizing and privatizing responsibility for one's survival[65]. According to Harvey (2005), neoliberalism was originally a theory of political economic practices, which argued that freeing individual entrepreneurial skills and liberties could advance human's wellbeing. It has now become a hegemonic mode of discourse that informs part of our common sense way of interpreting, living and understanding this world. This all-encompassing yet invisible hand that worked to guide and shape the population's behavior, movements, capital and resources sought to relieve the state, ever more so, of any responsibility towards its citizens.

As Sawyer (2004) pointed out, it is neoliberalism's paradox that, despite positing a view where the state's role should be all but obsolete in regulating the market (and society), in order to enable the neoliberal state, neoliberal governing must intervene at legal, cultural, social, political and institutional levels. The central pillar of neoliberalism is, as suggested initially, that individuals increasingly become solely responsible for their wellbeing. (Goodale and Postero 2013; Sawyer 2004; Lind 2005; Juliano 2004; Harvey 2005) Moreover, citizenship acquires a new meaning, where individuals are defined in terms of their market and work value[66]. Ecuador did not passively accept the neoliberal

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[65] Durán Ballén´s adminstration defunded institutional initiatives that sought to reduce poverty and 'empower' citizens, shifting instead to a social policy framework crafted by IMF and the World Bank, focused on curbing the social costs of the structural adjustments. As part of the privatizing scheme, he institutionalized the NGO presence in the state, thus relieving itself from additional resposibility towards its citizens.

[66] Veronica Schild's (2000) concept of 'new gendered market citizen' defines the incremental value of 'market' in terms of women's role as constituents.

policies that negatively shocked the lives of millions, nor were the policies themselves implemented smoothly. However, neoliberalism effectively penetrated the multilayered institutional and individual levels of daily life in Ecuador.

The governments that succeeded Durán Ballén´s administration continued along the neoliberal path of governance. President Abdalá Bucaram entered office in 1996 with the promise of alleviating poverty and easing the rigid policies installed by Durán Ballén. However, he quickly lost his urban-popular sector support base when he implemented a stricter set of adjustment policies[67]. Bucaram's populist strategizing led to his early ousting in 1997 (by the unprecedented mobilization of over two million Ecuadorians) as well as the drafting of a new Constitution (in 1998) that would reform political parties and campaigns.

The president that preceded Bucaram in 1998 was Jamil Mahuad (ousted after two years in office, in 2000). Mahuad introduced increases in prices and sales tax, and a partial freeze on checking and savings account that paralyzed the economy and led to major banks closing. (Lind 2005: 131) He made these decisions when confronted by a looming financial crisis, a budget deficit at $1.2 billion US dollars in 1999, a foreign debt of $16 billion US dollars, and rising inflation rates. As an additional culminating factor,

[67] Despite past president pushing similar harsh neoliberal policies under the 'tightening our bootstraps' motto, Bucaram's administration was deceitful in that it backed out of its earlier promises in regards to social policy reform. By the start of this presidency, the national foreign debt was over $12 billion US dollars and the government's budget deficit reached more than $1 billion US dollars. (Lind 2005: 116)

he introduced legislation in 1999[68] to dollarize the economy (a policy that was pushed for adoption in many countries undergoing 'Structural Adjustment Programs' or SAPs). After a massive protest overthrew Mahuad's administration, his Vice President, Gustavo Noboa, replaced him. Despite the dollarization of the economy favoring upper class sectors of society, it impoverished the lives of middle and low-class sectors in Ecuador. As Lind (2005) wrote, the effects of the dollarization (compounded by the already dire economic situation) raised inflation rates, unemployment and underemployment rates, led to the loss of savings, and devaluated social security benefits and payments. (137)

Lucio Gutierrez, a "Young, populist military leader who joined the indigenous movement to oppose Mahuad" (Lind 2005: 136) took office in 2003. However, like his predecessors, he was forced out of his presidential seat after a massive protest in 2005 and replaced by Alfredo Palacios. The dollarization of the economy in 2000 had not only exacerbated the economic crisis and led to the fleeing of massive numbers of Ecuadorians to the U.S. and Europe in search of work; it also added to growing mistrust in politics and democracy. The income inequality gap between the rich and poor was greater in the early 2000's than when Ecuador first established an industrial economy in the 1950's. Additionally, as Lind (2005) pointed out about the early 2000's, "since the inception of SAPs in 1980, there were approximately 15% more Ecuadorians living in extreme poverty than prior to the introduction of SAPs and related neoliberal development policies." (9) Further, the national poverty level increased to 70% of the total population.

[68] A decision that was made without consulting the IMF or World Bank or properly assessed, it led to a very unstable financial period that closed more than twenty primary banks.

Rafael Correa appeared on the political arena initially as the Minister of Economy for Palacios, and later as a promising, young economics PhD candidate for Presidency. In direct opposition with the previous line up of presidents who had upheld neoliberal ideals, Correa fully identified with the radical leftist wave that Hugo Chávez (in Venezuela) and Evo Morales (in Bolivia) were riding. If elected, he promised to end the 'long and sad night of neoliberalism'. (Conaghan 2008) He won in the second round against Noboa (a conservative candidate) by 56.7% to 43.3%, beginning his term in 2007 with an approval rating of 73%. (Conaghan 2008: 53)

Scholars have hotly debated whether to call his regime 'post-neoliberal'. Correa has, throughout his first and second term, effectively reduced poverty and lowered the unemployment rate[69]. He has increased taxes on corporations, as well as the number of redistributive social programs, through his 'Buen vivir[70]' (Good living) initiative. In order to sustain the increased credits, subsidies and welfare, Correa has relied heavily, however, on 'Petro-dollars'. Despite his initial stance on ending with the mining sector's

[69] According to Becker (2013), not only was poverty reduced, wages increased, the unemployment and equality gap decreased, the growth rate registered in 2011 was at 8% (up from 3.6% of the previous year). This growth came despite the global crisis of capitalism, variations in petroleum prices and lower remittances from migrant families. (43)

[70] The 'Buen Vivir' Plan established the progressive and quite ambitious goal of changing the neoliberal accumulative regime. This meant leaving the regime based on local industrial production and environmental and eco-tourism services behind and distributing actives, such as land and water, and doing a selective substitution of imports. However, as Ospina Peralta (2015) discussed, this plan was rapidly abandoned by 2011 and the substitution of a regime of accumulation gave way in 2013 to a change in the productive matrix controlled by more conservative groups in the government. (5)

extractive and exploitative destruction of the Amazonian rainforest[71], he has increasingly become dependent on the extractive economy. The macroeconomic expansion of the mining sector has been the backdrop of his poverty reduction and social investment strategy. The president's actions have disillusioned many initial supporters from the left, who had thought his rhetoric on ending neoliberalism was more than discourse. Bebbington and Bebbington (2011) argue that if Correa's regime is supposedly 'post-neoliberal', based on his extractive policies, there is not much differentiating his regime to others before him other than his non-transparency about his actions.[72] According to the economist Pablo Dávalos, who worked closely with Correa before his presidency, the regime "corresponds more closely to the interests of powerful groups that are emerging with the new mining and agro-fuels sectors" than to a social-movement support base. (Becker 2013: 55)

In this context, the neoliberal state has already embedded society with its inherently marketable values and life is commoditized based on individual competencies. Skilled workers, or workers that are better inserted into the neoliberal paradigm of production, effectively experience greater autonomy, delegation of responsibilities and enrichment. However, those who can neither access higher education, let alone the

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[71] Bebbington and Bebbington (2011) wrote that, following the reforms of the 1990's and early 2000's, "rights to subsoil had been handed out indiscriminately, leaving a large part of the central-southern highlands and Amazonian lowlands under concession. Legislation was so neoliberal that once a private party requested a concession, the state has to grant it; and to a very considerable degree, concessions could be renewed indefinitely." (135)

[72] Several authors have resonated with Becker's (2013) summary of Correa's relation to the '21st Century Socialism' ideal: "While Ecuador registered many positive socioeconomic indicators and Correa has favored leftist approaches to governance…his inclusion in the leftward tilt in Latin America is more a result of his populist rhetoric and the hops of his supporters than the consequence of a movement toward a more egalitarian and participatory society." (58)

cultural capital that would allow them to 'capitalize' their professional achievements, experience greater job insecurity as they traverse the precarious and poorly remunerated informal market. As the countrywide education levels grow, moreover, the requirements to be considered professionally competent increase and progressively become unobtainable for those who lack initial opportunities.

Sierra (2011) also sustains a similar line of thought in regards to Revolución Ciudadana's (Citizen's Revolution) social programs, arguing that social policy becomes an instrument of market formation, transforming citizens into economic subjects. The disenfranchised class, that has been structurally relegated to the margins, excluded despite Correa's efforts to reduce poverty and increase their participation in society, has been conceptually framed in various ways by authors. Whether it is as Valencia Triana's (2012) '*sujetos endriagos*'[73] or as Marx and Engel's (1848) *lumpenproletariat* that are structurally unemployed and permanently unemployable. Whether it is as Mbembé's (2003) living dead, the women who I interviewed were neither (directly and immediately) benefited by the greater inclusion of women in public spaces, the social programs aimed at reducing poverty or the influence of NGOs seeking to 'empower' them. They, as the sex workers documented by Juliano (2005), had to choose between earning enough money to survive and sustain a family while losing prestige, or retaining their 'moral' superiority and remaining in jobs that did not provide livable wages. The following

[73] Subjects *endriagos* surge from the precariousness at the margins of late capitalism. *Endriago* also refers to a literary creature, a monster product of a cross between a man, a serpent, and a dragon. They are, according to Valencia, "individuals that, educated to abide by the standards of hegemonic masculinity, attempt to override their structural precariousness to which they are condemned to since birth through ultraviolent practices that generate an intense economic activity. An activity that, although situated on the margins of the legal economy, is fundamental to its proper functioning." (98)

section will analyze the point of intersection where race, gender and class meet to further disempower and exclude the women I interviewed.

Section 2: Race, gender and class

> "I am a woman of color, who has not had the privilege of being educated, who has had a million ups and downs. I am a mother, grandmother, wife. I have hope, have made mistakes; I have emotions, I have rage and pain; I feel frustrated when I see that there are people who cannot do anything for others. "-Inés (interviewee who was imprisoned multiple times, Latacunga)

The Eurocentric conception of modernity built on the ideals of progress and Illustration racially hierarchized Ecuadorian society. Standards of civilization and barbarity/savagery have been historically associated to skin color, where the process of *whitening* the population would lead to a more modern, civilized one. Ecuador, however, is a country where the greater part of the population identifies as *mestizo/a* and a smaller portion of the dominant class is solely of Spanish or European origin.[74] In Ecuador, there are 14 different indigenous communities, making up around 15% of the population (although this number may underrepresent reality). The "relatively impoverished" (Radcliffe 2014: 12) Afro-descendent community makes up 10% of the population. Despite Ecuador´s cultural and linguistic wealth, the idea of *whitening* and homogenizing society continues to shape policy and societal thought. It was not until the Constitution of 1998 that the state recognized the pluri-cultural and multi-ethnic composition of the population.

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[74] Radcliffe (2014) recently stated that dominant white and mestizo groups compose 75% of the population, (12) whereas Lind (2005) had previously mentioned that the majority identify as mestizo/a or indigenous and that a very small percentage of the population is of Spanish or European descent. (9) As Maldonado (2007) reiterated in a publication on discrimination and the indigenous population in Ecuador, despite the official number of indigenous in Ecuador being 15%, it is likely that this number is higher. Historical exploitation, marginalization and discrimination of the indigenous population has led many to reject it and identify as mestizo/a instead.

Although Correa took office supposedly representing the interests of the indigenous, women, working class, and other marginalized groups in society, he has progressively lost the support of the majority of leftist organizations that placed so much faith in him. Further, discrimination continues to pervade social, political and economic relations. Despite the power that the indigenous community has amassed in the political arena since the late '80's and '90's (especially through CONAIE), they are still comparatively poorer than the rest of the population. In 2014, according to Radcliffe (2014), 69.9% of the indigenous population was poor compared to 34.4% of the mestizos and 38.8% of the nationwide average. (14) Even more relevant to this thesis is the probability of an indigenous Ecuadorian woman being poor as far more likely than any other demographic group, with a probability of 89% compared to 84% for indigenous men, 55% for other non-indigenous women, and 60% for non-indigenous men. (Radcliffe 2014: 14) In addition, as Lind (2005) reminds us, women who identify as mestizo, *indígena, chola* or negra face intersecting forms of oppression that continue to frame their everyday lives. (9)

Historically, both indigenous and afro-Ecuadorian communities have worked in intensive agricultural activities. In the early colonial period, clerics and Spanish settlers forced indigenous populations and African slaves to work in the *haciendas*, cultivating cotton for the textile industry or sugar canes for the sugarcane industry. When slavery was abolished by the mid-19th Century, traditional slave-owners continued to exploit the indigenous and African communities through "debt slavery." (Wilkins 2013: 15) Afro-

Ecuadorian and indigenous women both played important roles in the productive and commercial aspects of agriculture (although their remuneration was always less than that of men, if they even received one in the first place).

Wilkins (2013) explored the function of the *kinship system* in Afro-Andean communities that allowed women to work both within and outside of the home. The possibility of distributing childcare among women in the community "fostered autonomy and strength in the female sphere and allowed women to contribute to the household income" through commercial and entrepreneurial agricultural activities. (Guerrón 2000 as cited in Wilkins 2013: 24) In the case of indigenous women, as analyzed by Radcliffe (2014), they would both work in the fields and at home, beginning their day at 4 a.m. and contributing twenty more work hours than men to the household. (22) The juxtaposition of self-sufficiency and maternity (Wilkins 2013: 25), therefore, has traditionally informed the lives of both indigenous and afro-Ecuadorian women.

By the end of the 1950's, and perhaps more so by the Agrarian Reform of 1964 that finally dissolved the *haciendas*, the indigenous and afro-Ecuadorians either inserted themselves in alternative methods of survival (linked to the incipient industrialization process), migrating to the cities, or continued working the land for regional and international commercialization. Decreasing profitability in agricultural activities, the progressive concentration of land in the hands of few, and the rapid erosion of soil due to its fragmentation and over-exploitation, further pushed those living and working in the rural areas to the cities. Women became increasingly over-burdened by juggling both

reproductive and productive roles through the process of restructuring, as their husbands first migrated to cities and they later joined (or migrated on their own). The accumulated economic crises and the restructuring of the economy[75] greatly transformed the role of women in and out of their traditional domestic sphere.

The institutional shift in women's socialized 'reproductive' gender roles[76] and the marginal position they occupy in the paid capitalist market, including the informal sector (Lind 2005: 8) has both added to their overall workload and further impoverished them. The neoliberal social policy framework further privatized individual struggles and relieved the state of responsibility towards it citizens. Family structures were affected dramatically as low-skilled workers migrated to cities in search of work and women entered the labor force with the double task of providing and caretaking. Acosta (2006) traces the implications of this model on the Ecuadorian population: "In order to reach this reinsertion, [Ecuador] accepted the need to make the domestic working class competitive by depreciating the purchasing power of their salaries and liberalizing the labor market [through non-regular contracts]." (157) In this context, Lind (2005) found that various sectors of women began to feel the 'gendered effects' of the installed neoliberal policies. These included:

> …changes in household expenditures and consumption patterns; changes in family structure, continuing lack of access to basic resources such as water, electricity and paved roads; inflationary costs of food, transportation and education; and generally, increased workloads in the

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[75] The restructuring of the economy slowly mechanized the agricultural sector and led growing numbers of Ecuadorians to migrate from rural areas to urban areas, mainly Guayaquil (in the Coast) and Quito (in the Highlands).

[76] This includes activities such as household management, childcare, shopping and budgeting.

> household as a result of the more 'invisible' aspects of privatization, marketization and globalization. (Lind 2005: 55)

The crises of the '80's forced women's entry into the labor market, initially articulating an image of the 'working woman' as a woman with status (educated and capacitated). (221) However, Febres Cordero's regime quickly reversed this portrayal of women, drawing on traditional notions of femininity and caretaking to *mother the crisis*. (Lind 2005) Neoliberal ideology clearly pushed forth the Catholic ideal of a 'nuclear family', where a mother remains in the private sphere 'complying' with her reproductive function and the father provides for the family. The key reason why this ideal was sustained was because it allowed the state to center its social programs[77] on women's voluntary participation as caretakers[78] *of the state*. Imagining women primarily as mothers and only secondarily as workers, (where their insertion into the labor market was seen as a temporary consequence of the frequent crises), the state further burdened women with responsibilities while it privatized their struggles (and thus their family's) to survive. (Palán et al 1993; Lind 2005)

[77] The "grassroots" community centers that Borja's regime installed in poor urban areas, for example, were built on the idea that they'd be run by women. Thus, the state assumed that women disposed of free time to volunteer and run the community center, where resources were scarce and compensation rarely administered. Lind (2005) argues that, contrary to aiding women in the long term, his strategy "helped to institutionalize poverty and women's struggles for survival, and to the extent that it shifted public attention to private-led development (be it profit or non-profit…) it set the stage for the Durán-Ballén administration's neoliberal reforms." (83)

[78] The 'caretaker role' of women was assigned by the traditional sexual division of labor, where they were deemed as biologically conditioned to educating their children, maintaining the home, taking care of the sick and old, attending to their husband and other family members, maintaining the web of family connections and services to the community. (Palán et al. 1993: 219)

The impoverishment of women, which affected to a greater or lesser degree all countries across Latin America in the '80's and '90's, is known as *feminization of poverty*, as it affected primarily the reproductive (private sphere), home to both men and women, but primarily women. (Elson 2002) Greater domestic labor responsibilities at and outside of home (through collective organizations) that were not remunerated, plus the need to work in order to survive, led women's livelihoods (in certain, low-middle class and popular sectors of society) to deteriorate[79]. In Palán et al's (1993) words, the state's neoliberal policies created a contradictory image of a woman in order to double bind her role to society both as a mother/ homemaker and as cheap, exploitable labor. (215) The entry of women into the market generated tensions in the traditional model of father provider/mother caretaker, as women further divided themselves between domestic and extra-domestic obligations. Further, male migration that began in the late '80's and surged in the '90's towards the U.S. and Europe (reaching a peak by the crisis of 1998-2000), left many women as head of households[80], creating *bricolage* families (Scheper-Hughes 1993) or fragmented, 'mono-parental' homes. (Juliano 2005)

In this context of 'institutionalization of female struggles' (Lind 2005) and growing precariousness of livelihoods on the edge of survival, boundaries were being

[79] The 1987 'Household Survey' registered the female versus male unemployment rates (where women's was 10.4% and men's 5.2%). However, women's presence was more visible in the informal labor market (where 35% of the total EAP is located), where their participation was registered at 39% of the female, economically active population.

[80] Chant (2006) has criticized the immediate assumption that female-headed households and feminization of poverty are correlated or synonymous concepts. The author emphasizes that a household lacking a male does not necessarily equate with greater poverty. In fact, she argues, in many households, men play unstable and unsupportive roles in the family life (see Varea 2008), squander their salaries on alcohol and gambling, and are both psychologically and physically abusive and violent. Their absence may lead to better and not worse livelihoods and may be indicative of female agency.

redrawn between the private and public sphere as well as the subjectivity of citizens as self-realizing, self-responsible, and self-actualizing workers. Neoliberalism effectively rooted itself in every sector of the state[81]. The poverty rate, as pointed out previously, reached stratospheric levels in the late '90's and early 2000's, leaving both men and women at the unforgiving hands of the capitalist market.

Given Correa's initial stance on ending neoliberalism's advancement in Ecuador, it is important to ask how women have been faring throughout his regime. Santillana (2012) succinctly summarized both the advances in women's presence in the public arena, as well as the constants in gender violence, the extractive nature of the state and consolidation of peripheral capitalist 'modernization' based on the 'reprimarization' of the economy. The author described that the Revolución Ciudadana incorporated women into decision-making spaces[82] and increased the number of women who can access basic services, education and health. However, "the matrix of inequality as far as a model of social justice, productive development, political participation and gender violence is concerned, has not been transformed." (Santillana 2012: 44)

In a context where work growingly defines identity, women who are inserted into the margins of the labor force feel tensioned between the subjective construction of

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[81] According to Lind (2005), this lead to "not only to shifts in the broader economy but also to the restructuring of everyday life (Benería 1992 as cited in Lind 2005): the organization of paid-labor sectors, the intensification of domestic work (both paid and unpaid), changes in family structure (as in male migration to the United States and Spain, an associated rise in female-headed households and an increase in household size) and social relations, an evolution in cultural notions of play or vacation, and alterations to community development, strategies or initiatives". (93-94)

[82] Women now make up 33% of the National Assemble and 36% of the cabinet.

femininity and the objective/material conditions of their work. At the same time, as argued both by Lind (2005) and Schild (2000), women continue to carry the brunt of household/caretaking responsibilities that are now increasingly coupled with the need to work:

> As the neoliberal state is privatized, women have become the bearers of what were previously state welfare responsibilities: they are now service providers in the realm of community development, family, health care, day care and local produce markets. Through development policies and practices, including those of both international agencies and nation-states, these sectors of women have been brought into the visible fold of development. In conjunction with this, they have now become models of the new market citizen and of 'modern economic woman'… (Lind 2005: 89)

Women at the margins are expected to be responsible 'caretakers' and to comply with the standards of the 'modern economic woman' in order to be considered citizens of the state. The role, both as a consumer and caretaker, implies consumption of goods and services. However, in Latin America, according to Radcliffe (2014), women's salaries are around 17% less than those of men. If gender is crossed with ethnicity, this gap can increase to 28%. Women who migrate to cities and come from rural and/or impoverished contexts are at a disadvantage with men and non-indigenous or non-afro Ecuadorian women, due to differences in education, opportunities at the labor market, and discrimination.

Literacy rates have increased[83] (and women are enrolling in primary and secondary school at a greater rate than me) and the poverty rate dropped to 24.53% in

[83] The rate of literacy in 2015 was 98.8% across genders. ("Objetivos de Desarrollo" 2016)

2015. However, the index of *feminization of poverty*[84] ("Objetivos de Desarrollo" 2016) shows a gradual increase since the 1990's. It is difficult to determine whether this increase is due to the migration of women from rural areas throughout the '90's and early 2000's that established themselves at the margins of the urban areas, or if there was an increase in the overall female poverty rate regardless of the increase in female migration. Women continue to perceive lower income than men and engage in non-remunerated labor, where 35.6% of women do not receive an income as opposed to 9.1% of men. Women spend approximately 40 hours a week in non-remunerated labor, while men spend 10 hours, and women dedicate 21 weekly hours to remunerated labor while men spend 44 hours. ("Objetivos de Desarrollo" 2016) Moreover, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, women make up around 40.2% of the economically active population in the informal market. ("Mujeres y mercado laboral" 2014)

Women currently make up half of the Ecuadorian population, around 50.5% (8.08 million). ("Cifras Laborales" 2014) According to the INEC, out of 4.3 million homes, 26.4% (1.1 million) are female- headed households. (Tapia & Enríquez 2015) Analysts have determined that the majority of work opportunities available to women are concentrated in the commercial sector (informal market or service sector). In 2015, it was determined that approximately 53.7% of economically active women work in the informal market. ("La informalidad ilegal" 2015) In terms of the wage and employment gap, men's unemployment gap is 1.78 percentage points less than that of women, and

[84] This measures the number of poor urban women and extremely poor urban women for every 100 poor and extremely poor urban men.

men's mean salary is 483.13 US dollars, 21% more than women's mean salary of 398.83 US dollars. ("Hay menos oportunidades" 2015) Out of the total percentage of mothers in Ecuador, 32% are divorced, separated, widowed or single mothers. Most women give birth for the first time between the ages of 15 and 19 (44.1%) and have an average of four children if situated in the lower socioeconomic class. (Tapia & Enríquez 2015)

Out of my ten interviewees, half are of African descent and the other either indigenous or *mestiza*. All of them are single mothers and have anywhere from 2-6 children. Although some of them currently have partners, none of them are the fathers of their children (who had abandoned them either before or during their first imprisonment). Some were either born in the Coast or the Amazon (*Oriente*), migrating to Quito at a young age in search of work. Others were born into families who live in some of the most downtrodden, impoverished neighborhoods of Quito where migrants began settling during the first waves of internal migration in the late '60's, '70's and '80's. As Inés, one of my interviewees expressed:

> *I left home alone at a very young age. I left home when I was eight because my mother mistreated me, so I became a domestic worker, where I also suffered abuse, such as sleeping in the basement…until I was 14 when I returned home to find my mom. I left home because of hunger and poverty; I didn't return home for food, but to see her, because at eight I was already a burden.*

They, as their parents before them, worked in the informal sectors of the economy before engaging in the sale of drugs (or, in some cases, continued to do so while they sold

drugs). They would sell anything from avocados to fruit and candy on buses, or were hired as domestic workers. Fabiana's is a clear example of this:

> *I'm from the Coast, I had my children there…I came here alone eleven years ago [at 17] and became a prostitute…I separated from my partner and when I did not have milk for my children my mother would help me, but that wasn't right…My mom does laundry for others, she dealt drugs…the first time she was in for eight years, the second for sixteen and she just got out recently.*

Their ages range from 23-55, where the mean age is 35. The older women had barely finished their primary education, while the younger women interviewed had either finished secondary school or dropped out early. The reasons that led to early drop out were generally because they were pregnant and/or because they had to take care of their brothers and sisters at home. The selected excerpts from women's life stories show the intersecting structures of violence and poverty that overlap to constrain their horizons. However, with the intent of exploring the economic marginality hypothesis but also moving beyond it, it is important to consider how violence and gender intertwined to further increase their vulnerability.

Six out of ten women suffer from sexual violence in Ecuador (and this number is conservative). ("Diagnóstico de violencia" 2013) Sexual violence is defined as: "any action or conduct based on gender that causes death, harm or physical, sexual or psychological suffering to women, in both the private and public space." ("Convención Interamericana" 1994: art. 1) Women living in the *sierras* or highlands (such as Quito, in the province of Pichincha) suffer from the highest rates of physical, sexual and

psychological abuse. Indigenous women reportedly suffer the highest rates of sexual abuse (59.3%), followed by Afro-Ecuadorians at 55.3% (white women are at the bottom of the scale, where 43.2% are sexually abused in some way). ("Diagnóstico de violencia" 2013) Statistically, the more children women have, the more they are abused (physically, sexually and psychologically). Women of lower socioeconomic status reportedly are victims of abuse more often that women of higher socioeconomic status[85]. Sexual violence is generally perpetrated either in a private space, by someone familiar to the victim, (38.5%) or in a familiar space (33.3%). ("Diagnóstico de violencia" 2013)

With a more thorough understanding of the various intersecting structures that constrain these women's lives, it is possible to move on to the final section that explores the birth of the drug war and its relation to the increased incarceration of both men and women in Ecuador (and across the world). Further, we can engage in Juliano's (2005) argument about the economic viability of engaging in 'illegal activity' for women, despite the high moral cost. The 'legal' alternatives that a poor, minority woman has in Ecuador are limited to work that is neither self-fulfilling nor lucrative. Therefore, selling drugs or prostitution become, as Juliano (2005) suggests, a "multifunctional resource" (160), an "option between other possibilities or a survival or self-affirmation strategy." Selling drugs within a particular 'horizon of subjectivity' (Coba Mejía 2015), in a society that expects women to consume and to 'care for others' as neoliberal citizens but does not

[85] Despite there lacking any investigations in Ecuador related to this topic, it is relevant to bring forth Bourgois's (2003) observation about an increase in domestic abuse by men as they 'lose power in the home'. (214) The destructuralization of the economy and fragmentation of the home that pushed women into the labor market, while at the same time produced a class of unemployable and residual men and women left men with less references to assert their masculinity. By exercising more violence in the home, they are able to "reassert autocratic control." (214)

provide the resources or opportunities for these women to do so, is both attractive and, to a certain extent, practical. As Bourgois (2003) asks, “why should these young men and women take the subway to work for a minimum wage job when they can actually earn more, at least in the short run, by selling drugs on the street corner in front of their apartment?” (4)

Section 3: Prison, Drugs and ‘Recidivism’

> “We thus think about imprisonment as a fate reserved for others, a fate reserved for the ‘evildoers’…Because of the persistent power of racism, ‘criminals’ and ‘evildoers’ are, in the collective imagination, fantasized…The prisons therefore functions ideologically as an abstract site into which undesirables are deposited, relieving us of the responsibility of thinking about the real issues afflicting those communities from which prisoners are drawn in such disproportionate numbers’”(Davis 2003: 16)

In the epigraph, Angela Davis (2003) succinctly articulates the site where these women’s lives are molded, and where agency is born in a myriad of ways. This is where the ‘residue’ of the accumulated and continuous efforts of neoliberal experimentation is ‘kept at bay’ or imprisoned, where the boundaries of legality and illegality are both defined and blurred, where the state’s punitive hand coerces ‘discipline’ or submissiveness and perpetuates the cycle of poverty. Penalization, in this context, as Wacquant (2009) observed, functions as an instrument to mask the social issues that the state can no longer (or does not wish to) treat from its origin. Prison acts as a judicial container where the ‘human waste’ of the market is dumped. (24)

The war on drugs, as Coba Mejía (2015) argues, converged with the neoliberal project and provided the state the perfect moral frame against which to set standards for

its ‘good citizen-consumers’, to further control society and dump the ‘surplus’ population in prisons. The war on drugs, according to Owen, Chesney-Lind and Bloom (1994), has turned into a *war against women*, especially black and poor women[86]. (as cited in Torres Angarita 2008:5)

Drugs and Criminalization

Criminalization as a means of subjugating the ‘unwanted’[87] components of the capitalist society, therefore, came into full force with the drug war declared by Nixon in 1973 and fully embraced by Reagan in the ‘80s. (Wacquant 2003) Latin American countries have been the primal targets of U.S. intervention for drug-related reasons since the 1980’s, especially those in the Andean region (Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela). The anti-drug war policy led by U.S. has, to say the least, reinforced the repressive capacity of these countries by providing resources and training.

The ‘tough on crime’ stance accompanied the new neoliberal projects that swept

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[86] The intersecting structures of gender, class and race that merge to produce this statement do not fall far from my own results. As Coba Mejía (2015) states, around 21% of the female prison population is of African descent (where 10% of the total national population is afro-descendent).

[87] Foucault’s (1977) seminal work analyzes the ways in which the prison functions as a disciplinary body, exercising power on the individual through indirect yet effective tactics of constant vigilance and control. The idea of constant regulation, in the words of Foucault, implies a form of power “based on detailed knowledge, routine intervention and gentle correction” (Garland 1986: 851) to *improve* and not destroy ‘troublesome’ individuals. As opposed to earlier forms of punishment, which were public and physical, what is novel about the ‘Panopticon’, according to Foucault (1977), is that the subjugation (and constant vigilance) of the body concentrates on the mind and the ‘soul’[87]. As in society, systems of domination and of ‘socialization’ require that bodies be “mastered and subjected to training so as to render them docile and useful to a greater or lesser degree”. (852) It is when the body does as it is told without needing to exert further force that the ‘soul’ is influenced and, in turn, behavior.

the region as well as the international pressure and funds funneled to combat the drug war. It created a rationality of repression embedded within the Andean antidrug policy in which the nature of the crime one is punishing does not matter. The objective was to incarcerate people with illegal drugs. Whether they were at the bottom of the drug-trafficking ladder, as consumers, peasants, mules o low-level drug dealers, was irrelevant. In this case, their incarceration had no effect whatsoever on the actual production and trafficking of drugs. Moreover, this has not only led to absurdly high incarceration levels of men and women across the globe, but also to disproportionately higher levels of incarceration for women than men on minor drug offenses.

Although, as Nuñez (2006) stated, the full force and effect of the drug war hit Ecuador quite quickly and devastatingly in the 1990's, Febres Coredo (1984-1988) had already initiated the process throughout his presidency. In order to unite greater part of society behind the neoliberal project, President León Febres Cordero (1984-1988) had to fabricate a myth that would not only place Osvaldo Hurtado (1981-1984) as the scapegoat of the financial crisis but also 'insurgents' or subversives[88]. Parallel to Febres Cordero's declarations against subversion were U.S. President Ronald Reagan's on the 'War on drugs[89]', calling to save the American youth from the dangers of drug abuse.

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[88] The use of a 'common internal enemy' is no different from that used by all military dictatorships in the Southern Cone during the '60's, '70's and '80's. However, as Krupa (2013) mentions, there was no leftist movement of such magnitude to justify 'antiterrorism' as a founding principle of a new regime (179), nor his statements of committing to "fighting all forms of terrorism" or "eliminating the great scourge of our time." (179)

[89] President Richard Nixon declared the war on drugs in 1972. He named drug abuse the "public enemy of the United States" and geared public funding towards treatment rather than law enforcement (only time in history that this occurs). ("Thirty Years") As the war on drugs continued under Ronald Reagan through a prohibitionist lens, the 'fight' against the drug industry was meant to target the cultivation, production and

The criminalization of drugs led U.S. states to introduce draconian measures, such as lengthy sentences for carrying small quantities of marihuana. After Reagan's fervent declaration, Febres Cordero adopted the 'realist' (and prohibitionist) calling to eradicate drugs, likening 'drug dealers' to 'insurgents' and naming them the new state enemies. (Coba 2010: 7) Saving the cultural distance, as Roseberry (2002) stated, both discourses set the tone for a new epoch; they marked the beginning of a transnational hegemony, the fight for a dominating (and domineering) moral vision of the world. (as cited in Coba 2010: 7) The dismantling of the welfare state and the adoption of neoliberal governance necessarily led to the "political instrumentalization of tough on crime politics and penal populism" (Muller 2011: 57) or the increased securitization of the state.

The Ecuadorian state's incremental use of criminal and carceral policies is intimately related to U.S. anti-drug strategizing. (Nuñez 2006) Between 1992 and 1999, the incarcerated population in Latin America grew an average of 80%. (Nuñez 2006: 144) As the incipient welfare state (deemed as 'exclusionary[90]' by Nuñez (2006)) in Ecuador clashed with the harsh neoliberal policies of the late '80's and '90's, the antidrug war served as an ideal way of dealing with the 'surplus population' in the margins. The "historical coincidence between the drug war and the utopian neoliberal economy" (Coba 2010) served Ecuadorian politicians' and elites' interests in different ways.

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distribution of drugs in order to reduce the flow towards the United States under the umbrella of protecting national security (Ponton & Torres 2007: 62).

[90] Nuñez (2006) refers to a slower processes of social security coverage restricted basically to the public sector, social and ethnic stratification of health and education services, as well as a patronage system between the state and the impoverished sectors of society. (143-144)

The agricultural exporters pushed the ratification of the APTDEA[91] (Andean Preference Trade and Drug Eradication Act) in the 1990's, for example, as a way to increase and intensify exports to the U.S. in exchange for harsher drug policies[92]. If Ecuador committed itself to intensifying and judicially instrumentalizing the war on drugs, the U.S. would grant Ecuador preferential tariffs on primary export products. (Coba 2010: 6) Additionally, Ecuador signed an agreement to establish a U.S. base in Manta (a coastal city in northern Ecuador) that would allow the U.S. Department of Defense to carry out interdiction operations. In exchange, Ecuador received millions in 'economic assistance'. (Nuñez 2006: 146) Moreover, it contributed more than 2.737 billion dollars between 1997 and 2002 towards police and military training across Latin America.

Pressure exerted through U.S. embassies led to the increased criminalization of drug related offenses, where there was no longer coherence between law and the incarceration of individuals, nor differentiation of crimes based on proportionality and nature. In Ecuador, this pressure materialized itself in the ratification of Law 108 or the Psychotropic substances and Narcotics Law signed in 1991, considered one of the most severe laws in the Andes at the time. The approval of such a law was the cause of great criticism and upheaval for two main reasons. The first was that it led to harsher sentences, fraught with ambiguities and injustices given the lack of distinction between

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[91] Coba (2010) mentioned that 45% of Andean exports were destined to the U.S. The agreement ATPDEA is a renovation of the ATPA.

[92] The initial agreement, signed in 1991, was called ATPA (Andean Trade Preference Act), which was a program designed to liberalize tariffs and increase the commercialization of products (and economic development) in Bolivia, Perú, Colombia and Ecuador.

traffic, consumption and tenancy. Additionally, as Núñez (2006) argues, it created a sort of 'parallel penal subsystem', where the burden of proof was placed on the 'prisoner', the sentences expanded in length as well as content, and other intricacies that ultimately led to a reduction in the rights of the detained. Although Ecuador decriminalized marihuana consumption in 1998 (Pontón & Torres 2007: 63), those found in possession of small quantities of drugs, for example, continued to be incarcerated, as police would benefit from confiscating more drugs[93].

All of this must be re-evaluated in light of President Correa's presidency. The current president steered away from his predecessors in foreign policy, as a way of reaffirming national sovereignty, especially in matters of security with the United States[94]. A renowned Ecuadorian Professor (and interviewee of mine) pointed out two distinct periods throughout Correa's regime. The first can be characterized as having received great support from leftist social movements (whether they were ecological, feminist, indigenous, etc.) that centered on Correa's political project and the constitutive assembly. The constitutive assembly proposed a rights-based (or protective) criminal policy that moved towards the exceptionality of incarceration and judged drug related offenses as a non-penal issue.

As part of the minimalist approach to penal law, Correa created the Public

[93] Although the new penal code COIP (Código Orgánico Integral Penal) legalizes a minimum established quantity of consumption, there are discrepancies between the consumption and trafficking table that continues to incarcerate consumers in possession of small quantities of drugs. (see Appendix A) (Álvarez Velasco 2014)

[94]Apart form removing the U.S. military from the Air base in Manta, Correa also refused to sign a free trade agreement with the U.S., pulled Ecuador out of U.S. Army's School of the Americas. (Becker 2013: 48)

Defender's office that provided gratuitous legal services nationwide. In 2008, around 2,221 people incarcerated on minor drug offenses were released due to the 'pardoning of the mules'[95], a measure that applied to all those sentenced for trafficking, transporting, acquiring or carrying illegal substances and that complied with certain criteria. (Alvarez Velasco 2014) This action led to a substantive drop in the national prison population. Finally, the Ministry of Justice, Rights and Civic Cult was created and placed in charge of the prison system (the prosecutors were previously in charge of the penitentiary system). Of course, despite these efforts, and as numerous authors have documented, the conditions in prison continued to be detrimental, not only overcrowded but also insalubrious. Moreover, a myriad of human rights continued being violated. The logic of *refile* (Nuñez 2006), a corrupt form of economic relationship between authorities and imprisoned people remained intact. The number of imprisoned people without sentences remained high and those on extremely lengthy and unwarranted sentences continued to be untouched.

Although the president had announced that 2010 would be the year when Ecuador would not have any more prisoners with sentences, an interviewee (and respected scholar in Ecuadorean Criminal Law) identifies a turn towards securitization on September 2010. As pointed out in the previous section on the political-economic context of Ecuador, Correa's initial '21st Century socialism' discourse is fraught with crevices and fissures[96] as his regime moves forward. The following chart clearly shows how the 'securitization

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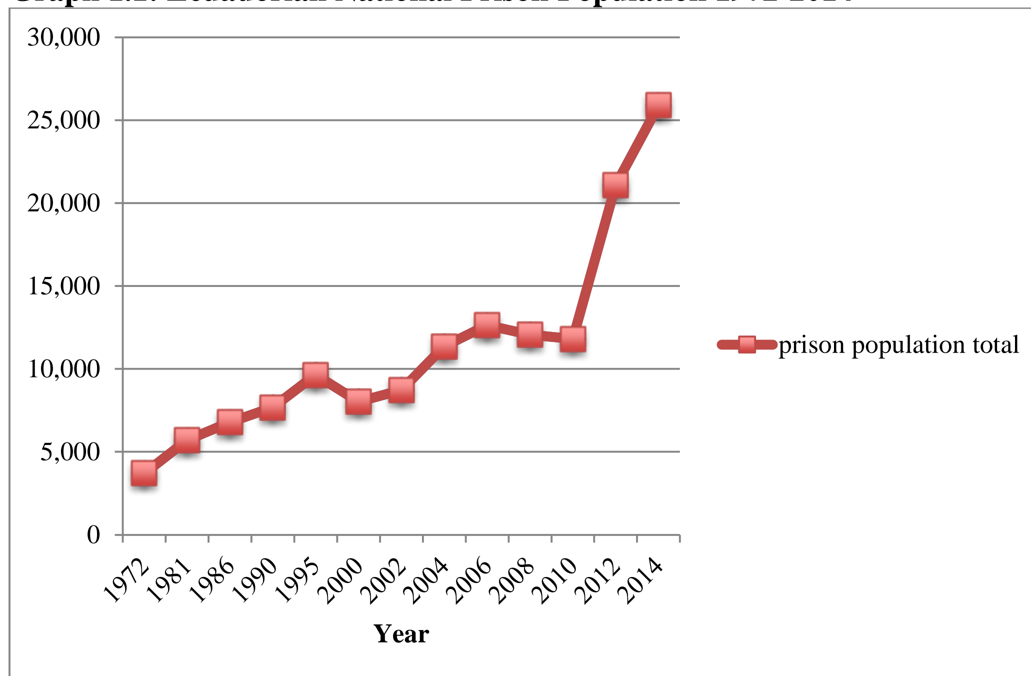
[95] "The criteria is listed as follows: having been declared guilty, having been the persons first crime, having been found in the possession 2 kilos or less, having realized at least 10% (or a year) of the sentence." (Alvarez Velasco 2014: 6)

[96] His initial "end of the long neoliberal night" announcement, for example, was not congruent with his mining and extractive policies that have sustained the social policies throughout his regime.

turn' affected the national prison population in Ecuador:

Graph 1.1: Ecuadorian National Prison Population 1972-2014



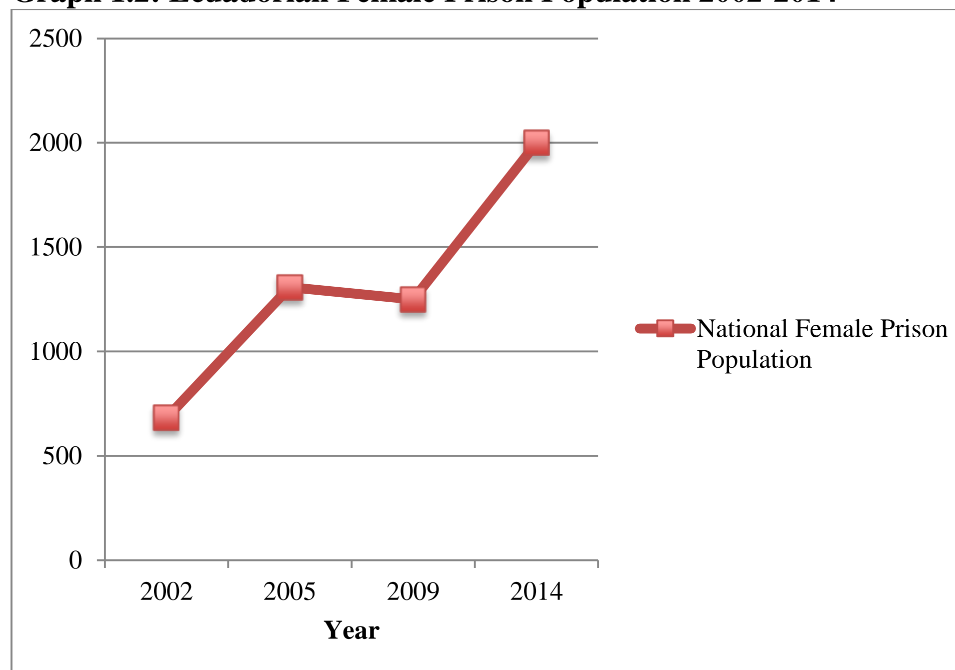
Data Retrieved from World Prison Brief and the Institute for Criminal Policy Research 2016.

The chart shows a slight decrease in the prison population between 2008[97]-2010 when Correa released over 2000 prisoners as part of his 'pardoning of the mules' policy. However, after 2010, the increase in the prison population is almost exponential when compared to the more moderate increase registered since 1972. Given the lack of official data on the prison population for the year 2015, it is difficult to predict the effects of the new penal code and prison transfer on the prison population. The female prison population, according to data collected by the World Prison Brief and Institute for Criminal Policy research, continues to be a small percentage of the total prison

[97] According to the ONUDD (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), in August 2008 Ecuador had the highest percentage in Latin America of prison overpopulation. (Edwards 2010: 55)

population (7.7% in 2014). However, the same sharp increase registered in the total prison population can be traced in the following chart showing female prison population in the 2000's.

Graph 1.2: Ecuadorian Female Prison Population 2002-2014



Data Retrieved from World Prison Brief and the Institute for Criminal Policy Research 2016.

The same slight decrease after the 'pardoning of the mules' is clear in this chart. However, after 2009-2010, the female prison population grows at a faster rate than before Correa's regime[98]. The recent reform of the penal code[99] acts specifically on modifying some of those draconian measures related to drug- crimes, rationalizing the sentences and typifying the crimes with their respective sentences.

[98] In 2000, the rate of the female prison population (for every 100,000 of the national population) was at 5.2. In 2014, the rate was at 12.5. ("Ecuador World Prison" 2016)
[99]The reform has been read within Correa´s intent of self-determination and distancing from the United States' 'war on drugs'. (Alvarez Velasco 2014)

The new table that both typifies sentences for different drugs and establishes sentences proportional to the quantities of drugs (see Appendix A) is a positive contribution of the penal code. However, the new penal code raised the sentences for other crimes and harshly criminalized political activism[100] Recently, some have indicated a return to an 'iron-fist' policy in terms of drug crimes and adolescents, because, in the words of the President, "after problems of poverty, [drug problems] are the most important in the country." (Alvarez Velasco 2014: 7) The dissociation of poverty and drugs in public discourse, two issues intricately linked, and especially from the lips of such an authoritative figure as the president himself raise many concerns. At the same time, it is important to point out the centrality that drugs continues to have in public discourse. Pontón (2013) likewise identifies an increase in the securitization of the state, where the police is ever more entrenched and charged with responsibility over the prison system. Pinos Calderón's (2014) thesis on the myriad of reforms throughout 2012 and 2014 in Ecuador revealed the following:

> …the institutional efforts to transform the Justice System within the framework of *Buen Vivir* [Good living] are evidenced in a great number of actions that have gone from the construction of more and 'better' [my emphasis] prisons, to the toughening of laws, the legitimization of the security discourse and the fight against delinquency. The construction of the New Democratic State of Rights, Justice and Good Living does not guarantee the inclusion or the equal exercise of rights; on the contrary, it is an ideal that fluctuates between the intention to promote certain changes in form and the need to establish punitive responses of vigilance and control from the state. (10)

[100] According to an interviewed Professor, the previously installed alternative measures to incarceration are now congruent to incarceration, sentences have increased, the discretional ranges that serve to analyze culpability have diminished, which means that that more actions have been penalized and that sentences have become harsher.

The recent neoliberal turn registered in Correa's regime becomes apparent in the penal system. Despite attempting to promote a more 'humane' system of incarceration that is meant to reduce and not increase the prison population overtime, it closely resembles a nascent version of the U.S. prison-industrial complex system. As both official documents and the state officials themselves explain, the reason behind the new multi-million dollar mega[101] 'Centers for Social Rehabilitation' installed across Ecuador in August 2014 (along with the new penal code or COIP) is that rehabilitation will not be possible until overcrowding[102] is resolved. By replacing the crumbling prisons dating to the 19th and 20th Century and reducing overcrowding, the introduction of a new code aimed at 'rehabilitating' and 'reinserting' the prison population would effectively reduce

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[101] The state invested more than 200 million dollars in new 'Centers for Social Rehabilitation' in Cotopaxi, Turi and Guayas. ("2014, año de la Rehabilitación" 2014)

[102] Aguirre Salas (2010) and Torres (2005) state that, because of the over-populated and dire conditions of living, the employees that essentially ran the prison (the Director changes constantly, making it very difficult to fix any sort of strategy in running the institution) employed arbitrary mechanisms of control and punishment that keep the inmates in a constant state of fear and distrust. The fragmentation generated within the incarcerated populace drove women to survival techniques, such as becoming *sapeas* ('telling on others to the authorities to receive benefits'). Even upon entering the prison, however, women were already arbitrarily assigned a category, depending on supposed 'standards', which do not actually exist (Torres 2005) to determine where they would live (which pavilion) and what rehabilitation program they would be assigned. The employees were also in charge of overseeing their compliance with the imposed rules and of making sure they attended meetings that are in nature not obligatory, but in the reality are, as they can determine whether a visitor will be allowed in the next month or not. As an additional point, authors like Lagarde (2003), Torres Angarita (2005) and Aguirre Salas (2010) have mentioned how the only work opportunities offered within the institution further confined them to their gendered expectations. Not only is the work conducive to maintaining (or veering and 're- socialization') women into doing this sort of labor, but also the cleanliness itself of the institution was maintained by these women and not remunerated. If the purpose of the prison is one of deterrence of committing crime, and a second one of re-habilitating those who do end up in prison, it is clear that this institution is only a Rehabilitation Center by title. The only specific program mentioned by Torre (2005) was one implemented by Dayton International, that was based on a philosophy of *mea culpa*, where the inmates were supposed to appropriate the crime committed and verbally blame themselves for it as a rehabilitation process. In light of the previous sections, illustrating the need to understand the incarcerations from the context previous to detention, it is difficult to understand how any of these policies would be therapeutic or conducive to making the person feel more capable and worthy of herself instead of more guilty, ashamed and afraid to face loved ones and society in general. After having visited the new Center for Social Rehabilitation in Latacunga, it is possible to state that, despite overcrowding issues being resolved, many of the issues mentioned by the cited authors continue to plague the new prison (such as gendered work opportunities, lack of useful workshops, privilege-based systems and power plays (*refile*) between guards and prisoners).

the prison population (and in turn crime). However, as I will later specify, the proportion of women incarcerated on minor drug offenses has increased throughout his regime. Despite it being too early to analyze it, I wonder how effective the new drug table will be. The rate of reentry into prison was high from the perspective of both incarcerated women and employees of the prison, and shorter sentences inside and the same impoverished conditions outside could further embed prison into the horizons of those on the margins of the state. According to an interviewee, there was already an official discussion underway in regards to modifying the table and penalizing drug offenses more harshly again[103].

Prison and drugs

The prison 'Panopticon[104]' was designed in the 18th century to discipline, punish and 'rehabilitate' or 'reeducate'. As Foucault (1995) explained, the 18th century was the age that discovered the body as object and target of power[105]. The subtle and micro dimensions of the exercise of power over bodies targeted not only individual's behavior, but also their utility and efficiency within society: "discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies." (138) The Norm, as Foucault (1995) insists, is what

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[103] This is confirmed by an article in *El Comercio* that spoke of Correa's new intent to toughen-up the criminal persecution of micro-traffickers, a year after the approval of the new penal code, COIP, that reduced sentences for micro-traffickers. (Ortega 2015)

[104] The Panopticon refers to the institutional design of prison created by Jeremy Bentham, allowing constant surveillance of the imprisoned population.

[105] It was not that bodies had not been strictly controlled before, but more so that new techniques emerged to exercise power and control over bodies (as through the Industrial Revolution and the mechanization/division of labor) that "assured the constant subjugation of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility, might be called disciplines." (Foucault 1995: 137)

normalizes society; it compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, and excludes. First, it compares individual actions, and differentiates one from another, then, it hierarchizes individuals according to their 'nature' (quantitative value of abilities). It introduces the limits of a 'traditionalism' that must be achieved, and finally, defines differences in relation to all other differences, creating the "external frontier of the abnormal." (183) Prison, thus, serves as a medium of social control.

Torres Angarita (2005) discussed in detail the historical underpinnings of female incarceration in Ecuador. Initially, president García Moreno's (1859-1875) project to 'civilize' society through Catholicism treated female delinquency as a medical condition. The nuns of the convent 'Buen Pastor' (Good Pastor) were tasked with "reforming delinquent women", "preserving those who are exposed to being victims of the corruption of the 19th Century" and "correcting women who had deviated into the road of vice and immorality." (Maldonado 1960 as cited by Torres Angarita 2008: 8) As opposed to men, who were locked in the 'Penal García Moreno' (Prison 'García Moreno'), women's incursions into crime were seen as sins, as the result of a sickened soul. This led to the 'preventive' use of incarceration, where women who were 'in danger of committing crime (sin)' (generally related to their socioeconomic/family situation) were also locked up.

As Torres Angarita (2005) explained, Penal García Moreno quickly resembled the modern panopticon, where a militarized, routinized regiment was meant to 'punish and discipline' the incarcerated men. Women's reclusion, however, was not only meant to

punish but also act as a form of gendered social control. Between 1914 (when the Buen Pastor cells were destroyed) and 1952, there weren't specific institutions designated to female incarceration. By 1952, however, the first institution for female incarceration was built and under the control of Buen Pastor in El Inca, Quito. It was not until 1978 when the institution was finally secularized and named 'Female Center for Social Rehabilitation' through the Code of Penal Execution and Social Rehabilitation (housing a population of 384 women). According to Torres Angarita (2005), the secularization of the carceral system is directly related to the increase in female incarceration for minor drug offenses. Since the 1980's, minor drug offenses (the consumption and sale of marihuana and derivatives of cocaine) have predominantly characterized female incarceration (whereas theft/robbery have characterized male incarceration).

By 1991, according to DINAMU (National Direction for Women), 60.99% of women were incarcerated on minor drug offenses across Ecuador. By 2005, the number had risen to 75% of women (Nuñez 2005) and later to 80% by 2012 (Pinos Calderón 2014). From 1973-2003 (three decades), the population of incarcerated women tripled in relation to the national total (from 3.5% to 10%) and in direct relation to the prosecution of drug trafficking, increased 72.5%. (Coba Mejía 2015: 4) It is difficult to determine the current percentage of women incarcerated on minor drug offenses. Given the current climate of securitization in Ecuador, and the recent transfer of prisons to new 'mega-prisons' outside of the main cities, the numbers are not available to the public. Throughout my fieldwork, both incarcerated women and public defenders mentioned that

around 90% of women were there for drug-related offenses[106]. I was unable to confirm this number with official statistics (despite my repeated attempts at filing petitions to the Ministry of Justice and contacting several employees of the Public Defender's Office and non-governmental institutions).

The impossibility of accessing official statistics and corroborating my data against new publications makes me hesitant, to say the least, to rely on the only numbers obtained outside of my own fieldwork. It is also important to point out that, within 'minor drug offenses', women can generally be sentenced because of *selling*, *trafficking* or *consuming*. The women I interviewed sold small quantities of drugs on the street. Generally, publications on women, drugs and incarceration have focused on mules (who transport drugs), ignoring the smaller number of women (which has been increasing) that sell on the streets. According to Pontón (2013), around 13% of confiscated drug in Quito in 2012 was destined to micro trafficking (low level dealing) in Quito. Despite being unable to document the rise or decline of female micro-trafficking in Quito, Pontón's (2013) statement about the "democratization of the sale and consumption of drugs in various neighborhoods in the Capital" (68) points to an expansion of the activity. Herrera (2011) wrote that "consumption, purchase and sale of drugs overcame the barrier of exclusivity and division by sectors. Drugs are sold in almost all neighborhoods in

[106] I am hesitant about relying on numbers I was able to obtain from a contact, not because of the contact's reliability, but more so because they don't seem reasonable when compared to the reality of Latacunga's female incarcerated population. According to my contact, the total number of women currently imprisoned in Ecuador stands at 1,636, out of which 709 are incarcerated on minor drug offenses. However, while I was conducting my fieldwork in prison (one prison out of 64 nationwide), the number of women fluctuated between 556-720[106] on any given week. These numbers do not seem reasonable when compared to the total number of women incarcerated, nor the percentage of women supposedly incarcerated on minor drug offenses (43%) against the 90% mentioned while I conducted my fieldwork.

Quito…detected in more than 51 neighborhoods in the capital.” (as cited in Pontón 2013: 68) The neighborhoods that Pontón (2013) mentions in his document on micro trafficking align with both the selling points and neighborhoods in which the women I interviewed lived in.

Despite Correa’s recent reform of the penal code and the table that reduced sentences for micro-traffickers to two or four months (depending on the quantity), the prison employees I spoke to saw an increase of the incarcerated population. According to a contact, the total number of women currently imprisoned in Ecuador stands at 1,636, out of which 709 are incarcerated on minor drug offenses. However, while I was conducting my fieldwork in prison (one prison out of 64 nationwide), the number of women fluctuated between 556-720 on any given week. The numbers obtained from my contact do not seem reasonable when compared to the total number of women incarcerated, or the percentage of women supposedly incarcerated on minor drug offenses (43%) against the 90% mentioned while I conducted my fieldwork. The impossibility of obtaining reliable numbers, as well as the significant fluctuations of the female prison population while I was doing my own fieldwork seemed to point to an issue that the new 5-step rehabilitation plan largely ignored. The cyclical influx of women in Latacunga revealed how they had adopted micro trafficking as a lifestyle; prison was just another inescapable obstacle of their everyday reality.

Chapter 2. Confronting the schema

The following chapter will analyze the porousness of the motherhood and consumer citizen schema. It will question the discourse of the sacrificial woman 'for others', either as a mother/caretaker or as a worker/consumer to satisfy the needs and desires of others. The neoliberal state, as Lind (2005) argues, privatizes women's struggles to survive, increasing the weight of responsibility they carry both as caretakers and as consumer-citizens. The historical chapter unmasked the raw layers of class, gender and race that intersect and inform the background against which the state creates these expectations. As authors have argued, the impoverished conditions in which these women live in as single mothers and heads of households make the sale of drugs an attractive option. Women sell because they are trying to be both responsible mothers and consumer-citizens. The sale of drugs implies less bodily risk than other illegal and 'profitable' activities, such as prostitution, and a higher, more immediate reward than any other option available to them. Moreover, as Rodríguez (2004) emphasizes, the sale of drugs allows women to continue being mothers, wives and homemakers while earning a livable income. If these women worked either in the formal or informal market, they would be working longer hours (and work weeks) and earning considerably less. Greater hours outside of home and a meager pay would make the task of working, homemaking, and caretaking[107] much more difficult and exhausting.

[107] The historical chapter clearly traced the effects of re-agrarianization and deindustrialization on the lives of men and women in the margins, and especially the impact and transformation of women's roles both in the family and society.

Torres Angarita (2008) questioned, however, the determinist explanation espoused (and forcefully defended) by most Latin American criminological theorists starting in the late '80's and early '90's. The author did not intend to discard the idea that poverty and the need to survive and sustain children is sufficient to explain women's incursion into illegal activity, but more so that other reasons may also inform this decision. This thesis does not intend to understand the initial motivations to traffic, but more so if agency is gained through the sale of drugs[108]. However, if the discourse on economic necessity is not porous, then the decision to traffic is grounded on the cultural schema, conducive to reaching the ideal of good mother and good citizen. This chapter, therefore, intends to shed light on what escapes the motherhood discourse, on what is silenced, circumvented and expressed.

Section 1. Discourse on economic necessity and motherhood

According to Torres Angarita (2008), the motherhood discourse is firmly institutionalized in the prison setting in Ecuador. The author discussed how women are aware of the moral strength that motherhood has both in the eyes of society and the state. In a context of marginalization and criminalization, where their claim to 'good mother' is challenged (if not rejected), women hold on steadfastly to their roles as mothers. This both victimizes them in the eyes of society and softens judgment: they entered crime because they were trying to be good mothers by providing for their children. As described earlier, this is congruent to the neoliberal state's (and non governmental

[108] It is important to note that Torres Angarita (2008) worked with mules and not low-level dealers. As the author described, women who perform the task of a *mule* generally come from low-middle or middle class families and have greater familial support than low-level dealers.

organization's) expectations of women as responsible caretakers (acting in accordance to their gendered role). Schild (2000) and Hahn (2012) argued extensively that women in the lower socioeconomic rungs are punished when straying from this path and made to bear the brunt of their precariousness. Lind (2005) further contended that NGO's and governmental social policy programs rely on women's voluntary labor. As the state's caretakers, they are responsible for *mothering the crisis.*

Juliano (2005) also mentioned the two avenues available to women when speaking of their engagement in illegal activity: the victimizing discourse versus the assertive discourse. (157) In her words, there is a tendency to use the victimizing discourse because no one wants to *hear* the assertive one. It is easier to blame structures entirely for their decisions instead of introducing the scope of choice. This is parallel to my argument: no one wants to *face* the possibility that women may have willingly strayed from the motherhood path. The idea of a woman continuing to choose trafficking for reasons other than sustaining her children (knowing that they will return to prison and leave them on their own) seems unnatural, abnormal, wrong, and defective. It goes against women's 'biological predisposition' to *mother* others. As Scheper-Hughes (1989) and Juliano (2005) insist, this occurs because we are grounding our expectations of women on the myth of maternal instinct, a myth that we homogenize across history, culture and class. As Scheper-Hughes (1989) wrote, mother love is "anything other than natural" and represents instead a "matrix of images, meanings and sentiments, and practices that are everywhere socially and culturally produced." (341)

Despite the fact that Torres Angarita's (2008) analysis is of drug mules (who are generally of higher socioeconomic status and have a longer trajectory in education), it is useful to compare and contrast my interviewee's own explanations to the institutionalized one[109]. The author begins her analysis asking Josefina why women in prison have generally sold or trafficked drugs, to which she replies:

> The woman is the mother, the majority here are single mothers and heads of households, abandoned by their husbands. They have to sustain their house with around four or five children. And unfortunately, across Latin America, we are going through a social and economic crisis that denies women the access to jobs…Mothers for the sole reason of being mothers. I think that is the main reason that leads them to sell drugs, because of their children, because here the majority of women are mothers. If they do it, it is to give their children a better life, just as any mother would. Who does not hope that their child fares well, has a good profession, a good house to live in, and everything else he or she may need? And the majority of women were abandoned by their husbands, or have irresponsible husbands. (56)

Josefina's explanation is relevant to the livelihoods of the women interviewed. Their partners abandoned all women once, if not twice. All had multiple children to take care of and limited employment options. Five of the ten women interviewed began selling before having children, through their friends or families. Two of those were drug addicts who sold in order to sustain their habits. Two women were allegedly framed by someone the first time around and then began selling after their first imprisonment through friends. The other three started selling when they already had children, also through friends. Unless the interviewed women were overtly protecting their ex husbands or partners by

[109] The institutional discourse described is common in other countries, such as Chile (Cárdenas y Undurraga 2014) and Spain (Juliano 2005).

masking their participation in crime, women's decision to drug deal were neither motivated by *romantic love* or manipulated by a partner[110].

Drugs and families

Graciela's entire family sold drugs: *it was the circle in which I lived in because all my family sold drugs, my cousins, uncles and aunts, mother. I became well known and started selling when I was twelve years old.* The sale of drugs was thus normalized from childhood. Drug dealing was part of her everyday world. As Cárdenas and Undurraga (2014) argued, the *meaning* of drug selling is socialized as any other job for those who grow in dealer's homes. However, Graciela goes on to emphasize the *caretaking* and necessity discourse to justify her partaking in illegal activity: *we lived in poverty. My mom was in prison when I started working, my father would drink a lot and there was never enough to eat. I was the eldest, and to not see us in a bad state, to eat...I left school.* Later, however, when she speaks of leaving prison, being employed as a cashier, barely having enough to feed her children and being tempted to sell drugs, she states: *if the family has money, you become aware of what you lack and you want the same thing. They are all the same, they don't change but I believe that if one wants to make something happen, they can.* Throughout her narrative, it is possible to trace both the palpably dire

[110] Lagarde (2003) has argued that, in the case of women who have committed drug-related felonies, the core of their transgression into criminal activity lies in their conjugal, filial or maternal relationships to men. According to the author, there are to types of women tied to drugs: 1) those who commit crimes with their partner and are detained and imprisoned with them. These women do not work on their own, but always next to a man who protects and uses them 2) women who commit a crime as ordered by their imprisoned partner.

economic situation when she leaves prison and is a single mother, but also the use of the necessity framework when explaining her early incursion into crime that was most likely motivated by reasons other than poverty (because, as she later states, her family's higher income tempted her to sell drugs again). Moreover, something I will later analyze, even when she had a 'legal job', she returned to selling drugs because she became aware of what she lacked and 'wanted the same thing'.

Drugs and adrenaline

Valeria began selling drugs after a trip to Quito when she was sixteen. Her three children (at the time) stayed behind in the Coast. Her narrative is a constant back and forth between the motherhood imperative and the thrill and 'adrenaline' (a concept that will be analyzed later) of selling drugs. Against a very precarious and violence ridden childhood, both narratives clash in such a way that it is hard to distinguish if her children's wellbeing was the real motivation to sell. When remembering that first trip to Quito, she narrated: *Drugs make you forget everything. I started traveling, getting to know another environment. I opened my eyes to bad things and I loved it because I would see people selling drugs. At first, I sold around 25-50 grams (unpackaged), that's how I started investing in drug dealing.*

Later, however, Valeria's narrative confronts her child's reproaches of being abandoned by her and embracing the 'street life'. She described slapping her child,

scolding him for being so disgraceful when she had always provided for them. She then went on to explain why she had sold drugs in a different light, resorting to the poverty-stricken and lonely childhood she had: *Everything has cost me tears of blood. I wanted to give my children a better life. That was my way of thinking, I don't like poverty. When I was a child, I promised myself that I would never let my children go hungry.* Contrary to the initial explanation for dealing, where she leaves her children behind and 'opens her eyes to bad things', when she faces her child's reprimands of being a 'bad mother', her relationship to drug dealing changes completely. Suddenly, it is not about 'love' of bad things and power, but more so about her children and providing for them. As Josefina initially mentioned, mothers sell drugs 'for the sole reason of being mothers'; motherhood annuls the woman and her own projects for those of others. Valeria falls into the institutional discourse to defend herself against her child's claims in my eyes and in her own. Suddenly, the only thing that ever made her *feel like a woman is motherhood.*

She then goes on to stress how she would do anything for her children, condemning women who are not willing to put their own 'self' at risk for them, tagging them as weak and passive: *The woman who lets her children go hungry is a coward, because if it were necessary to prostitute myself, I would. I have been with men for money. I would ask a man [to give me money] who was really ugly, and I did not like. I would ask him [for money] for the entire family.* Now, instead of being on the receiving end of the reproaches, she sets herself high on the moral pedestal, judging women who are not willing to engage in 'whatever it takes' to sustain their children. In her narrative, the 'good mother' is not one who stays on the legal path, but one who is willing to put her

body and life at risk for her children, to sacrifice herself entirely, even if it means going to prison or engaging romantically with a man for money. By wholly embracing the self-sacrificial or 'self for others' mother role, she reclaims her legitimacy as a good mother: women who stay in low paying, legal jobs are not doing enough, are not being good enough mothers, they are 'cowards'. Finally, she generalizes her claim about necessity as the sole factor pushing women to traffic, where both the lack of lucrative job opportunities compounded with the incompetency of men to provide for their families, makes it the only good option: *Women who sell drugs know that whatever else they do is going to be a bust, and they need money. And their husbands are a disaster; they don't even know how to traffic. That in a month of work they can get paid, but with drug dealing, they get paid that same day.*

This quote is reminiscent in its entirety of Josefina's institutional discourse on selling drugs. First of all, Valeria mentions both the pressing need for money (to cover immediate economic needs), which confirms Josefina's remarks about women being heads of households and having to sustain their house and numerous children. Second, Valeria mentions that 'whatever else they do is going to be a bust', also supported by Josefina's accurate portrayal of Ecuador's economic and social crisis that "denies women access to jobs." Finally, both Josefina and Valeria stress how women, with or without a partner, are sustaining their household on their own. Whether abandoned or with irresponsible (incompetent or *disastrous*) husbands (who, as Valeria states *don't even know how to traffic*), women carry the burden of being both mothers and fathers. And of course, who can deny, as Josefina asks, and Valeria comments, the want of providing

children with a better present and future. Without discounting the veracity of these claims, and the dire situation in which Valeria and the women interviewed in find themselves and their children in, where the question of *what will they eat today* is a daily reality, it is not possible to say that Valeria or Graciela solely sold drugs because of being mothers.

Friends and drugs

Julia also began her life story narrating that she was the *black sheep* of a stable family (mother, father and siblings) and began committing petty theft as an adolescent with her friends. Soon thereafter she began selling drugs to put herself through school, which never happened: *...when I got out [of prison], I started doing more [selling drugs], I wanted to give my children more to eat, they have to study, they have to be better than me. I was in prison for selling, but they never lacked anything.* Despite her initial reasons for selling and the story that underlined the motherhood narrative, Julia relied on the feminine mandate to justify her acts. She was in prison, but her children never lacked anything. Here, Valeria's invocation of the mother as the martyr who is willing to sacrifice everything for her children comes into play. The illegal act was solely based on the want of acquiring what she never had, because, as Josefina asked, how could one not understand a mother's desire to provide her children with a better future. By selling, she was sustaining her family and *being* a good mother.

Consuming and selling

Two of my interviewees began consuming at a young age through friends and became extremely addicted, abandoning their children with their mothers and embracing the lifestyle of consumption, partying and selling. Despite consumption being the obvious reason fueling their intense engagement with drug selling, both interlaced their narratives with the economic necessity/motherhood discourse to redeem themselves, at least partially. Ramona, a 28 year-old woman imprisoned throughout her late teens and twenties (she was imprisoned three times), narrated the following:

> *When I was thirteen years old, I went to school, but I met some friends who consumed solución*[111]*. I was terribly abused by the father of my children; he thought he was better than me. I lost my children by selling drugs for them, but then it all ends and one has to start all over: sleeping on the floor, where people want to trample on you, ignorant people who don't want to see what is happening to us. No one came to tell me, 'I'm going to help you' and to help myself…that life, I don't want to remember the past, it destroyed me…bad friendships would lead me to dances, to do harm. In prison I ended my life, lost my youth.* [she attempted to commit suicide several times in prison] *With drugs no one mattered to me, no one…when I would leave prison, I'd go directly to a friend's house so that I could get high again and I would tell her, what am I going to do, I don't have clothes, I don't have anything and she would tell me 'here you go [handing her drugs], go sell'. Interpol always caught me with drugs, they caught me with four and a half pounds of marihuana…'I was helping my girls'.*

Underlying her narrative is a story of physical abuse, a fragmented and impoverished household, and early pregnancies. However, despite the potential reality of her dealing *for* her girls, it cannot be argued that she only dealt to fulfill her role of responsible provider and caretaker. The dire economic situation after multiple imprisonments is palpable, but so is her addiction. After gaining her freedom, she would go straight to a friend's home to get her fix and *no one mattered* to her, *no one* when she

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[111] *Solución* here refers to glue that is snorted.

was engrossed in the drug world. Like Valeria, she emphasizes the structural oppression she is immersed in and the neoliberal stance on self-responsibility: *no one came to tell me, 'I'm going to help you'.* After describing her patterned behavior to sustain her drug addiction when gaining freedom, she clings to the economic necessity/motherhood discourse when confronting the police: *I was helping my girls.* In the eyes of the state, she hopes to justify the sale of drugs through the institutionalized response that stresses the responsible fulfillment of her traditional gender role in society. She was not doing it to satisfy her own needs (drug addiction). Interestingly enough, this response to state authorities repeats itself in other interviews, where women feel the need to distinguish themselves from other unfeminine, 'bad mothers' in front of the police: *When I was imprisoned, I kept telling that to the police. It's just that I love being a mom, I don't go out dancing*. Both women knew their claims to motherhood would not absolve them of their crime; they were going to prison. However, they were aware that they would be judged differently by the state and society if they sold drugs to sustain their families. As Gibbs (2001) argued, this allows these imprisoned women to remain linked (more than other women in prison) to the system of social legitimacy. (41)

A similar discourse is present throughout the narratives of the women I interviewed. They generally began selling either before they had children or after they were imprisoned for the first time (because allegedly two of my interviewees were framed the first time). All of my interviewees mentioned selling drugs to provide their children with a *better future.* Most women continued selling drugs, in large part, because

prison greatly compounded their already vulnerable livelihoods[112]. However, what is interesting is the way that the economic necessity/ motherhood discourse is intertwined with the interviewee's linear reality; that is, that despite claiming to sell drugs for their children, their stories reveal contradictions. These inconsistencies are related, in part, to women's stories of *romantic love,* or more so, their failed stories of love. This will be analyzed more thoroughly in the second chapter.

Section 2. Gendered consumer-citizen

This section will explore the ways in which women conform to and escape the neoliberal state's 'consumer-citizen' discourse. In order to justify drug dealing before and after imprisonment, women sustained that they had no other choice when confronted with the overwhelming cost of living and providing for their children on their own. Here, work acquires meaning through possibility of providing for their home, and the labor itself is a 'test of maternal love' and sacrifice. Drug sales did in fact allow women to provide for their children without a partner. However, I question the idea that women solely sold drugs to satisfy the needs and desires of their children. I argue that they did not want to limit their consumer habits (as dictated by the neoliberal state) to sheer survival. As Cárdenas and Undurraga (2014) argue, women who sell drugs and are imprisoned multiple times fracture the social and the gender order. Not only did they commit an 'illegal act' (against the social order) and were imprisoned (thus impeding them from

[112] The carceral experience is both mentally and physically damaging. It is perhaps in being dislocated from a routine, predictable, enclosed space, and building the 'quotidian' aspects of life and finding work that one may feel adrift in a vastness of life outside of prison, where survival strategies developed inside no longer apply. Moreover, in the case of women, especially, prison incarcerates both mothers and their families. (Pinos Calderón 2014) This will be analyzed in more detail in the fifth chapter.

caring for their children), they also modified the distribution of economic power in society. Through drug sales, they are able to integrate into the market as mainstream consumers, resisting the state's idea of a poor, responsible, sacrificial female consumer.

Schild (2013) speaks of the caring or enabling and punitive function of the neoliberal state, especially in targeting poor women in Chile. The first *teaches* women to be responsible, *active* citizens able to decide rationally as consumers and workers, make demands upon the state and stand up for their rights. The state privatizes the process of *empowerment* of women in poor sectors, generally carried out by NGOs (Lind 2005) and, as Hahn (2012) mentions, articulates an "intense moralism…around relations of the poor to consumer goods." (63) In considering the poor as non-modern, their poverty is limited to survival, considering that they should practice hyper-austerity and hyper-rationality as consumers. (Hahn 2012) In case of behaving unlike the good consumer citizen, the state's punitive dimension will both exclude and punish that woman. As Schild (2000) wrote, "the key feature of neoliberal rationality is the congruence it endeavors to achieve between a responsible and moral individual and an economic-rational actor." (197) Women are generally targeted in these programs because they are *expected* to fulfill the role of the responsible consumer. As caretakers and homemakers, they have historically administered the household, taken care of shopping, cooking, budgeting and caring[113]. The enabling state, as Lind (2005) argues, further privatizes women's struggles to survive by assuming that they *should* be the ones carrying the weight of poverty. Once again,

[113] Authors have argued that men tend to be more individualistic and conspicuous consumers than women, channeling revenues into activities outside of the household. (Anderson 2008; Bourgois 2003)

these assumptions and expectations are founded on the cultural (and not biological) notion that women have a maternal/caretaking instinct because of their ability to reproduce. Selling drugs, according to the interviewed women, allow them to be 'modern consumer citizens', "autonomous, enterprising and responsible for their own lives and for the life of communities. " (Schild 2000:188) However, instead of 'acquiring' these skills of *desarrollo personal* (personal development) through the techniques of self-improvement 'enabled' by the state, they do so through the route of illegality. These women escape the 'illusion of consumption' that the neoliberal state imposes upon populations excluded from the mainstream market.

Inés is in prison for the third time on minor drug offenses. She is a single mother to three children. She left home when she was eight because she felt like she was a burden to her mother, who frequently mistreated her and worked as a domestic worker. According to her narrative, the first time around she was imprisoned for taking care of someone else's drugs. Twenty years later, she was imprisoned again for selling drugs. Halfway through her narrative, Inés speaks specifically of consumption: *I can go in wherever I want to because I have money, because on top of being black I am poor. Before I'd ask people for help, to lend me or give me something…Society itself pushes the poor to commit crime. It's the situation that leads you there.*

Inés first identifies how the intersectional clash of race, gender and class have excluded and subordinated her in society. At the same time, she points out how having money increases her value in society and allows her to inhabit more public spaces.

Valencia (2010) mentions this as she describes her *endriago* subjects: neoliberalism shows that life is not important in and of itself if not for its value in the market as an object of economic exchange. Inés, like Cárdenas and Undurraga´s (2014) interviewees, is integrating herself into the market, modifying the distribution of economic power in society. Further, if before her 'freedom' as a consumer citizen to navigate the market was conditioned by poverty, it is now unleashed by the sale of drugs. In order to justify the sale of drugs, she states that society pushes the *poor to commit crime.* Here, she resorts to the economic necessity discourse, arguing that the state leaves the poor no other choice but to sell in order to survive. However, what if, as Graciela stated, she also *always wanted what others had*? Inés continues narrating: *I could wear nice clothes, perfume, makeup, boots... If I liked something, I could get it. It wasn't that I would only see the rich people wearing it…*

Consumption is intrinsic to the functioning and growth of neoliberalism; the *desire* to consume is embodied by citizens as a natural instinct, as part of the *habitus* (inscribed in our bodies in such a way that we do not regard it as a product of structured structures but as part of our nature). The interviewed women's responses to their exclusion from participating in the market show the extent to which the neoliberal rhetoric of *individual freedom* has effectively ramified and rooted itself in society, cutting across class. If he or she has the right to consume, why don't I? After all, as Sierra (2011) argues, the neoliberal government's plan is to transform people into economic subjects that are entrepreneurs of themselves and produce their own satisfaction, who are concerned with privately accumulating capital to insert themselves in the competitive,

mercantilist world. The excluded sub-consumers are *pacified* (as they might endanger the economic order) by the state through welfare programs that allow them to survive and experience some form of consumption (though mechanized and controlled by the state). The women I interviewed, however, were not satisfied by mere survival.

In this individualistic world, subjects of the state are alienated from agrarian relations of reciprocity and solidarity, and immersed in a consumerist world of mercantile relations where what we *have* defines us. As Valeria's concluding remarks emphasize: *I look at the material things because it is visible, it is what counts. Feelings don't matter. Women look at your pockets and not at love. Friendships are of convenience, because of what you have.* Women consistently repeat avoiding seeing friends upon release from prison to avoid the temptation of dealing again: *I have my friends…and it's getting out* [of prison] *and seeing them wearing brand clothes, jewelry…I don't want to see my friends of the past because I'm going to end up back here and I don't want to, it's very ugly.*

Seven out of ten women reported that they'd rather avoid seeing their friends once released because they are only 'friends by convenience' and/or because seeing them and what they *have* would make drug sales a tempting option again. If people are defined by what they have, the only way for these women to *belong* to a group and be a *valuable* member worthy of respect is by consuming at the same level. Further, and especially for women, it is not only value, but also *feminine identity* that is at play. Femininity is linked to our appearance. 'Beauty', as defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary, is 1) the

quality of being physically attractive, 2) the qualities in a person or a thing that give pleasure to the senses or the mind, 3) a beautiful woman. A 'beautiful woman': a 'generally pleasing' woman (again, defining beautiful by the dictionary). Here we have the basic tenets of the 'ideal woman': pleasing to the eyes, the body, the mind. Since the 1970's, feminists have elaborated the associated characteristics of femininity: 'submissiveness, irrationality, sensitivity' against the 'rational, strong, aggressive' male. Women are bound to the idea that they must please from birth, spending large amounts of time immersed in 'perfecting' themselves, tailoring their bodies to the standards set by society. The plethora of products available to women are both a response to and producers of the advertisements, shows and discourses in popular culture specifically targeted at raising the expectations of *perfection* for women. Some women cannot leave home until wearing make up because they aren't 'presentable', or even *themselves* without them. Ofelia clearly references this triad of 'consumption-feminine identity-self worth' when in prison: *The identity-they turn it off…self-esteem is completely trampled on and one thinks they are nothing when they see people dressed well. Limits, limits, they tell you what you can eat, what you can buy…We are women, we like to look good.*

The new center for social rehabilitation in Latacunga borrowed several ideas from the prison-industrial complex of the United States, one of which was the new dress code: orange jump suits. Ofelia directly related identity to clothes, or rather the annulment of identity to the imposition of a homogenous dress code. Furthermore, she both highlighted and generalized this to the entire prison population: *self-esteem is completely trampled on* and *one thinks they are nothing when they see people dressed well.* Here, she is referring

to the limited influx of women they see, whether on a daily basis (such as the public defenders or employees of the prison) or the few visitors that enter. The women I met were generally 'dressed well', wore make up, jewelry and perfume. It was as though they unconsciously flaunted their exercise of freedom as consumers in front of these women who were deprived of everything, limited in their freedom of movement, expression, and choice. According to Muriel, *the idea of being* [in prison] *is to lower self-esteem because 'you are little women' and that's why we get less clothes. We're dirty and have nothing to dye our hair with.*

As both Muriel and Ofelia emphasize, the mandate of femininity also creates expectations about women's appearance that cannot be met in prison. *We women*, as Ofelia narrates, *like to look good.* It is an expression of femininity but also of desire and identity, of self-expression that is denied. Prison purposively denies them these material goods to further punish them not only as humans, but also as *mujercitas* (little women). The fact that Muriel cited prison officials saying *mujercitas* is an indicator of how this form of punishment knowingly belittles and patronizes women. Imprisoned women repeatedly mentioned not wanting to receive visitors so that they wouldn't see them without make up and in their orange uniforms. Muriel, for example, told me her son in law said she had let him down, that she had grey hair and did not look the same. Others preferred not seeing their children and mothers so that they wouldn't have to see them in 'such a state'.

The women I interviewed wanted more than to just survive. Hahn (2012) describes the underlying idea stemming from this hyper-rationality and hyper austerity imposed on the poor. It originates from the belief that they are born deprived of the 'economic rationality' that other 'affluent' members of society naturally have. There is a supposition that their 'pure, innocent poor souls' will be further deteriorated when confronted with marvelous material goods. Without proper discipline, the desire to obtain such attractive objects might lead them to harmful behavior (to themselves or society), as though they do not have the capacity to live well with material goods. (69) There is also the idea that the poor should be content will less than the rest of the population; they are not allowed to engage in profligate spending, to *desire* and to experience pleasure through recreational activities and consumption.

Ofelia, as eight out of ten women interviewed, reflected that she provided for her children materially but also distanced herself from her children and immersed herself in a world of consumption. Women frame this particular reflection with guilt and shame, castigating and labeling themselves as *bad mothers,* who did not care for their children's *hearts*. *In that moment, I only thought of the money and that we were pretty comfortable…I would leave them money for shoes, shirts, books, and they'd go to school and would not think of their mom.*

Inés also speaks of embodying the role of provider and not that of the affectionate and loving mother. She categorizes herself as something outside of the mother role because she was neither 'affectionate' nor 'loving', and did not take care of her

children's' hearts. This is reminiscent of Scheper-Hughes's (1989) rejection of the innate *mothering instinct* that is homogenized and biologized across cultures, yet expected of women who have children:

> *...I don't want to justify my acts, but there comes a time when one is no longer conscious of what they do and the money, material things come first and there is nothing left for my children. I did not dedicate enough time to them in search of money to give them life. Emotionally and morally, my children are a mess…we deprived each other of our affection, I did not enjoy them, did not see them grow. I did not do it, I wanted to take care of them economically, but not the love and affection (calor humano), of the mother, and that's why I think that today my children are rebels…I mistreated their hearts, my little children did suffer.*

Again, Inés justifies (as Ramona in the previous chapter) how she could not be a mother to her children because she was attempting to be a good mother by sustaining them: *I did not dedicate enough time to them in search of money to give them life.* The idea of 'giving life' through work metaphorically references women's biological capacity (and social and religious mandate) to both sacrifice themselves and suffer to give birth. Economically, her children are fine, but *emotionally and morally*, they are a mess. The *emotions* are the realm of women, considered the more sensitive, caring and empathetic sex because of their ability to reproduce. This quote is charged with guilt; Inés repeats 'I did not' four times in a short paragraph, as though engaging in penance and symbolic flagellation. Julia similarly sways in her narrative between her own personal consumption, economic necessity and the shift into being a provider for her children:

> *I started selling more, I wanted to give my kids food to eat, they have to study, they have to have more than me. And I landed back in prison…but I never lacked anything…I got out and continued trafficking, I was very stable…I separated from my husband…take this money, go, eat, I would make up for everything* [with her children] *with money, and I hurt*

> *my children a lot, a lot of alcohol…I'm not a materialist but…I've always had a clear mind that what matters are our children and I don't have them anymore and it hurts…*

Julia highlights the comfort and stability she experiences with drug dealing, not worrying about *choosing between a coffee and a bus ticket to ride back home* when waiting for her children to finish their school day. She also echoes the previous quotes' sentiment of guilt and regret for having abandoned her children (not only when in prison but also when she was outside). As Inés, Julia saves herself from being tagged as a reckless consumer: *I'm not a materialist but...*What matters, in the end, are *our children,* whom they lost in the process of working to *give them life.*

These women describe the difficulty of being a provider, a caretaker and an individual 'not for others', especially when they are expected to renounce their own projects and diversion 'for others'. It is important to remember that she, as the other nine women I interviewed, had to be both mothers and fathers to their children in a context where stable employment that paid them a decent salary was a non option. As Juliano (2005) and Coba Mejía (2015) question, how can we set such high expectations for women without providing them the opportunities or resources to ever reach them? Further, if motherhood is supposed to be the apex of a woman's existence, the passage through which women *become* and construct their identity and self-worth, how do we face Luisa's opening sentence to her interview? *My life has been really terrible; I have 6 children. I have lived a really awful life.*

The romantic ideals that enmesh women's childhood fairytales and playthings, their adolescent insecurities, desires and aspirations are not remotely close to experiencing motherhood alone and in poverty, living a life of sacrifice and restraint. Luisa first ran away from her impoverished household when she was sixteen because she was in love. After having her first two children with her partner, he abandoned her and she began selling drugs. During her stay in prison, she fell for another man and had children to, in her words, *please him* because he wanted them. After having two other children for him, for a project of their own, he left her for another woman.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I argued that women did not passively embody the schemas of motherhood and 'gender consumer citizen', through which the state enables their passage to womanhood and marginal 'citizenship'. In opposition to Mahmood's (2005) findings, and the determinant discourses that explain women's motivation to sell drugs, the women I encountered were not willing to enact rituals to reproduce a system that defined them inferior, emphasizing their *femininity* as responsible, poor mothers and consumers. The following section will explore the schema of romantic love and how women did effectively habituate their practices to reach self-realization through the ideal of companionate marriage.

Chapter 3. Shattering the Schema

The previous chapter described the ways in which the women's narratives clash with the discourses typically used to explain drug dealing. There is a cultural schema, however, that these women hoped to live by, intimately related to their suffering and dire living situations. Authors have generally associated women's involvement with drugs to their relationships with men. Whereas Lagarde (2003) claimed that women were coerced or manipulated by their partners in some way (stripping women of agency), Torres Angarita (2008) sustained that women were, as Mahmood (2005) elaborated, knowingly conforming to the schema of "good wife" to reach self-realization through their partners. There are multiple ways of exercising agency, not all of which necessarily imply *resistance.* The following section will attempt to understand women's relationship to the cultural schema of 'good wife' because it informs their relationship to drug dealing and motherhood. As Hirsch and Wardlow (2006) argue, familial ties are now subordinated to *conjugal ties,* where a couples' sole purpose is not to reproduce but to establish an emotional relationship of *romantic love* or companionate marriage. I argue that the women I interviewed became embroiled in the world of drugs and embraced autonomy when the life projects they had imagined, 'illusions' of a family with their partners, were shattered.

Section 1. Love and abuse

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, women's 'bodies for others' are either reproductive or erotic (for their husband's pleasure). Religious discourse continues to shape traditional, Latin American views on gender. For this reason, the biblical mandate of women living under the authority of men rings true in a many sectors across Ecuador. Furthermore, in accordance to the *romantic love* tenets, they reach *individual fulfillment* through their partners. Therefore women cannot 'be' without men and their children. Their identity is founded on the existence of a family. The lives of the women I encountered resembled that of the motherhood/romantic love schema until their partners betrayed and/or abandoned them.

Studies have shown that women who suffer abuse in relationships will generally either attempt to remain in the abusive relationship or will resort to another relationship to sustain that sense of 'self worth' through others. Many women across class and race would rather turn a blind eye to their husband's 'double lives' and infidelity, instead of losing if not a family, then the illusion of one. Further, as Lagarde (2001) reminds us, to speak of love is to speak of solitude. If we feel threatened by the idea of abandonment, it is because we think we'll be unable to live on our own, as though our *fountain of life* was not in our selves but in others. Throughout the interviews, several women circumvented the story of heartbreak until they ran into it, and then angry tears of sadness would stream down their faces. They consciously avoided speaking of the relationship that had shattered their ideals of romantic love until I either ended the interview or neared the end of it. As Valeria mentioned: *I was in Cuenca with another partner that I can't tell you about because I will cry.*

It seemed that these women could not allow themselves to relive that pain, but not necessarily because they wished to be with that partner. More so, it stirred feelings of rage against their partners for 'destroying' their 'home and hearth' projects, and also of shame and guilt for having been unable to retain their partner, for having 'failed' to be a 'good enough' woman. Their husband's infidelity did indeed lead them to practices of self-annulment, but it did not take another man to mend their lives. That speaks of strength and courage, and the ability to define their self-worth through something else. Women generally avoided speaking of men and love during their interviews; they would not let themselves be *fooled* or *played* again by their partners and by life. However, the desire to have a family is so strongly embedded in their habitus that it continues to underlie their intimate dreams. In a stream of consciousness, Graciela shared her personal fears and longings:

> *I dream of getting married, of having a husband that loves me and of being like all the other people who have their children, their things, their work, but I don't think I will achieve it. I love my family very much, my brothers. I am afraid of growing old. I am afraid that my children will go through what I did in prison...*

The globalized image of the prototypical family, one of cohesion, companionate marriage and individual fulfillment (through the couples' mutual recognition of uniqueness), has been linked, through media and discourse, to the idea of *modern progress.* As Schmuckler (1982) states, the fragmentation of kinship ties and solidarity has been replaced by conjugal and paternal solidarity, thus establishing the foundation of

the modern nuclear family into which we invest our trust, time, and money. Graciela yearns to be the 'modern woman' fully inserted in a society that individualizes and values personal accumulation and the puritan standards of a traditional family. As pillars that are tantamount to a woman's self-fulfillment, she hopes to *achieve* this. The use of this word implies that it is something she must work towards, a goal of *normalcy* that will represent ultimate success. Yet the full consummation of the companionate marriage/prototypical family has been hindered by intersecting structures since birth.

Valeria was perhaps one of the 'strongest' women that I met while in prison. She is thirty years old, migrated from the coast to Quito when she was sixteen and after she had had her first three children. She did not finish secondary school and came from an impoverished home where her mom sustained her children by working in informal labor and relying on a constant influx of male partners who were neither stable nor generally kind to her daughters. Valeria was first sexually abused by one of her mom's partners when she was ten years old. She never told her mother about it. *My life has been really tough; I did not have a childhood. I was sexually abused in three different occasions* [between the ages of 10 and 12]. *I was traumatized for several months and instead of seeking psychological help I decided to hide myself and then run away with the father of my children.* She was already 'economically independent' when she was six, selling fruit or candy on the streets or in public transportation. According to Valeria, her mother was not present because she was working all the time and there was never enough food to eat. Valeria had her first child when she was twelve with a boy she had known from her

childhood. However, as she narrated, being with him never made her feel like a woman. After she moved out to Quito and began selling drugs through friends, she:

> *…fell in love for the first time, he was the only one I gave myself to the first time. We lived together, the beating started; he would beat me a lot. I got pregnant and lost the baby because of the beatings. When I got pregnant again, he told me he was married and had three children. He made fun of me as though I were a child. I dissected myself, I wanted to kill myself. He dried my feelings out, if the same thing were to happen to me again I would not cry…not all men are bad but I am cured, enough for me.*

This excerpt clearly shows that it was not the physical abuse and the loss of pregnancies that made her want to 'dissect' herself (or leave him), but the betrayal, the instantaneous destruction of an idea built on romantic love. After all, and as Camacho (2001) argued in regards to abused women in Ecuador, the idea of leaving a man is almost unthinkable. The lack of protection and romantic love leads women to feel shame and guilt; it is the annulment of their own 'self'. In Valeria's horizon of subjectivity, the idea of physical abuse and love might've been intertwined. In these women's world, their *everyday* is imbued by violence; violence is a quotidian reality[114].

Abandonment (and betrayal), however, mercilessly shattered any illusions she had of 'being' with and through him. Jenkins (2014) wrote that when someone is betrayed in an intimate relationship: "the affront goes to the core of psychological conditions for social relations ruptured by betrayal. The rupture of trust by betrayal can, surprisingly, be reported as the 'worst' of all that has occurred." (Jenkins 2014: 54) There is vulnerability

[114] It is not only that these women are extremely poor, but also that the rates of violence against women are very high, further impinging their (already) vulnerable livelihoods. As pointed out in the structural chapter, six out of then women are victims of some form of sexual abuse. The majority of victims are either indigenous or Afro-Ecuadorian and live in the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder.

in trust, as it is delicately balanced against the constant possibility of betrayal. Whether betrayal is done on a large scale (institutional betrayal) or small scale (interpersonal betrayal) it implies, in a way, a return to Hobbe's state of nature, where "One man to another is a wolf, not a man", to a state of basic survival, where social ties are inexistent because there is no guarantee that the other will reciprocate. It is one in which those who deny their vulnerability will always gain power over those who don't. *Vulnerare,* the Latin root of vulnerability, means to wound. That is, someone who is vulnerable is open to being wounded.

For this reason, perhaps, eight out of ten women mentioned being 'over men', having dried their eyes out completely of tears and their hearts of feelings. When Julia reflected on leaving prison, she mentioned that her children mean everything to her and that she *freed* [herself] *of feelings.* Here, emotions are configured through romantic and not motherly love, where family relations are subordinated to conjugal relations. Valeria, who showed herself as an independent woman who *likes danger* and *eats life* (and doesn't let life *eat her*), was speaking of a moment of stability in her life, of 'motherhood and responsibility', a moment where she too embraced the schema that was later shattered: *But everything went away because I fell in love (tears). I feel no illusions about life.*

Her narrative is a constant appraisal of the power of women and the incompetency of men, of revenge and agency, yet she too feels emptied after being abandoned and

facing solitude. Despite embracing her womanly prowess, she has no *illusions about life*, and here life is defined as the normative project of family that embeds her *habitus*.

Silvia also began working when she was six, selling fruit on the street. She had ten brothers and sisters and had to help out at home in order to survive. She did not finish secondary school because she began dealing when she was sixteen through her friends. Her first child was born when she was 20 years old and the second when she was 22 years old. When she spoke of her ex-partner, she simultaneously spoke in anger and sadness: *My husband…we lived together for ten years and he left me* [when she was in prison]. *I wanted to die. I took a lot of pills but then a friend made me understand that I have children, that I have a reason to live for and move on, and it hurts but not so much anymore.*

Once again, Silvia (as Valeria) attempted to harm herself (perhaps even mortally) when her partner abandoned her. It is not only that their immaterial 'self' was metaphorically annulled; these women acted towards their bodily annulment. The fact that all these women had children was (almost) not enough to save themselves from potential suicide. It is clear in these narratives that motherhood was rooted in *companionate marriage,* and outside of one it no longer signified progress, family, modernity or freedom. As Fraser (2005) described, it is difficult, and sometimes even impossible, for some women to envision their lives as complete without a partner, especially for those who see love as the main vehicle of liberation.

Ofelia was also born to a precarious household. She began selling avocados when she was sixteen years old, thus not finishing secondary school. She got married when she was sixteen and had her first child at 18 and her second at 20:

> *I was abused by him…he was an alcoholic…I lived with him for eight years and then he left me and I cried, begging him not to leave me and he left with an 18 year old. I cried, begging him not to leave me and he left with that girl and then he would call me. I dedicated my time to drinking, I became an alcoholic and then he began calling me because he wanted me back. I wanted to kill myself. I made a soup and put rat poison in it so that my children and I would die. That night, my eight-year old daughter said 'mommy let's pray' and she said thank you God for the food on our table, for life. And I grabbed the three soups and threw them away; I couldn't give it to them.*

Ofelia's near-homicidal narrative brings forth the notion, once again, that motherhood without a partner was unthinkable. The climax of a romantic love relationship, through which women reach individual fulfillment, is the family. One of Camacho's (2001) interviewees makes a point of this when she mentions that having a daughter without a man would irreparably harm her child's reputation. A woman without a man would instantly damage her 'reputation' as an honorable, 'good woman'. There is an underlying association of single motherhood to adultery in the eyes of society. The *paterfamilias* is indispensable and without him, a single mother must face both the responsibility of supporting her children and the social reprimand of 'she must have done something' to end up alone (categorizing her as a prostitute). In all three scenarios, the idea of living without their 'man' immediately dissolved the possibility of 'being' through their children. As Julia, a woman who also began selling with friends at sixteen (with whom she'd previously stolen with), narrated: *Infidelity, abuse, I began to look for my own thing, to sell on my own. That's when the abuse began and he went to prison. I*

went to prison shortly thereafter…I did not think about being in prison, but about being without him. They would tell me [other women in prison] S. Mara, llora, llora (S. Mara, cry, cry) [reference to a character]. But when both my husband and I got out, that's when the real destruction began…

She did not cry because she was abused, or because she had lost her liberty and left her children alone, but because she was far away from her partner. It was both the thought of him continuing to betray her and the possibility of losing a hold on him (an 'attractive catch' because a *man with money is like honey for women*) that lead her to the "real destruction". According to Janoff-Bulman (1992) and Deprince (2001), betrayal shatters four basic assumptions: 1) the world is benevolent, 2) the world is meaningful, 3) the self is worthy, 4) people are trustworthy and worth relating to. Infidelity had fractured the frail yet real pact of trust established in their romantic relationship.

In a horizon of subjectivity configured by violence, abuse was normalized or thought of as collateral damage to having a partner. In Alejandra's (prison psychologist) words, women who are born in violent homes look for violent partners: *outside of prison they are scum, they are nothing. And their partners are abusive, they mistreat them, but they are 'husbands'.* The fact that these women stayed with their partners despite the abuse (and the infidelity) shows how much they were willing to *sacrifice* to not lose hold of their home and hearth projects. One can only imagine what it represents for a woman (who defines herself through a man and stays with him unconditionally), to be abandoned or betrayed by her partner. As Camacho (2001) described, women's greatest

disillusionment with men comes when they begin to be unfaithful and abuse them, inciting deception and grief in women. Although women can both passively accept or actively resist abuse, Camacho (2001) argued that women generally resort to passivity and silence, to *aguantar y callar.* Her results show the extent to which motherhood, matrimony and the presence of a man are considered such important and inevitable milestones to define and reaffirm a woman's feminine identity. (136)

The rupture of the *romantic love* ideal caused these women to embody "vital indifference" (36). Whereas before, their *self* was realized through their husband or partner, the existential dependence on the 'other' was revealed in its destructive form in these narratives. As Valeria mentioned, their lives are now stripped of any *illusions.* Calveiro's (1998) term "bodies without subject" can be understood as bodies removed of the 'me' of the individual, encompassing the material 'me', the social 'me' and the spiritual 'me'. When our identity, our 'self', is dissolved, as it is defined through 'others', our self-worth and our legitimate claim to meaning in this world is contested. How can they redefine themselves without a partner if that's the only legitimatizing schema available to them? When the schema of motherhood on its own is just not enough?

Section 2. The tipping point

In order to understand how these women's narratives deviated from the schema, it is important to consider the general make up of the schema. Bourgois's (2003) chapter on 'Inverting Patriarchy' is helpful to this investigation, as it is both congruent to the

motherhood/romantic love ideals that shape women's schema in Ecuador and inserted in a context of drug dealing. According to the author, a Puerto Rican woman living in East Harlem named Candy had had an extremely violent life thus far. The man whom she'd been with since she was thirteen was not faithful but she stayed with him and endured his infidelity until he went 'too far' when she found him with her sister. She narrated:

> …women think that their man fooling around with another woman is the worst trauma you can go through, but it's not...I'm not gonna deny it-I tried to kill myself a lot of times. I don't know, but God wants me alive, cause I'm a good-hearted woman...[And after shooting him, she continued] I don't think I had any feelings. I mean, I'm a good-hearted woman, but in that moment, I didn't care. He hurt me so much. He destroyed me so much. He took my childhood away. And I was a respectable wife for eighteen years. When he messed around with my sister, he destroyed me completely. (223-225)

As in the quotes analyzed in the previous chapter, Candy acted according to the motherhood/romantic love schema and was a "good hearted woman" or good woman and good wife. She lashed out against herself constantly after she learned of her husband's infidelity, as if punishing herself for not being enough for him, but did not die. In her words, perhaps God wanted her to stay because she is a 'good hearted woman' or because of her children. In her religiously imbued comment, good, sacrificial devoted women and mothers are worthy of living. Her narrative, as the women I interviewed, reveals the destructive nature of the devotional and emotional dependency that is attached to the romantic partner. Her husband had broken the sacred pact, had shattered the possibility of self-realization through romantic love. In this scenario, her children were not enough to stop her frequent suicide attempts, despite her 'rejoice of motherhood': "I love kids. I believe kids are the most wonderful thing alive; that's what made me live until now."

(216) Whereas previously God had impeded her death because He believed she was good enough to live, now she framed her want of living through motherhood.

After shooting her husband, he landed in prison and she, in his absence, fell into a deep depression and economic crisis. As Bourgois (2003) described, she "pulled herself out of the depression by falling madly in love with Primo and getting a job selling drugs…" (226) Instead of attributing overcoming depression to her own success in the underground drug economy, she accredited it to falling madly in love with another man. In regards to this, Candy stated: "Without Primo, who knows where I would have been. And forever…I could marry anybody in the future, but I always have Primo in my mind, because he taught me to be the strong woman I am." (Bourgois 2003: 227)

Candy, unlike the women I interviewed, could not define her self worth through her own competence (and success) as a single mother and a drug dealer. As before, the only comprehensible way of making *meaning* of her own self was through the love of a partner. She portrayed herself as the damsel in distress that was saved by her Prince Charming, a frail, passive woman who would have been irreparably lost without him. Furthermore, it was through him that she *became* a strong woman. Their relationship allowed her to reach individual fulfillment. Torres Angarita's (2008) thesis similarly traces how women speak of their own growth and acquirement of knowledge through the relationship with their partner, who is now their mentor or idealized 'other'. Candy's narrative, therefore, portrays the illusion 'come to life' discursively of *romantic love*. The

women I interviewed, as I analyzed in the previous section, fell into the dark pits of alcohol, drugs and depression when they were abandoned.

Seven out of ten women mentioned attempting to commit suicide or some form of severe physical harm, distancing themselves from their children in the process. All women fully embraced the world of drug sales as a result of their shattered illusions. This is what I call the *tipping point*. Based both on previous investigations about abused women as of women involved in criminal activity, it would have been expected of these women to either attempt to save their relationships or jump right back into another one. Torres Angarita (2008) interviewed some Ecuadorian women in the former prison in Quito who had become mules *in order to* save their relationships. After an initial, unexpected rupture in their projects of romantic love, they attempted to mend their fragile illusions by embodying sacrifice, literally ingesting capsules to transport them in their bodies. As Torres Angarita (2008) argued, the only route of legitimate social integration available to them was through a companionate marriage, fulfilling their expected role of mother and wife.

The women I interviewed, however, proved to be loosely structured actors, capable of escaping what seemed like the only legitimate road to self-fulfillment when their initial schemas where shattered. They neither spoke of overcoming depression through a partner or selling in order to mend their broken relationships. They did not, as Bourgois (2003) argues, 'invert patriarchy', reproducing gender stereotypes by acting 'like men' and embracing a new "macho street-dealer identity" and

"neglecting…children and flaunting…sexual conquests." (238) These women did indeed neglect their children, but we cannot attribute it to them acting like men. This is reminiscent of Adler's (1975) own harmful ideas about the feminist liberation movement leading women to behave more like men and thus increasingly engage in crime.

Disillusioned, heartbroken and drained of hope, women decided to define themselves in an alternate way and not through a partner. After 'total destruction' begins in Julia's and her partner's relationship, and she immersed herself in the drug-dealing world, she explained the following: *Total change in myself, I was not the naïve one anymore, she stayed behind in prison crying, not the obedient, the goody-too-shoes, that was bossed around, 'Sandra, come here, do this, do that'. I separated from my children's father, I suffered a lot.*

As Giddens (1979) wrote, a necessary feature of action "at any point in time, is that the agent could have acted otherwise." (56) However, it does not mean that actors are fully aware of their definite goals when making such decisions; intentionality is, as the author argues, a process. Sandra was still caught in the web of a broken romantic love schema, structured structures that are embedded in her habitus and led her to embrace what would instill purpose in her life. However, she *could have* continued being obedient and subservient, could have sought another 'partner' to mend her life. She reflexively recognized attitudes in herself that had led her to sacrifice herself entirely for an illusion of a project that never was.

It is as some of Ortner's (1989) actors who respond to and resolve cultural contradictions and exercise agency. Julia had been taught her entire life to be dutiful and compliant, to embody sacrifice as a wife and a mother in order to gain legitimacy in the world. If she was a *good-hearted* woman, as Bourgois's (2003) Candy, she would be individually fulfilled through the companionate marriage-family project, but more importantly I think, be respected and recognized as a worthy woman. In order to attain that, she endured infidelity and abuse, loved her husband unconditionally despite the grief he caused her. What worst affront to her own self-worth (as well as her ideas about the schema) than to be abandoned, despite having done everything according to the schema? Her illusions toppled beneath her and could have led her to prolong self-blame and mutilation, making it hard to regain balance without another partner.

I do not intend to argue that Julia changed the schema, but more so that she was able to escape parts of it. She spoke of transforming aspects of her personality that are deeply ingrained in her gendered self: subservience and unconditional devotion. Yet, she cannot deny that separating from her partner and all that it implied caused her to suffer immensely (and still does as tears rolled down her cheeks when saying this). Drug sales initially provided her with an escape route, a way to provide for her family and live independently. Progressively, drug dealing began to represent a means to gain respect, although it also distanced her even more from claiming legitimacy as a *good mother.* Her immersion into the world of drugs and multiple imprisonments (and separation from her husband) impeded that she fulfill the role of caretaker for the greater part of her

children's lives: *I went back to selling on my own, I did not want to depend on anyone, just stay with my children…*

After being imprisoned the first time, she seized the opportunity to sell drugs as one that would allow her to live without having to be obedient or submissive in order to survive. The economic independence that the sale of drugs afforded her allowed her to escape the gendered schema that dictated how she had to act, to resolve the contradictions that she had faced and enact the schema in her own way.

Silvia also gave herself to her partner, trusted and forgave him repeatedly, holding steadfastly to her project of life with him:

> *When my husband was in the visitor's line to see me, he met someone else and now he's in prison. I'm all alone…with drugs I was able to gain things but I also lost my children. I was even able to make a house, but I'm going to lose it now because it's in my ex's property. Prison changed my entire life, my way of thinking…You learn to be distrustful in prison, they are 'friends' and they take each other's husbands, they tell on each other…That happened to me, my daughter told me about my husband and the entire prison found out, but you learn from everything. I want my daughters to be something, different than what I am…Here I have learned to know their father, and that it's wrong to trust, to give everything for someone. And I've suffered…but I'm glad that wretched man is here* [in prison]…*I am brave and worth a lot. To abandon me even though I'm a woman and in prison…I won't die, I'm going to get out. When I was free, I would hand deliver the drugs and he would just drive the car. I am worth so, so much. When I cried in the beginning, I thought the pain would never go away. I would tell him not to play with an imprisoned person's feelings. I would forgive my husband for anything and everything…*

Throughout her narrative, Silvia repeats the word 'lies' four times. She also reiterates that she devoted herself to her husband and trusted him, forgiving him despite

his dishonesty and mistreatment. The prison setting here acts as a background that further opened her eyes to what she had tolerated in her relationship. It is a context suffused with anxiety, boredom and scarcity of goods and services that leads both to a ‘survival of the fittest’-style competition and the fragmentation of the social fabric. All interviewed women mentioned learning to become quiet and distrustful in prison, to carefully measure their words and not be too opinionated. They said that, despite feeling lonely, they preferred keeping to themselves to avoid trouble, and even so, they were constantly on guard. In an environment of hyper vigilance, having to sustain a daily level of profound awareness and suspicion is enough to cure anyone of ingenuousness. One cannot afford to be naïve in prison.

Silvia had committed the ultimate sacrifice: she had told her husband she would ‘take care of everything’ outside because men’s prisons are ‘tougher’, thus going to prison in his stead. She literally surrendered her freedom for someone who, despite everything, was a ‘man’ with whom she could build a family. She even forfeited being a ‘good mother’ through imprisonment for her husband, an example of Schmuckler’s (1982) argument that conjugal ties supersede paternal ties in our modern conception of romantic love. Even so, as she says in disbelief and disgust, he abandoned her, despite being a woman and in prison. She, as Julia, had also acted as she had been taught, *aguantando and callando* (enduring and staying silent). Further, she is a legitimate ‘woman’, having gone through the passage of girlhood to adulthood through marriage and motherhood. She realized she could not expect him to rescue her; he was not the

chivalrous prince charming and she was not his damsel in distress, or anyone's for that matter.

Her husband's abandonment made her reflect on her self-worth differently, as well as the gender norms that she had both followed and been instilled with to reach self-fulfillment. Not only is she a full-blown and legitimate woman, she is also *brave.* As she narrates, when they would sell drugs as a couple, her role implied more risk and skill than her partner's: he would just drive. Most authors have seen this as both the reflection of a manipulative relationship and the subordination and exploitation of women in the low-paying, high-risk roles. However, Silvia re-signifies this and describes herself as brave, defined as feeling or showing no fear. Fearlessness is generally a quality assigned to men and not women; in fact, the ideal of hegemonic masculinity necessarily implies fearlessness.

A man who is not brave cannot be a 'man' but a boy, a less than, more feminine, male. Silvia's narrative of her husband's role as a driver and her role as a direct drug expender (the brave role), therefore, de-masculinizes her husband. Valeria also describes how women who are either single or married to a disastrous man have to sell drugs to sustain their children because their husbands are so incompetent that they *don't even know how to traffic.* Selling drugs becomes a value-laden parameter to define someone's competence and legitimacy in their world. In the urban decay of deindustrialized cities, as Bourgois (2003) wrote, men are finding themselves adrift in a reality that is marking them dispensable as citizens, fathers and providers. Selling drugs, according to the

author, is a (self) destructive yet agentic route of regaining masculinity or respect on the streets. The women I interviewed, however, were further delegitimizing men's worthiness or respect in the drug world, arguing that they were so inefficient that they couldn't even sell drugs. Men are now stripped of the one thing that could have made them useful. As Valeria asserted, she always worked with women: *they are more intelligent. They are always braver than men.* Of course, the schema of romantic love still reigns strong, as all of these women hoped to define themselves through a man. I am not arguing that women changed the schema but escaped it. Where incompetency is synonymous to powerlessness and weakness, it is both a show of grassroots feminism and recognition of self-worth that women are able to frame their roles as dealers in this light.

Silvia's emphasis on being *worth so, so much* confirms this idea. Not only does it reflect how she is a good woman (good wife, good mother), but also skilled in something other than just that. Moreover, the fact that she described her drug dealer role as one that symbolizes bravery is also a sign of agency; she *owns* it, framing it as an activity where she was not passive but indispensable. Like Juliano's (2005) interviewees, she opted for the assertive and not the victimizing discourse. She grieved and despaired, as Valeria did, but was able to overcome the dark pit of depression and self-annulment in a context that is both unforgiving and demoralizing by recognizing her own *worth* through something other than being a 'woman'. Further, like Valeria, she confronted the contradictions of the gender norms they embody that led her initially to be subservient: *it's wrong to trust, to give everything for someone.* Her experience grants her legal grounds to condone the feminine norms that she has inhabited in order to reach the ideal of self-fulfillment.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that, in the margins of society, where these women are multiply constrained and excluded from claiming legitimacy as citizens, mothers, and wives, imprisonment acts as the forum where gender norms (and schemas) are confronted and drug sales the avenue through which they are countered or negotiated. The tipping point for the women I interviewed came with their shattered illusions and later re-negotiation (within a constrained environment) with the underlying cultural schema, a *habitus* that they had assumed was natural until it almost ended them. The next chapter will explore the ways in which women as *loosely structured actresses* moved between the dichotomy of *Marianismo* and witchery, claiming their right to *meaning* outside of motherhood.

Chapter 4: Altering the schema

The following chapter will explore the alternative schemas that emerged from women's decisions that countered the traditional cultural schema, in order to gain legitimacy outside of *Marianismo.* As pointed out earlier, intentionality does not necessarily imply that women were fully aware of the future impact of their decisions. Intentionality, as defined by Ortner (2005), refers to "people's culturally constituted projects in the world and their ability to engage and enact them." (143) In every step we take lie an infinite number of possible alternative routes. Our choices shape the contours of our existence. However, as Bourdieu (1990) expressed, there are limits to the options available and our creativity in making those decisions. They are set by "historically and socially situated conditions of production" that arise from "the necessary yet unpredictable confrontation between the habitus and an event." (55) In the end, according to author, our practical relationship to the future is defined by our habitus and the choices offered to us by the social world, limited by power.

The women I interviewed do not have the power or freedom to change the schema on their own. They are constrained by intersecting structures, and embodied the romantic love schema until it imploded on them. Bourdieu (1990) would argue that their alternative trajectories are nothing other than a deviation from the same habitus, a structural variation, what we brand as a "personal style". The women I interviewed did in fact escape the plot narrative. They did not transform their realities by grounding their actions on the underlying traditional schema, as Ortner's (1989) actors. Further, if the

"culturally constituted" projects lead individuals towards a life of meaning or purpose, the women who engaged in drug dealing (and do not depend on a man) are now socially excluded from claiming legitimacy through *Marianismo*, both by society and the state. Selling drugs, being imprisoned multiple times, and rejoicing being independent from a man largely deviated from the schema. So did resisting the moralized and gendered citizen consumer role imposed on them by the state, selling drugs both to subsist and to participate as mainstream consumers. The questions that remain are how agency is expressed through their counter narratives and legitimacy reclaimed.

Section 1: Questioning the motherhood discourse

Thus far, I have been arguing that the motherhood discourse is (generally) strategically enacted in the prison setting (as in other public spaces) to justify the sale of drugs. As Torres Angarita (2008) wrote, the economic necessity explanation could suffice to understand (most) women's motivations to deal drugs. The women I interviewed had to survive and had limited options as single mothers with several children. Moreover, as analyzed in the first chapter, the social and familial circles that shaped women's horizons of subjectivities, and the fragmented and violent nature of their relationships, also impacted their decision to sell drugs. Further, we cannot forget that the role of low-level dealer is both the riskiest and most exploited role in the drug trafficking world. If the victim-motherhood discourse were entirely true, however, it would also be expected that these women would aim to regain *meaningfulness* through their children. After all, "being a woman is configured through maternity" (Montecino 1998), where

social legitimacy is claimed through the power to reproduce. As my interviewee Sandra pointed out, and as Juliano (2005) and Torres Angarita (2008) emphasized, there were alternatives to drug dealing:

> *I was mother and father for my four children…and I am a grandmother and grandfather to my grandchildren…I probably am no different than these women, because I migrated to Quito from the province…because I came with four children and alone, but I never committed a crime, I did not prostitute myself, or swindle, or harm anyone. So, I don't think that us human beings have no alternatives but more so that it is systemic, structural.*

What I have been trying to understand throughout this investigation, therefore, is why some women who come from the same socioeconomic context decide to sell drugs while others don't, why some women appropriate a lifestyle outside of the norm. Although Sandra attributes this difference to the working of structures alone, I argue that women are also able to exercise limited forms of agency. When I asked Ecuadorian Professors, lawyers and activists who have dedicated their lives to studying and advocating for imprisoned men and women, I received a variety of responses. Upon beginning my two and a half month fieldwork in Quito and Latacunga, Ecuador, and interviewing professors who twitched uncomfortably when hearing the words *reinsertion* or *rehabilitation*, I wrote in my field notebook:

> *Would a comparative analysis be necessary to understand or at least grasp a pattern or possible differences [between women who recidivate and women who don't]? When I asked Constanza*[115]*, the public defender [I worked with in prison], if she thought that all these women I was talking to would go back to the same thing, she immediately replied*

[115] Given the delicate nature of this thesis, all names used are pseudonyms in order to protect the interviewees' confidentiality and overall safety.

> *"de ley la gente vuelve a lo mismo, no tiene opción". [people obviously return to the same thing, they don't have a choice]. She stated it with such an air of certainty that the patterns I am looking at may not be masks but merely the logic of the cycle they are inserted in since birth.*

Constanza's argument is firmly rooted in the necessity discourse and the economic and social crisis of the state. Her statement is structural and leaves no room for choice, or agency; women are the whim of greater structures. However, Dolores, a professor I interviewed while in Ecuador who has worked extensively on the topic of prisons through a well-known feminist collective explained the following:

> The concepts of re-insertion and rehabilitation are dangerous…I have been able to distinguish with a lot of clarity the profiles of women who will return and those who won't. There are women who are mules and common sense indicates that they probably won't return because they normally have a familial structure and belong to a social class that will sustain them. They are women who are easy to identify within the ones who return because they know they will leave prison and there is a whole culture in Quito…there is an ethic to drug trafficking that is a fundamental job. There are men who sell but not on the streets, however, it is fundamentally a female job that has a complex ethic there that is part of a scheme of life. We conceive it almost as a cultural horizon...we must stop thinking about reinsertion or about the poor as people who would like to be like middle class but are not allowed to be. Instead…at the moment we are thinking about subjectivities that are configured within determined urban contexts that in turn generate different horizons of life. Instead of thinking of the "good poor" that could find a place in society if given a chance through work, we should think of how different subjectivities are created…since birth.

Is the cultural horizon so different that selling drugs is not only a matter of necessity but also of preference, ethic or custom? Is it necessary to think of intergenerational transmission of negative values through Oscar Lewis's (1966) *culture of poverty*? The professor's argument of specifically configured subjectivities that generate different horizons of life would need to be understood within women's familial context.

Is the fact that a third of these women's mothers were in prison and sold drugs an additional factor to be considered when explaining their own involvement[116]? The professor's argument points to the possibility of their being a semi-established, illegal route that is available to these women to enact, appropriate or reject. Further, her argument supports the idea that the women I interviewed did not want to be 'good poor mothers and consumer citizens'. As Bourgois's (2003) interviewees who sold *crack* in East Harlem, the women I interviewed sought legitimacy outside of the norm.

It is important, however, to question how the women I interviewed understood motherhood, as it was a factor that impacted their decision to sell to a certain extent. Additionally, the lives that they envisioned once outside of prison (at least in my presence) were grounded in their children. In admitting to their 'wrongdoings', to having abandoned their children and sought a different life for themselves, they redeemed themselves by promising to lead a devotional, sacrificial life for others (their children) after prison. However, even this life escaped the schema in that it did not include relying on a new relationship to sustain it. They want to enact the *Marianismo* schema on their own terms. Unfortunately, and almost without exception, the desire to live independently will lead to them dealing drugs again and repeating the cycle.

Guillermina, an employee of the public defender's office that specializes in gender studies in Ecuador, framed her response in this historical context:

[116] Given the time limits, Lewis's failure to reflect on how structures also constrain the lives of the poor, and the overall focus of this thesis, I won't delve further into this particular question.

> *When we look at the history of the lives of women throughout the history of humanity, we know that until the 19th century women worked but had no right to administer their own wages; their fathers or husbands did it for them. When women would inherit funds, it was their father or husband who would administer the inheritance, or some tutor that they would depend on. And when this breaks in the 20th Century, women continue to earn less and act outside of the decision-making spaces. Access to power was out of the question. In the Ecuadorian society, we have the first liberation movement in the '80's and that's only just yesterday. But all of these women who traffic are daughters of mothers who were totally patriarchal, submissive, limited, women who were barely able to go to school, so these women who are in prison carry the burden of their mothers' life stories of no access to power, of not being able to be free and independent. And a great part of the independence that many of us women have today is due to the fact that we create our own economic resources and the access to money grants us autonomy.*

Valeria, for example, defines herself against her 'patriarchal, submissive' mother. However, while she reprimands her mother for a lifestyle built on revolving and intermittent relationships with men, she catalogs herself as the *damaged one* in the family for having chosen something different:

> *My mother was always a good woman according to her. She was a good mother but not the best because even until today, she doesn't accept that she failed a lot. She worked so much that she left us so alone and made us suffer. She didn't even explain to me what menstruation is. The first time I menstruated I thought I had been raped. My mother had many husbands. And she would tell me "my daughter, I don't want you to go from man to man" and it's what she taught me. All of us* [her siblings] *are form different fathers. My sister is going down the same path. We are three and I am the last one, the damaged one, the black sheep.*

Valeria initially establishes what a good mother does not do, which is to abandon her children and cause them to suffer. Her sister, like her mother, is embodying the devotional romantic love schema. Valeria actively recognizes that her mother and sister

are staying within what is expected and that she consciously deviates from this. In facing a contradiction of the cultural schema, Valeria resolves it by altering her own path of motherhood, although she also abandons them. However, when faced with her own child's accusations about abandonment, she replied: *Ask mom how many times she didn't have a husband and didn't have a home; I would go to sleep on an empty stomach. She would only work to bring back leftovers.*

This excerpt exemplifies how her mother wholly depended on a partner to survive; she was not economically independent and had minimal control over her life. Further, the work opportunities available were not lucrative enough to bring back more than 'leftovers'. Valeria 'carried the burden' of her mother's powerlessness and inability to sustain her family. As she told her own child:…*when I was a child I always thought I would never let my children go hungry…Maybe I thought wrong, and thought my wrong would bring something good for you. Maybe my mistakes have consequences. But to judge myself, condemn myself for what I did…be thankful that you always had something to eat...No one knows what I went through.*

Valeria chose to escape the cultural schema that her mother and sister embodied by seeking independence. If she did in fact abandon her children (as her mother), at least she didn't let them go hungry. Although she defines herself as the *bad egg* in the family, she justifies her decisions on life experiences that informed the desire for independence. As she reiterated throughout her narrative, she may have harmed her children, but no one can deny the fact that she overcame her mother's dependency on men. In fact, she 'wore

the pants' (alluding to men's role as providers of the household in a patriarchal society): *I have always been seen as the fierce one, the strong one, the head of the household, the one that sustains.*

She is neither passive nor submissive; her life story inverts patriarchy as do the rest of the women who sell drugs, according to her. However, I dispute Bourgois's (2003) claim that they are only reproducing gender norms by becoming more like men. They resist society's imperative of the 'good poor responsible mothers and wives' because they have experienced its contradictions in their own lives, and that makes them strong and fierce.

Against the backdrop of their mothers' submission to patriarchy, these women gained economic independence. However, they constantly express the desire that their children will progress even further: independently through education. Unfortunately, their multiple imprisonments (motivated by this desire to be economically independent) negatively impacted their ability to influence their children's lives in a positive way. Inés reflects on this when speaking of her daughter and what she wish she could've taught her as a mother:

> *My daughter didn't finish* [school]. *She had a year to go but she didn't want to…she left because she fell in love, pregnant at fourteen.* [She should know] *she's a lady, to defend herself; that boys do whatever they want. She's had a lot of issues with abuse, life has been really tough for her…she always sought family's affection…she looked for it and couldn't find it and was never stable until this guy came around and she fell in his arms…I told her she had to study, so that she could live on her own*

> *without depending on any man and later her children. When they* [the children] *are alone, their wretched father doesn't exist.*

Her daughter sought to have a family, the romantic love project that would provide her with meaning and affection. Given Inés's own experience, she hoped to teach her daughter to avoid that route, to finish school and not depend on anyone, not a man or her children, but on her own. Instead of enacting the schema and telling her daughter to *aguantar y callar,* she urged her to open her eyes and see that boys will play with her feelings. Inés insists that she learn to defend herself, anticipating the probable implosion of her daughter's illusions of romantic love.

It is not that women discarded the motherhood schema entirely when deciding to sell drugs. More so, drugs sales were an avenue that allowed them to negotiate how they would enact it. Although they all recognized that they had made their children suffer, that they were not able to provide them the warmth of a mother and abandoned them, they all mentioned that their children never lacked food. They economically provided for them: *My friends here* [in prison] *see me the same way because we are all like that here, we show our true colors. We wear pants.*

Their 'true colors' refer to their ability to survive independently on the margins, but also their *bad-ness*, their inherent *wrong-ness*, something others seemingly have to mask or hide. It is almost as if those who are in prison are there because they openly embraced the alternative lifestyle and were ready to face the consequences. That speaks

of agency. It could also be, as Anderson (2008) expressed, that women who sell drugs are able to keep appearances as mothers during the day. Prison un-masks those appearances: they are who they are, free of society's vigilant eyes. This confirms that they do not entirely disregard their children or their motherhood role, but decide how to enact it within their lives.

Section 2. I 'am' at night

The following section will explore the ways in which women have redefined the motherhood narrative, weaving their 'true colors' into their alternative trajectories. Archaic as it may seem, the interconnectedness of witches, agency, criminality and women that I will explore in present day Ecuadorian society, closely resembles (albeit the many obvious differences) that of the Medieval Ages. At a time of great economic crises, plague and war, women were persecuted when they did not wholly conform to their *submissive* roles as wives and mothers. Women who sought to live alone were in danger of being imprisoned for doing so and those who socialized with other women were thought to be plotting evil rituals. *Agentic* women were, as Knox (2002) discussed, a danger to society and had to be controlled and punished; perceived as more treacherous than men, witches (or independent women) were criminalized. Of course, as Ewan (2002) stated, even some women who were almost impeccably following the schema of a 'good woman' had to stray from it at times to survive. In order to make ends meet, some had to work in informal markets although it could imperil their lives (if they were caught). As

the author argued, the state was ultimately criminalizing their daily survival strategies, but also their will to live independently.

The previous sections concluded with a short discussion on the 'true colors' of women that were potentially masked during the day in order to maintain the image of a good mother. These women were not willing to renounce their newfound independence but could not fully abandon the motherhood trajectory or the social expectations of legitimacy and 'normalcy'. After all, they cannot escape the structures that have structured them since birth, living on a limbo between the *Mariana* and witch dichotomy. Fabiana clearly narrated this in her interview:

> *What I am, I am on the streets, but in the daytime I am a normal mother, I'm simple and that's how people know me. When I am outside, I help out. At school, I ask for recommendations because I am known as a good mother. Only at night. What is being normal? On the streets, each one does what they dedicate themselves to. In normal life, I wake up at 5 am, cook for my kids, take them to school, go to meetings, and cook lunch for them. I work at the dining hall for my children.*

Whereas authors have claimed that motherhood *annuls* the woman and defines her as a 'self for others', Fabiana is stating she is a mother but also much more than that. In fact, according to her narrative, her 'self' or true colors, come out at night. During the day, she behaves as a good woman, as a mother who is devoted to her children's wellbeing. She is simple and caring, and maintains a good reputation within her social circle. She is able to keep up appearances by acting according to the norm during the day, and embracing her 'self' at night. However, it is not that she is acting outside of schema. She cannot circumvent all of society's expectations of what being a woman is, but she can negotiate with them:

> *I prefer to live alone and to cope with life like this, without asking any favors. I've been alone like this since I was seventeen…I have a brother who traffics kilos* [of drugs] *and never gives mom anything and we always get into arguments…I tell my brother… 'I am no longer a child that you can just hit whenever you want to, I'm a full fledged, grown woman with five children who takes her of herself on her own.'*

Her alternative route has granted her legitimacy and respect, she is a 'full fledged woman' and no man can place a hand on her. She can survive without a man: *she wears the pants*. She has to hide her 'true being' during the day, however, because, like the witch, her alternate lifestyle is the representation of evil. It disrupts the established patriarchal order. She has to pretend that she is a responsible mother that enacts the gendered schema of motherhood. Julia also mentioned how she enjoys being a 'responsible woman' during the day: *I like to lead a responsible life, if without set hours, cleaning my house and feeding my children.*

Despite asserting their autonomy throughout their narratives as providers of their family through drug sales, they cannot avoid the weight of *doxa* that have embedded their habitus. A responsible life for a woman is one of a dedicated homemaker and caretaker. These women can speak of the freedom and relief that selling drugs brings to their life, one where they are their own bosses who set their own hours. However, they have to frame it within the schema of a good woman, both because they cannot escape it but also because it makes their work acceptable both to them and their interlocutor. As Guerrero Navarrete (2012) wrote of the persecution of witches in the Medieval Ages in Spain, an independent woman who questions hegemonic masculinity is not yet accepted. "She is

not submissive to a man, she is sexually active, she travels alone at night and does not depend on a man. It is clear that she must be persecuted." (113)

Interestingly enough, the Afro-Ecuadorian and indigenous myths of witches also speak of women who only reveal their true identity at night. During the day, they enact the schema, they are wives and mothers, but at night they leave their husbands sleeping in bed and fly off to disrupt the social, reproductive order: "…the witch is a woman, whose husband is ignorant of her practices and sleeps at night next to her empty body, her 'shell', while she goes out and flies in search of children's virtue, jealous of the transmission of knowledge…the witch is a subversion to biological maternity or a control of uterine activity…questioning hegemonic masculinity". (Fernández Rasines 2001: 102)

Both the *bruja* (witch) and the *mula* (mule) refer to women who sell drugs, either dealing them nationally or transporting them internationally. At the same time, both names are reminiscent of myths of independent women who live between the *Mariana*/witch binary, neither fully conforming nor accepting either one. "The mule is a mythical expression…whose materialization, like the witch, is in a woman's body...it is understood that the Mule is the woman who sins with the priest…she is a woman, a Christian woman…she can live, can be with her husband, whatever she wants. But at night, she leaves and her husband doesn't realize that the woman is already a mule." (Fernández Rasines 2001: 106)

Infidelity and deceit with a priest references a seductive Eva who tempts the holy man himself into committing the ultimate sin, going against his promise to God to remain celibate. Her punishment is to become a Mule, an unfertile hybrid who cannot reproduce her own culture. If a woman is defined through motherhood, then she can never become a woman. Although the discussion may seem tangential, it is one that is deeply embedded in the history and culture that structures these women's lives. It speaks of the historical formation of gender roles imbued with Catholic references inherited from the Spanish Conquest.

Valeria's narrative also falls into this trap of framing her role of provider within a responsible life:

> *I went back to selling drugs much later because I was in debt. I worked in a phone booth and earned 400 dollars a month, I was single. I worked at 6 a.m. I would wake up at 5 a.m. to cook breakfast and lunch. At midday, I would ask for permission to cook dinner for my children. Sometimes I would ask my mom for help, my older daughter would also help. And when they started school it was books, uniforms, electricity and water bills, and mom, oh she was another one, and my handicap sister, and another abused sister that has two kids. And I had to support my mom who has cancer. No one understood where so much money was coming from.*

Despite her interlaced display of power and ownership of her 'true colors', Valeria cannot escape the social eye, embodied by my presence. She first points out she was single at the time and therefore had to sustain her family on her own, without a man's help. She then delineates the responsible life she was leading, working at a legal job, dedicating all her spare time to cooking and caring for her children and extended

family, all of whom had either a terminal illness, disability or suffered from abuse. She had to carry the burden of caring for her children and the sick, a *good* woman. It is most likely for this reason that she explicitly specifies she does not sell in her neighborhood but in another one (well known for drug dealing), because *people don't see it as normal.* The image of good woman remains intact during the day and at night she can embrace her true being. When I asked her how she defined herself, she said: *I would describe myself as a woman, just a woman. I don't like being anything else. I am a woman. I like to sell drugs, it gives me power. I like the adrenaline, the risk, not feeling fear, the recognition that feeds my ego. I like to be strong. I would like to be with a woman stronger than I.*

As Fabiana described, at night she is what she is, a woman and nothing else. Motherhood was perhaps their passage into womanhood, but it does not define their identity. Instead of enacting the house-maker/caretaker role, of children and responsibility, the foundation of her definition stems from power, autonomy and strength. The same qualities that have been assigned to the definition of hegemonic masculinity are those that she is appropriating as her own: strength, competence, fearlessness and power. Moreover, she no longer wants a man but a woman. She resists the Catholic, heterosexual normativity and further emasculates men by asserting her desire for a woman and one stronger than herself. Whereas Anderson (2008) distinguished the power that women and men can exercise across a gendered line, this section intends to show that it is much more fluid that the author contended. Women and men can enact both 'relational power' (power for others) as well as 'power over' (power over others). Valeria even proudly

admitted the following: *What haven't I gotten with drugs: people at my feet, men, women.* The women I interviewed did not only gain power by selling for their children; there was something more that drove them, whether it was 'adrenaline' or some form of social recognition.

Adrenaline: Respect and legitimacy

As I attempted to contact women through the snowball method who had been released, I wrote the following: *all the women I will interview outside will be women who have very different lives or horizons than those who would return to prison. The women who would be potential 'returners' are outside selling and will not want to talk to me. The first woman I interviewed today mentioned that her sister was outside again (she had been imprisoned four years for selling drugs) and had gone back to selling immediately. When I asked if she thought her sister would talk to me, she said definitely not. This has also been confirmed by attempts to contact women outside, most of who apparently have gone back to selling.* I noticed that the women mentioned liking the 'adrenaline' of selling, the risk that their illegal lifestyle implied. When I asked Sandra, an Ecuadorian woman who has dedicated her life to advocating for prisoners and prostitutes, about this she replied:

> I think this is an insider discourse. I've heard that thing about liking the adrenaline a million times. I don't buy it. Who's going to actually enjoy risking their life for a couple hundred dollars? Is my liberty worth 5000 dollars? I believe that women who traffic must live such economic despair and anguish when confronted with their personal and familiar reality that they have no other choice but to traffic or sell. *These*

> *are women who are not prepared to face life; they are women who must feel absolutely weak against the other. They are women who, in my mind, must not have enough strength or creativity to get through tough times because I don't think micro trafficking is their only option.* Because in that context, I think it's unrealistic that some women say that they like the adrenaline. What is the socioeconomic context in which these women grow up? They must be contexts of low culture. And with women who, needless to say, have had many things lacking in their lives.

While it is true that the contexts in which these women are raised (or raise themselves) in (generally) lack material and emotional support, it is difficult to ascertain whether they are women *who must feel absolutely weak against the other* or who do not have *enough strength or creativity.* As mentioned previously, women do have other options to choose from (albeit the low pay and poor working conditions of these options), such as domestic work or other forms of informal labor. Perhaps they do feel weak against men and other women, and the sale of drugs makes them feel (to a certain extent) more powerful. As the Professor (Dolores) mentioned, it could also be that the cultural frame generated in their particular context does not condemn the sale of drugs, but more so supports it.

As described earlier, the available data on the rate of multiple imprisonments was scarce, if available at all. While the Public Defender's Office mentioned a rate of 0.1% the psychologist Antonia who had worked in prison for the last five years stated it was between 35-40%. I wrote after the interview with the psychologist: *Prison serves no purpose other than to punish, repress, and create more violence. Antonia stated that "they are scum when they leave prison; the most difficult thing is to be involved in activities where they can say that they are worth something, where they are important".*

In her words, once women begin to sell drugs, they don't stop. That in Ecuador, women don't feel they are worth anything unless they have a partner, a husband. That she sees a lot of abuse of every kind in women's lives when they open up.

Antonia's quote is perhaps most relevant to the *witch/prostitute* narrative for a number of reasons. First of all, she states that without a partner, women in Ecuador *don't feel they are worth anything*. Second, I'd like to highlight the idea of *meaninglessness/meaningfulness* that she articulates, that is, that the *most difficult thing is to be involved in activities where they can say that they are worth something, where they are important.* Finally, it is important to point out that the idea that once they start selling drugs, *they don't stop*. Women in Ecuador gain *value* in as far as they are good mothers and good wives. As Camacho (2001) states, even when a husband or partner is abusive or unfaithful, women will remain in the relationship because being outside of one is seen as an offense to oneself. If women 'are' through a partner and children, then rejecting those two is denying one's *raison d'etre*. In both Bourgois's (2003) chapter on women and drug sales and Torres Angarita's (2008) work on drug mules and romantic love, men are linked to the motivation and the ultimate success (but not to their failure when they are imprisoned) that women have selling drugs. As Mahmood (2005) argued, "agentive capacity is entailed not only in those acts that *resist* norms but also in the multiple ways in which one *inhabits* norms." (2005:16) If women can no longer acquire self worth through a man, then why does selling drugs become such a defining dimension of their life? In response to this, Inés narrated:

> *I got to a point of such dependence on drug sales because the drug addict is not the only one who becomes addicted to drugs. The addict needs drugs to live and the person who sells becomes addicted to the money earned through drug sales. The one who smokes is desperate and the one who sells is desperate to sell. Just like the consumer, I would constantly think: "why hasn't the brujo[117] called? Is it because he doesn't want to give me any more?" and I would talk with the smokers and there would be certain communication. I've developed a relationship with the life of a drug dealer. I don't consume drugs but the money I get from drugs. As a dealer, once I sell, I can rest easy and get excited because afterwards I can have what I never imagined.*

According to a recent interview of a low level dealer in Colombia, drug dealing is not 'easy money'; it is risky and the profits are neither stable nor very high. It is, as a Professor I interviewed mentioned, *liquid money*, attractive because of its immediate solvency. There is something else that drives one to continue dealing, as the interviewee describes:

> You don't have a lot of luxury…but I do like to dress well…live well! I can do something with my…life, you understand? As if, if I don't end up living for long, at least I can say I lived well…But this has turned into a lifestyle…at first I only did it for money, but one falls in love with it…this ride from Monday through Sunday, 24 hours a day and I have tried to stop this many times, like relapses. But at the end, I always think: what else am I going to do with my life? Because honestly, one falls madly in love with *la vuelta* (selling drugs), it is as if you left your first love. And it's not about reputation, but of being well with oneself and you get used to living like that. (Ramirez 2014)

Both Inés and Ramírez's (2014) interviewee mention how they grow *addicted* to the *vuelta*, where Inés compares herself to a drug addict on 'money' and the interviewee to falling in love and relapsing every time he tried to stop. However, as the interviewee mentions, where money may have driven the desire to sell initially, it becomes about

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[117] Brujo (like Bruja for women) refers to the man who distributes drugs to the low-level dealers. However, whereas some women mentioned being brujas even as low-level dealers, male low-level dealers are not brujos.

something more than that. There are other ways of earning money that do not imply such a high risk. It is about *bienestar* (wellbeing), about having *what* [one] *never imagined.* In Inés´s words: *It gets to a point where one doesn't even think about the danger or the harm you are doing to another person. You become unconscious when you make money and especially if you start having a life you've never had before, you can think about wellbeing.*

Wellbeing is a concept that has evolved over time and integrates both physical and mental health holistically, making it difficult to measure and define it. Historically, it has been conceptualized by the hedonic (happiness as an expression of pleasure) and the eudemonic view (happiness as an expression of virtue and worthiness)[118]. The most mundane definition is 'the state of being happy, healthy or successful'. This largely abstract definition speaks of people's perceptions of their *meaningfulness,* their achievements in life or realization of their potential, and their health (which is greatly impacted by good living conditions such as housing and employment). Recent evidence suggests that a multidimensional approach that incorporates both hedonic and eudemonic views is most fitting to people's perceptions of wellbeing. Dodge et al. (2012) argued that: "…stable wellbeing is when individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge.

[118] The hedonic view dates back to the Greeks and is closely tied to the pursuit of pleasure or happiness (as Hobbes). The eudemonic view, held initially by Aristotle, believed pleasure to be a vulgar ideal, positing instead that true happiness in found in the pursuit of virtue, in doing something worthwhile. (Ryan and Deci 2001; 144-145)

When individuals have more challenges than resources, the see-saw dips, along with their well being and vice-versa." (243)

Does this mean that money makes people happy? What of those folktales and romanticized ideals of the 'good and pure' poor who are able to find happiness in a simple life? The decrepit periphery of the urban landscape is neither as picturesque nor as merciful as the portrait of solidarity and community in a rural town. As I described in the historical section, women are typically employed in the informal sector, having to work several jobs to make ends meet and even so, the question of 'what will we eat today?' looms daily over their heads. A salary of 400 dollars a month is not sufficient to live comfortably when renting a room in the lower income neighborhoods costs 60-80 dollars a month, an apartment 120 dollars a month, food for a small family costs around 150 dollars a month, plus the cost of transportation, school (books, uniforms, school supplies), electricity and gas. As Ryan and Deci (2001) state, "not only can national poverty interfere with satisfaction of physical needs, such as food and shelter, but it can also block access to exercising competencies, pursuing interests and maintaining relationships." (152)

However, as I described previously, despite neoliberalism positing that wellbeing is at the heart of its stance on individual freedom, it is neither 'wellbeing for all' nor wellbeing itself that comes first. The government is supposed to ensure that the conditions are present for the market to function correctly; the market will later ensure individual freedom. According to Harvey (2005), neoliberalism proposes that "human

well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market and free trade." (2) The state, even in its 'post-neoliberal' form, has increasingly unburdened itself from any responsibility for the wellbeing of its population. In transferring if not all then most responsibility for wellbeing to the individual, the state further excludes and impoverishes greater segments of the population. The 'caring state' (Schild 2013) only provides a safety net to sustain the poor population at a bare minimum level of survival. Anywhere beyond that, the responsibility and accountability for wellbeing falls on the individual. As Harvey (2005) posits, "at the heart of the problem lies a burgeoning disparity between the declared public aims of neoliberalism-the wellbeing of all-and its actual consequences-the restoration of class power." (79)

Notwithstanding the neoliberal state's attempts to segment and exclude the impoverished margins of the population, assigning them *bare lives* (Agamben 2004), the neoliberal ideology structuring relationships to others and oneself has permeated Quito. Globalization that spread and accelerated through the 1990's infiltrated culturally defined ideas of relationships, families, power and gender. Simply because the state has favored the wellbeing of some over the majority does not mean that those on the verge of survival are incognizant to the life they could have. They are not impenetrable or unaffected by the ideals of worth and wellbeing promoted by the state. This does not only imply the satisfaction of immediate, pleasures or desires (such as purchasing a shirt or a good meal), but also more long term, enduring goals such as self-realization or finding a worthy purpose in life.

Rodríguez's interviewee highlighted "feeling good with oneself" as something that kept keep him hooked on selling drugs. If not, what was he going to do with his 'sorry life'? At least, as he said, he has achieved something. Inés similarly mentions growing unconscious to the risk of selling and the harm done to others because of the 'addiction' derived from selling and the ensuing sense of wellbeing. It is not only, as she says, that she can consume and have what she never imagined. Most people are wedded to the material competition of consumerism and accumulation, especially because society measures an individual's worth based on their material goods, as she insists here: *When I liked something and wanted to get it or do it, I no longer saw that only the rich person could wear it. I did feel like I was worth more, I didn't see myself as so little. I would place myself at other people's level, and then there are some people that are higher than us all.*

As the majority of society, Inés hierarchizes people's worth according to what they have- *some people are higher than us all.* The ability to consume and satisfy immediate pleasures made her self-worth increase; she didn't see herself as *so little* anymore, whereas previously she was diminished by the denial to participate in the mainstream market. Valeria also claimed the right in her narrative to wellbeing: *I like money, wellbeing. When you live from nothing, you will always live depending on others, we will be small forever. But no, we are all capable of everything.*

Not only does she assert her right to wellbeing, she also democratizes her statement, extending that possibility to everyone. In her words, by gaining autonomy, by not depending on anyone to survive it is possible to personally grow and climb the social ladder, to be *something*, to acquire wellbeing. Inés also mentions the following: *With drugs, you have total decision-making power, you are not accountable to anyone, you decide on your own. There is no danger or fear of being fired if you do something wrong, because "there are already so many of you that are useful to me". Humiliated…but with drugs, you are your own boss, your patrón. What I enjoyed the most was not having a patrón…*

According to Ryff (1989), other dimensions of wellbeing include autonomy (self-determination and independence), environmental mastery (or an individual's ability to create or choose an environment suitable to his or her psychic condition), personal growth, and a purpose in life. Selling drugs allowed Inés to control her own environment. She was suddenly not on constant guard or at the mercy of her boss who threatened her with her structurally imposed *disposability.* The feeling of humiliation she mentions is tied to the liberalization of labor in the de-industrialized era that has made it difficult (if not impossible) for unskilled workers to gain a sense of identity or self-worth through their work. As Bourgois (2003) described, the only legal job his interviewees could compete with failed to provide livable wages (94); the impersonal market forces imposed a sense of personal powerlessness that plummeted their self-confidence. (120) By controlling her own 'environment' autonomously, her sense of self-worth and wellbeing

increased, despite being on constant alert and risk. Fabiana mentioned both the addictive nature of her work as well as the independence it granted her:

> *On the streets, you lose your appetite. It's a constant alert, you live so much on the street and at home in scarcity and if they don't get you on the streets they'll follow you home, but we have to survive. And you get used to taking your own money and not depending on anyone…you know it's wrong, but you already live like that, you get used to that life…when one lives on the streets, the get used to taking money without being held accountable by anyone and that is also blinding. I've had time to reconsider, but I've always gone back. You get scared when you get out. It's become a part of your life…*

Like Rodríguez's interviewee, Fabiana mentions how she's relapsed, unable to escape the temptation. As Inés narrated, she is addicted to the independence and autonomy that drug selling has afforded her with. Despite the daily risk of persecution, she was not held accountable by anyone and became accustomed to that 'entrepreneurial freedom'. In all three cases, as in the rest of my interviews, the sale of drugs allowed them to access (although still from an unstable and precarious position) a sense of well being that they are generally excluded from experiencing. It is not only that they are able to socially integrate into the consumerist market, but are also able to gain self worth and autonomy denied to them by the precarious labor market. As Bourgois (2003) argued, different "cultural capitals" (Bourdieu 1990) are needed to work as an 'entrepreneur' in the drug world as opposed to the legal world. (136) The illegal world does not ask for a C.V., for credentials and experience. In current times, we are evermore subjectively defined as human capital, where we are our own entrepreneurs and rely on personal competence and experience to advance. Those who are structurally marginalized from

personal growth opportunities and higher education cannot compete with jobs that require a complex set of skills.

Inés, for example, worked as a domestic worker and when she was laid off, started working as a janitor for a language institute in Quito. When she asked for a higher pay and her petition was refused, she quit, showing that she was not willing to be exploited. A friend from her first imprisonment (where she supposedly fell for someone else) sold drugs and introduced her to a *brujo*. During her second imprisonment in El Inca (former prison in Quito), she worked with a feminist collective and forged deep friendships. Once outside again, the collective got her a job at a coffee shop where she worked as a cashier. However, she did not last long there, as she explained: *it wasn't my strong suit, I didn't feel like that was my territory, pure academic women…they came from a lot of collectives and I didn't have one to which I belonged to, I felt belittled, I didn't feel the same…my daughter became friends with a guy and I started selling marihuana and…later he realized I sold on the corner and I also started selling pasta base.*

It wasn't as if the women treated her with disrespect or judged her. It was more that she didn't feel like it was her territory. Despite the collective's efforts to socially integrate her through a decent, legal job, Inés did not feel comfortable or competent. Graciela's narrative revealed a similar experience with legal work:

> *The first job I got as a cashier was through a friend I met inside [in prison]…and once when I was outside [of prison] and at home and my daughter told me 'mommy, my friend's mom is at work' and asked me if she could bring her friend home. That means that she knew* [her daughter] *that I was nothing. So I took the job. But I felt useless, I couldn't learn anything, I forgot things…I couldn't understand how I could learn the bad but not the good things.*

Graciela first emphasized how her lack of work signified that she was *nothing*. Upon taking up the job offer, however, she had to face another reality that felt equally degrading: her lack of cultural capital necessary for a service sector job. In Bourgois's (2003) analysis of Primo's (one of his main characters) incursion into a high-rise office job, he mentions how his interviewee was "claustrophobically surrounded by overseers from an alien but powerful culture", exposed to the fact that "he didn't have the cultural or symbolic capital that would've allowed him to ascend." (144-145) The return to the underground lairs of the drug economy instilled him (and his friends) with a sense of dignity, both for refusing to be exploited in jobs that easily replaced them, and to feel belittled by those where they lacked cultural capital. As an interviewed law professor and ex-employee of the Ministry of Justice stated when I asked him about my own hypothesis:

> *I think that, as any other economic activity, if people do something with gusto, it may reflect agency on one hand but also a normal pattern in which social relationships are constructed, on the other. You become an expert in something and then you live off of it…If I am allowed to choose between being a domestic worker and earning 350 dollars a month or micro-trafficking and earning that per day, I would choose micro-trafficking without a doubt.*

The professor further supports the idea that women are searching for a sense of self-worth, as Bourgois's (2003) drug dealers are for respect in a world that has rendered

them unemployable and dispensable as fathers. As any other human, they want to find *meaning*, to gain direction or purpose. This becomes more urgent after they lose their hold on the romantic love schema and are excluded from (but also in refusal of) gaining social legitimacy through motherhood. Autonomy is an exercise of freedom. In their multiply constrained lives, it implies not depending on a man, a brother, a husband or a father to survive, or a conglomerate of unstable, informal jobs that keep them on the brink of survival. As Guillermina explained:

> *In a business that doesn't ask for a curriculum, years of experience, diplomas, where they don't ask for anything other than selling and in exchange they receive money that is a symbol of freedom, of course it's an exercise of power for themselves…Of course, they remain in this marginality…these contexts of violence, that just think how marginal they must be for them to consider this independence that they receive through fear or adrenaline, that for them is decisive…a space is generated where they own their destinies. So they assume it, they make the decisions and in this marginality, it represents their limited options to exercise power over their lives.*

As Ortner (1989) stated and as I reiterated in the theoretical framework, all of us, big or small, are searching for *legitimacy* in this world, for meaning and purpose, for wellbeing. To achieve something implies accomplishing something competently or courageously, a task that those in the margins are deemed apathetic to and incapable of doing. Their lives are valued differently by the state, as 'less than' others who have been afforded more opportunities and higher standards of living. Unfortunately for these women who refused to be 'good mothers' and 'good consumer citizens', the only avenue they found to reach self-realization was an exploitative, risky, (self) destructive one. They had other options, but they, as Graciela triumphantly said: *always wanted to have what other people have and I have achieved it.*

She achieved it, but, as she later reflects, like bad karma, lost everything: her things, her children, her freedom, her sense of identity and worth. By walking on the line between the prostitute and *Mariana* schemas and refusing to be catalogued as one or the other, in negotiating with the structures and gaining a sense of autonomy apart from their children and men, they were punished. As Guerrero Navarrete (2012) wrote of the expansion of a centralized and mercantilist state, the temptation to use the poverty-marginality-witch- triad was too great. In a penal state that progressively used gender and class to structure and socially control society, where marginality and poverty are essentially feminine (as women are mere reproductive instruments and exchangeable objects of the labor force), segregation and criminalization where used to reproductively control and punish women who were 'different'. (111)

Conclusion

This chapter argued that women exercised agency by refusing to accept the scant choices offered by society to survive. They claimed their right to wellbeing and became their own entrepreneurs, providing for their children, controlling their own environment (within all the obvious constraints and risks) and living independently. However, as the final chapter will argue, the life of wellbeing and autonomy that women rejoiced in can only ever be a short-term reality. Imprisonment becomes an additional constraint impinging on their wellbeing (and that of their children), as well as a likely predictor of their return to prison in the future.

Chapter 5. Discipline and Punish

The previous chapter discussed how women traversed the line between motherhood and 'witchery'. Despite the weight of the necessity argument, fueled by their responsibilities as single mothers, I argued that women were driven to continue selling because they gained legitimacy through the sale of drugs, a sense of worth and wellbeing. In this chapter, I will argue that the state punishes women's daily struggles both to survive but also to procure a sense of purpose or *meaning* in a violently scarce and competitive world. However, women's aspirations to self-realize outside of motherhood and independent of a man (an attempt to re-gain their sense of worth after prison ultimately annulled it) will render them forever punishable, as they will return to selling drugs. I argue, nevertheless, that the act of refusing what society has deemed will make them legitimate citizens and, in its stead, enacting an alternative form of the schema is an act of resistance and intention and thus, of agency.

Section 1: The punishment

The prison I visited, a construction that is officially valued at 46,580,976.49 US dollars, was inaugurated on August 2014. Along with the prison came a new 'rehabilitation' program and penal code. The five-step rehabilitation program, as explained by an official of the Ministry of Justice, includes culture-sport-education, work, integral health and 'family ties', making family the "pillar of reinsertion." ("Año de

Rehabilitación" 2014) Entry into prison revealed a very different story, as my field notes describe:

> *On the road towards the officially (preferred and euphemistically) named 'Center for Social Rehabilitation', my mind drifted between the rolling, green hills and rigid cliffs that line the famous avenue of volcanoes. I was not ready, however, for the giant, blue and metallic structure that lay between the rugged mountains and the paved highway, one that was reminiscent of movies and orange suits, but that I could not make sense of. A perfect rectangle surrounded by four watchtowers. Approximate population: 5000 inmates- 850 women and over 4000 men. UN 'in observance of human rights'-agreed maximum number of inmates: less than 5000. New 'humane label' for prisoners: persons deprived of liberty. Not 'inmates' or 'prisoners' anymore. Now they proposed to "treat every human with equal respect". Apparently, the person's 'human-ness' got lost in the name (and not in the prison). It is a Center for Social Rehabilitation after all, not four walls, and watchtowers, trained dogs, police and guns, and emptiness. Reason for recent transfer: officially, overcrowding was not allowing the 'persons deprived of liberty' from correctly rehabilitating, hence higher crime rates. The transfer to the new prison would allow a new, five-step rehabilitation program to thrive and eventually reduce crime. Securitization discourse they call it. More mega-million dollar prisons, would eventually lead to safer, happier communities. Un-official discourse: the "punishment" ideology still stands.*
>
> *After driving past the first entrance, we parked and left everything in the car except our I.D.s, a notebook and a pen. We went through three security check points before going in, where they had us take our shoes off, our belts, watches, as though going on an airplane, except there were no flight announcements, no plastered smiles and excitement. Tension and suspicious scowls, yes, most certainly. Fortunately for me, my 'public defender assistant-associate-investigator' identity saved me from the meticulous strip search. I was escorted to the women's sector where I'd meet the public defender Dr. Constanza, who would be helping me out. As described by her fellow co-workers, she was a strong, forceful woman, known to have applied the recent penal reforms in favor of incarcerated women. My mental idea of her scared me, slightly. Not as much as the idea of being immediately rejected by the prisoners. After all, I was just another curious spectator, a 24-year old white girl, an Argentine with a naïve fantasy of 'contributing' (if indirectly), a social scientist hoping to*

> *do more than 'add' to the existing body of knowledge on women, imprisonment and drugs.*
>
> *I passed through additional security checkpoints, only to find that Dr. Constanza was not there. And John and Carlo, my contacts to the prison, were seeing to other matters, mainly resolving post-inauguration, 'un-kept promises' issues with the director of the 'Center'. They had been out of water for a few days. The water well that was feeding the prison had been dug for those purposes, but no technical test had been done on this water before it was used for the prison to see if it was potable. And, getting ahead of myself here, the women (who did not outright reject me) showed me the botches on their skin they had as a result of the terrible water that was not fit for human use because of its high metal concentration. A new five-step rehabilitation program with a fancy structure, but no water fit for human use. Ah, right, but then, it is crime and punishment after all. My head tried to make meaning through my own writing: By creating terms and cultural meanings and discourses to justify the need for an institution such as the prison based on the idea of sickness, it is easy to forget how often this institution creates and not corrects violence.*

What I can attest to is a system that reinforces the passivity of the 'person deprived of liberty' against an active state that creates and guides the 'rehabilitation process'. A system like this does not enable the incarcerated man or woman to either appropriate the mechanisms through which to 'acquire the necessary skills to lead a better life or make better life choices', nor to have a say in any part of their daily living. They are acutely regularized in what they can and can't do throughout the day, starting from their personal space, to the places they can inhabit daily, to the food they eat, the items available to them in the market, the activities available, and so on and so forth. A woman in prison would later tell me: *Incarceration sickens body and mind. When we leave here, we are only color orange, orange. The pig is eaten, and fed. They have us in total mental and physical inactivity her; the mind forgets things. The mind has to be in connection to the body, because then when it wakes up it's already forgotten.*

As soon as I mentioned reinsertion and rehabilitation to the women I encountered in prison, their stories starkly contrasted with the government's new 'humane' plan. They denunciated the government of labor exploitation within prison (30 out of around 700 women were employed in prison[119] and generally not paid, despite previous promises), the bathrooms had no doors and the water in the open showers was freezing. The prison lies in open grassland in the dry, cold and windy region of Cotopaxi. It stands in direct opposition to the infamous and active volcano, Cotopaxi (that began to erupt during my fieldwork). They did not have enough clothes to shield them from the weather (only two T-shirts, a sweatshirt and one or two blankets) and the cells were supposedly less forgiving. I would go to prison with long pants, boots, and several layers on top, including a warm jacket and would not be able to shake off the cold until I got home and took a warm shower. According to the women, Pavilion G was inhumanely cold and also used for solitary confinement as a form of punishment. The P.D. sketched out the cell in which nine to twelve cots shorter than the size of a median adult fit. The size of the room was most likely three by three meters. She mentioned women were not allowed to go out of their pavilions every day. Some of the workshops themselves either have no more room or insufficient material, or classes are cancelled for several days for example.

A small structure lies in the middle, housing a small 'beauty parlor' where a chatty Cuban woman styles hair, and a tiny store that only takes money donated by family members. In the building where the P.D.'s office is (the only office without a

camera), there are also classrooms for high school and college, a music room, workshop rooms and an open bathroom. And again, an interviewee's reflections came to mind: *I don't understand how they intend to rehabilitate or recompose a person. Prison damages; the healing depends on oneself. As long as hunger and poverty exist, there can't be any sort of rehabilitation. Why don't they incarcerate my companions? They are: poverty, hunger, solitude, ignorance, sickness and the cold.*

Moreover, the supposed pillar of the 'rehabilitation program', *family*, was one that was largely absent from men and women's lives in the new prison. Whereas previously both the prison Penal García Moreno (for men) and El Inca (for women) had been in the city of Quito (in the province of Pichincha) the new prison was in Latacunga, the capital of Cotopaxi (a province south of Pichincha). Given that the greater percentage (if not all) of the prison population comes from the impoverished sectors of society, a one way trip to Latacunga on public transportation (as opposed to a car) took anywhere between two to three hours. The total cost of the trip was around eight to ten dollars. If the minimum hourly wage is at $2.21 dollars and most of the would-be family members of the imprisoned population are working at informal jobs that are unstable and earn below the minimum wage, the ride to Latacunga is not only costly but also implies losing an entire workday. Additionally, only two family members are allowed to visit every 15 days (the time of the visit is generally random and specific) for only two hours. Within prison, men and women are only allowed one call every eight days at an allotted time that lasts five minutes. This absurd policy not only leads to vicious fights between women at the phone line, but also acts as a lever for the guards when they wish to punish or

privilege someone. Moreover, and more importantly, it alienates imprisoned men and women from their families.

During a screening of a new documentary on the prison Penal García Moreno by Jorge Nuñez Vega and Mateo Herrera, *El Panóptico Ciego,* (The Blind Panopticon), I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to ask questions both to the creators of the documentary but also the Minister of Justice herself, Ledy Zúñiga. I asked her how family, that was supposedly such an important part of their new 'rehabilitation program', played a part in the reality of men and women's lives in Latacunga when they were so isolated and restricted from communicating with them. Her response was: "well, they are in prison for a reason after all." I received a very similar response upon interviewing a woman from the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Civic Cult. This only confirmed what others had mentioned (previously cited) and my own observations about Correa's regime as a *punitive* and not human rights driven state.

Graciela's reflections on imprisonment and its effect on their sense of self-esteem both confirm the state's punitive agenda that castigates and sedates women's alternative schemas. *Here you feel useless, they have you locked up, you lie down all the time, you aren't useful. I've never liked being beneath other people and we are worth something; it's not fair, what they make us feel. I feel that we are worth nothing here because they treat us poorly.*

The women I interviewed spoke of the new experience in prison as one that completely dissolved any sense of self or identity. The feeling of wellbeing that they acquired through drug sales was, in the end, short lived. As every witch in our fairytale stories, the women I interviewed were destined to a fatal end. More tragically, the women knew they were now condemned to a lifestyle that would most likely ensure their return to prison. As Ofelia narrated: *Leaving here scares me because we live in a soap bubble where they give me everything, but when I leave, I know what awaits me, and I'm scared of getting home. I don't know what the situation there looks likes, my children telling me 'yeah, you…always going to prison.'*

All women expressed a sense of hopelessness and fear at the thought of leaving. They would all start with one foot back, as Fabiana said. Julia explained that life had already moved on throughout the imprisonment, and you have to speed up to your children's needs and your own when you got out. Despite this, they all argued that they now saw their children as foundational. They recognized how they had abandoned, neglected and harmed them and hoped to make amends.

As a researcher, an outsider and a woman, the women I interviewed may have crafted their responses for my ears. As I stated in my methodology, I acted both as the "psychologist" who unburdened them of their past and the confessional vehicle through which they could redeem themselves. I witnessed their entire story, one that could further ostracize them and strip them of any legitimacy as mothers (and therefore humans). However, I also represented the possibility of transcribing it, of historicizing their future

as one that portrayed them as good-hearted women who would sacrifice anything to be with their children and support them on their own. By writing about it, I could tamper with their future narratives and describe a life of *normalcy* they most likely knew to be impossible. In documenting their prospective *could-be's*, the potentially judgmental eyes that would read their stories would at least think that they truly desired to be good mothers. No matter how their lives turned out in the end, they *intended* to do otherwise. Through me, they could envision and record a life that granted them, at least momentarily, moral and social legitimacy.

In a neoliberal state that impinges its citizens with growing self-responsibility, the final 'recordings' of these women's hopes and desires are circumscribed along the state's expectations of 'good women'. In the end, it would seem as though the state effectively 'punished and disciplined'. Women embodied the sense of guilt, shame and moral responsibility. In acknowledging their 'wrongdoing', they liberated the state from any responsibility over their impoverished livelihoods. Both the interviewees and I knew, sadly, that they would not acquire capital to start their own businesses, whether as 'gourmet fish vendors' or as owners of a cyber café. Further, they would not choose to work as domestic workers or fruit vendors when they knew the life they could have through selling drugs; even if it meant going back to prison and losing their children again. In re-appropriating the motherhood schema through our interviews, they continued to define it on their own terms. They excluded men from their imagined lives and hoped to live solely with their children and gain self-realization from a job that would not own them. Given their aspirations of independence and autonomy, and the simultaneously

constraining structures that framed their daily reality, drug dealing would once again present itself as the only way of gaining *meaning* outside of motherhood.

Section 2: Negotiating the narrative through poetry

This final section will effectively record women's final reflections of a negotiated form of motherhood. Given the *hopeful* yet unrealized dimension of their closing remarks, I cannot ascertain whether social desirability informed their answers or if they truly hoped to gain legitimacy this way, even if I predict, and unfortunately so, that they will return. As I mentioned in the previous section, despite discursively handing over their future lives to that of their children, embodying the sacrificial and devotional motherly figure, they continued to refuse a schema that rendered them submissive and dependent on a male. They spoke of rebuilding their future with and for their children, but also of creating their own business to provide and live on their own, autonomous terms. In the end, women hoped to negotiate the schema that awaited them outside, the only one that could potentially grant them legitimacy. However, they refused to define womanhood through motherhood alone, or to realize themselves through a man. This is, as mentioned in the introduction, an act that speaks of grassroots feminism.

While I worked in prison, I created a workshop called 'Encuentro conmigo misma' (An encounter with myself), meant to explore self-esteem and techniques to rebuild a sense of self-worth[120]. During our first session, we spoke of Gioconda Belli's

[120] The idea 'using' the interviews of women, who opened up to me and spoke in intimate detail of their lives, to write a thesis for the sake of adding to the body of knowledge seemed almost unethical to me. I

poem *And God Made me a Woman (Y Dios me hizo mujer).* We discussed briefly if they agreed with Belli's poem about women's power to reproduce, of her body as a '*workshop of human beings*', and the few women who participated rejoiced in their motherly prowess. I told them we'd be writing poetry or a reflection that could either be a response to the poem or whatever else they wanted it to be. The following, and final, piece of writing is a compilation of women's future projections as expressed through the interviews and their own artistic creations, which they gifted me with and told me to include in my thesis.

When I get out of prison, I don't say hurray for freedom, but: now what? Back to the same thing? What do I do? Freedom for what, if I'm going back to the same thing, we're better off living here. Outside we have to fight…You feel like everyone stares at you when you get out; prison toughens you up. When you are in need, no one's there to help. (Fabiana)

I say
Why do we wait?
They are here to cry tears of sadness
Why don't we wait to be stable to cry?
Tears of joy as we pick up our children
Embrace them with all our strength
And cry saying I'm not crying out of sadness
But joy because I have the most precious thing in the world.
And why not cry for what you love the most
What you most admire.

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received permission from Director of the Center for Social Rehabilitation to conduct a one-month workshop that would integrate poetry and yoga/meditation. Despite encountering difficulties to effectively carry out my project, because the prison didn't care enough about my idea or the women in prison to properly inform them of the workshop and the days/hours it would be held, I was able to hold a few sessions. In my first session, women entered the workshop carrying bibles because they confused me with the Evangelical women from the United States (white and blond) who did their own workshop at my time. Of course, the prison had failed to inform me of this.

At my age, I don't feel satisfied with who I am, I have nothing, the only valuable thing I have are my children…I'm scared of growing old, of my children going through what I did in prison. (Graciela)

Being a woman is the
Essence of life
Devotional love and passion
Every day

They feel alone, they cry…I would be happy with my children outside of prison, educating them.

When I don't have money for food it hurts, to not be able to fill that gap but I try filling it. To think of getting out scares me because I won't be able to pay for my children's education, they demand money but I know I will be calm with them. (Julia)

I love all of my children
And for them I will change
I feel sad because I miss my children terribly
Solitude is ugly.

If you don't have a family waiting outside, you feel more incarcerated outside than in here, because out there you have internal fights, restrictions, physical fights, rescuing your children and finding material things again, and again not having enough for your children. Here you don't pay rent, you don't think 'what will I eat', 'how will I rent without work, will I sleep on the street, on the sidewalk.' These fights deteriorate you, they tire you. Many leave here and don't know where they'll go because there is nothing, no one to live for. Some prefer to stay, but not those who are resilient because there is nothing like freedom. (Inés)

After the storm
Comes the calm
Because despite being locked up
We are spiritually free
We are tenacious women, strong
This is the storm
Soon, the calm will come and we will be happy

Here one learns that people outside forget about you, that you are not worth anything. Mistaken is the person that remembers those who are in here. When one leaves prison, they have nothing.

The opportunity
Life has many facets
We are born, we grow

When we are born we have a lot of value
And as we grow a lot of goals to achieve
One of which is facing
Our adversities every day

I want to get out, have my own business, but I don't have money. Fried fish with rice would be a good product to sell because it would be a hit, but I need capital. So I'd have to sell avocados. (Ofelia)

God gave us the Opportunity
To live one more day
To learn from our mistakes
And grow stronger

Sometimes I say: I'd rather just stay in here. It gives me anxiety. (Muriel)

Rainbow
I thought that my life's crystal would break
Until the tears
Made me see the colors
Of a rainbow

What I'm certain of is that I don't want more prisons, I dream of having a cyber café or a discotheque for my children and I and I have to make it happen. Sometimes I wonder how I'll make it happen. I don't know how I will achieve it but I am certain that I return to be with my children, even if it means sharing a bed. (Julia)

Other times, it's dark
Suddenly there's clarity.
Every sadness
Every pain in color
Every joy
Every emotion
Has its own song
And that way, our lives are painted
In many colors
And its preferable that our lives
Are like rainbows
Instead of lives
In black and white.

People don't try to understand what we've gone through. I've had to be really tough to sustain my family. One of my children resents me…and many, as my friends say, I gave her priority. "You cannot neglect your children", but she needed me. I don't care if my children hate me. Each person lives their world; I have to live my life, my

experiences. I think differently. No one is waiting for me with a treasure outside, I have to win it for myself; I have to fight.

Conclusion

By building on Ortner's (2005) definition of agency, representative of an act that is intertwined with intention but also resistance (as both are indelibly inseparable), woman's refusal to enact the traditional cultural schema, even after being multiply imprisoned, represents an agentic act. The women I interviewed did not conform to the norm, despite trying to throughout their interviews; they escaped it consistently. They don't want to be 'good, poor citizens' of the neoliberal state; they want to actively participate as consumers, entrepreneurs, women, mothers, and autonomous, respected beings that are *meaningful* to the world. I close this chapter with an excerpt from my field notes:

> *The fieldwork I conducted in Quito and surrounding areas led me to confront the individual, communal and societal harm that state- (and historically) imposed meaninglessness, in the form of excluded and impoverished bare lives (Agamben 2004), can have. This leads to (self) destructive actions that harm the individuals and their loved ones. (Bourgois 2003) It reproduces a cyclical wheel of hyper marginality where the word freedom becomes associated with street life and illegal activities that further condemn them to their fate as residue of the urban decay. In resisting the vacuous-ness of their existence, as deemed by the neoliberal state, they are evermore defined as ruthless 'others'. The punitive hand of the governing body, protector of the Norm and us normal, 'good consumer citizens', lashes against those who have grown in a world where violence and poverty have macro and microscopically shaped the contours of their livelihoods. Each of us tiny dots, flames that burn passionately, or shimmer in the breeze at dusk, as Eduardo Galleano once said, we hold a legitimate claim to meaningfulness. Big or small, we social beings must define ourselves as something. I have seen women fight for*

this claim, even from the unforgiving confines of a nomadic existence on the verge of survival.

Conclusion

> "To the imprisoned people of the world, it seems that the only thing dividing us is a flag and currency."- Guillermo Jiménez, *La Cara Oculta de la Luna*

This thesis intended to expand our knowledge about factors that motivate women's participation in low-level drug dealing[121]. Moreover, by inscribing the question both in a Latin American and in a global setting, it hoped to open a broader conversation about the carceral system and its destructive and detrimental effects on men and women's lives[122]. The question explored in this thesis asked: within a neoliberal and patriarchal society, in a determined socioeconomic context that sets boundaries on horizons of opportunity, are women living on the margins of society forming alternative narratives to motherhood through the micro-sale of drugs in Quito, Ecuador?

My findings clearly pointed to a structural problem of inequality and poverty, as well as a prison system that promotes a multi-dimensional 'rehabilitation' plan that does not contribute in any way to the 'betterment' of these women's lives. Once they are released, there are no jobs waiting for them or employees willing to hire them and pay them livable wages. Moreover, there isn't a lifestyle outside that will fulfill them and make them feel valued and purposeful. Low-level drug dealing, however, represents an

[121] In Ecuador, as in many countries across the world since the '80's and '90's, male and female prison populations grew exponentially after the 'war on drugs' was declared. Lost in the small percentage of female incarceration, however, was the fact that the rate at which women were being imprisoned on minor drug offenses was (and is) proportionally greater than that of men.

[122] After the initial sentence, prison became inscribed in these women's horizons of subjectivity. It is another structure constraining their already precarious livelihoods, plunging their fate and that of their children further into a cycle of poverty and violence. The carceral experience is damaging, to say the least, to a person's body, mind and future possibilities of survival. Any time served in prison implies a sense of losing control over one's body, of giving oneself to some external element and submitting oneself to life between walls that is thoroughly degrading to humans.

economic opportunity for women (and men) living in low-income neighborhoods in Quito. I argue that the attraction to dealing after imprisonment is not only tied to their dire economic condition but also to the form of agency derived from micro trafficking.

Without romanticizing these women's exercise of agency, I hoped to recognize the ways in which they reinterpreted the available cultural narratives through which they could gain legitimacy as *women*. In search of some form of alternative meaning or purpose, they renounced their fate as *bare lives* (Agamben 2004) excluded from social integration as both consumers and as citizens of the state (defined as competent, self accomplished individuals or self-entrepreneurs). Moreover, as loosely structured actresses they redefined *womanhood,* 'existing' for themselves and not only for the love of a man or the lives of their children. They resolved the contradictions of the available plot narratives by treading the line between the *Marianismo* and witch schemas. They insisted upon their right to wellbeing, becoming their own entrepreneurs, providing for their children, controlling their own environment (within all the obvious constraints and risks) and living independently.

As Das and Poole (2004) suggested, the margins are not only in the periphery of the state, but also determine what is in and out. The margins are sites of exclusion, where the line between legality and illegality is blurred and the abnormal defined. The prison is a place where the greater political, economic and cultural structures intersect and further exclude a portion of the population with the purported intent of correcting, punishing and controlling society. However, as Das and Poole (2004) insist, the margins are also sites of

creativity, where "alternative forms of economic and political action are instituted"[123]. (19)

The role of an ethnographer granted me the privilege of peeking into the lives of women in the site that works, *par excellence*, to make humans invisible. Through the process of documenting the narratives behind the gray and blue fences, walls, and watchtowers, I was able to capture (if only a portion) of the everyday lives of ten women destined over and over again to the margins of the state. This provided me with information that is valuable to those who are crafting (or advocating for) public policies to reform (or abolish) the carceral system and de-criminalize drugs or reform drug policies. Moreover, it is significant to both state and non-governmental organizations attempting to 'empower' women through programs that, as Schild (2002), Lind (2005) and Hahn (2012) argue, are built on assumptions about women as responsible caretakers that, in the end, serve to further impoverish them.

Prisons will continue to exist for at least the foreseeable future, as well as ideas about 'reforming' or 'rehabilitating' imprisoned humans. Given both the current Ecuadorian situation of prison reform[124], as the global one, I wrote this thesis in hopes of

[123] This is not to say, as the authors insist, that the margins are not risky, dangerous, violent or impoverished, but the contrary.

[124] The Ecuadorian Ministry of Justice, Human Rights, and Civic Cult recently published a collection of essays of Latin American experiences on social rehabilitation, in support of the new penal policies installed in Ecuador. In the book's prologue, Minister Zúñiga first cites the 20th article of the Magna Carta, highlighting the "positive preventive goal" of incarceration: "The social rehabilitation system will, as its final objective, integrally rehabilitate the people sentenced to prison in order to reinsert them into society, as well as the protection of person deprived of freedom's liberty and the guarantee of his or her rights." (Zúñiga Rocha 2014: 7) The text emphasizes how this 'humanist' aspect of incarceration is protected in numeral 6.4 of the 'Buen Vivir' National Plan (2013-2017). It concludes with a forceful statement: "we

contributing to the conversation about what men and women seek when dealing drugs. They are not only hoping to survive; they want to find *meaning* or legitimacy as everyone else. They are searching for *respect,* as Bourgois (2003) argued in his work, and not for an unstable factory job that pays them a wage on which they can barely survive on[125]. The women I interviewed longed for start-up capital, for the chance to be entrepreneurs and sustain themselves autonomously.

Further, in this thesis I argued that available explanations in the literature have been divided between push and pull factors, structures and agency, that do not fully grasp the girth of women's experience in drug dealing. Multi-causal arguments recently espoused by a myriad of scholars did not suffice to explain the patterns that emerged out of my own interviewees' narratives. Practice theory provided me with the opportunity to explore a question that many scholars, feminists and society have not confronted: what if women's motivations to deal drugs were not entirely driven by their motherly responsibilities? In avoiding this question, are we afraid that women will be perceived (and morally condemned) as 'monsters' for having dealt drugs knowing they would most likely abandon their children at some point? Without losing sight of the vulnerable situation in which these women live in, by victimizing women's participation in drug dealing, we are reproducing expectations and assumptions about women. Through this

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continue working together, State and society, for a true revolution of the penitentiary system." (2014: 9) The Sub-secretary of Normative Development further points to the 'revolutionary' dimension of the new approach, which marks a "before and after in the conception of the traditional penal system, eminently punitive, that interprets the sentence as punishment imposed by the State in its quality of inquisitive institution, and not in its function to reform, rehabilitate and reinsert the offender into society." (Donoso Arellano 2014: 11)

[125] As all the Professors I interviewed insisted, if that were the state's 'reinsertion' plan, men and women would most likely hold on to those factory jobs but also deal or traffic on the side.

route, we cannot escape the structures of *Marianismo* and the maternal instinct, founded on women's biological capacity to reproduce. The narratives of women analyzed in this thesis spoke of wanting a purpose in life that exceeded motherhood.

Given the exploratory and descriptive quality of my thesis, as well as my sample size, there are many limitations to my results, as well as questions left unanswered. These restrictions, closely related to the time frame I had, the chosen method and the politicized nature of the topic, serve to think of future recommendations or questions that stem from this thesis. The first limitation I encountered was the number of women I was able to interview in and outside of prison[126]. Since I was only able to work with ten in-depth interviews to structure my main arguments, I do not expect this thesis to be more than a descriptive, exploratory case study. By choosing to do ethnographic research, moreover, I did not intend to make my findings generalizable. With more time, the number of interviewees within prison would have increased as well as the depth of my interviews. As my fieldwork progressed, I hoped to ask previous interviewees more questions but it was not possible to (and there wasn't enough time) to locate them again.

[126] While I was doing my fieldwork, the Director of the prison changed twice (since 2014, they had already had six different Directors). Moreover, the government was changing the composition of the Public Defender's Office, with the supposed intent of centralizing power and replacing current lawyers with more politically loyal members of the government. The Public Defender's Office was created in 2007 under Rafael Correa. The Office's budget was not controlled or funded by the government. However, according to several of the employees I worked with, given Correa's loss of power in recent years and the increased penalization of political activism, he was attempting to co-opt it. My trips to Latacunga sometimes proved fruitful, but other times I had to ride back home without any interviews. I was also unable to go to Latacunga for several days at a time when the Indigenous communities mobilized themselves from Loja to protest against Correa (blocking all Highways) and when Cotopaxi began to erupt and the city of Latacunga started to be evacuated. Further, the duration of my interviews was largely determined by the prison routine that was out of my control.

The second limitation is related to the first. I was unable to interview women who were outside of prison and living in the neighborhoods X, Y, and Z. This would've provided me with a more nuanced perspective in terms of the contradictions I traced in the interviews[127]. Further, it would have allowed me to pinpoint biased responses, prompted by social desirability. Finally, it would have given me a window into the lives of women who choose to not sell drugs. By living intimately with women in these neighborhoods, I would have been able to explore the question of alternative narratives as well as the true force of the motherhood narrative in their daily reality[128]. In future research, it would be important to ask: what alternative narratives are available to women growing up in the margins of Quito? How do past myths inform alternative narratives? Have national and/or international media changed gendered expectations and shaped the romantic love schema?

A third limitation is the scope of my results. I can only speak for the lives of the ten women I interviewed in my case study. However, I can question the available literature's reticence towards exploring the relationship between agency and structure when speaking of drugs and women. Given that the rate of female imprisonment on minor drug offenses continues to surpass that of men (and that more women are imprisoned proportionally on minor drug offenses), it would be fruitful to replicate a similar study across different populations and compare results. Can the participation of

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[127] I would have been able to explore the relationships with their mothers, for example, in conversation with Oscar Lewis's culture of poverty. It is telling that a third of these women's mothers had been imprisoned for the greater part of their childhood.

[128] If I had lived outside with these women, I could've also documented the State's role, perhaps in monthly welfare checks or community development programs that I was unable to see in prison.

women in drug dealing be explained by other factors outside of the necessity discourse? Are women globally contesting the historically determined and culturally enforced gender roles by dealing drugs?

The final dimension that must be accounted for is the state. This thesis, as I argued before, reveals the contradictory nature of President Correa's 'human-rights oriented' penal discourse when faced with the punitive reality of Latacunga[129]. The prison that I worked at and the 'new plan' promoted so vigorously by the Ministry of Justice foreshadows a future of higher and not lower prison populations. The 'rehabilitation' process I described in Latacunga neither works as a "deterrent of crime" nor as "reformative". These concepts are founded on an image of an individual that is 'unable' or 'unwilling' to properly 'reinsert' him or herself in society. The question, however, is whether they were 'inserted' in the first place. As Barrata (1991) wrote, "if we observe the prison population-its demographic composition-we realize that carceral marginalization is, for the majority of detainees, a secondary process of marginalization that intervenes after the primary process." (76) In failing to provide all citizens with the same rights and opportunities, where does the state's responsibility lie? If the prison's purported purpose of 'rehabilitation' only serves to punish, and individuals leaving prison are dumped in a world where they have to survive, is not the state the 'recidivist'?

[129] Interviews with women outside of prison revealed the psychological harm of 'serving time'. They mentioned locking themselves up in their homes by five p.m. (the time when they were locked up in their cells) and of not riding the bus alone or spending time outside on the streets because they feared everyone. Their heightened mistrust had led them to live in constant alert and suspicion. Their current jobs do not provide them livable wages.

Moreover, it unearths the neoliberal current underlying Correa's 'post-neoliberal' stance that has further privatized individual responsibility. The privatization of citizenship that leaves the state unaccountable to the 'ordinary citizen', can be better understood within Sassen's (1995) discussion of the effects of capitalism and the globalizing forces of the market that have displaced the sphere of citizenship as an intermediary of the population, communicating, representing, demanding according to various salient interests.

In such a world, as Berlant (1997) argues, "the vulnerability of personal existence to the instability of capitalism" (4) is made to seem exceptional and personalized (embedded with the rhetoric of meritocracy), where the image of the normal and abnormal is drawn. At the same time, agency is stigmatized, punished for trespassing the confines of discourse that lays out the rules of the game and the codes of conduct. It is in marginalizing and excluding, in categorizing, that we subsume and devalue others and disconnect ourselves from them.

Society can relieve itself of collective responsibility when 'others' are described as incorrigible, as less than human, in the outskirts of what we have diagnosed as normal and good. The intimate sphere to which citizenry is relegated is wittingly controlled and defined by the state itself. In this scenario, women who 'returned to prison' multiple times are collectively stigmatized and excluded, having 'failed' repeatedly to be 'good mothers' and 'good women'. They are doomed to be dispensable humans, when what

embroiled them in the (self) destructive world of drugs was not only the need to survive, but also the desire to gain legitimacy as *meaningful* humans.

APPENDIX A

Table 1. Art. 220, COIP 2014 Ecuador

Felony for the production or trafficking of catalogued illicit substances	
Art. 220 Illicit trafficking of substances held accountable to auditing:	
1. Narcotic and psychotropic substances, in the quantities signaled in the following scales	
a) Minimum scale	2-6 months
b) Medium scale	1-3 years
c) High scale	5-7 years
d) Great scale	10-13 years

Retrieved from Alvarez Velasco, 2014. Source: COIP, Third Chapter, Felonies Against the 'Buen Vivir' Rights, Second Section.

Table 2. Table of quantities of narcotic and psychotropic substances to sanction minimum, medium, high and great scale of illicit trafficking

	SUSTANCIAS ESTUPEFACIENTES							
	Heroína		Pasta base de cocaína		Clorhidrato de cocaína		Marihuana	
	Mínimo	Máximo	Mínimo	Máximo	Mínimo	Máximo	Mínimo	Máximo
Minima escala	>0	1	>0	50	>0	50	>0	300
Mediana escala	>1	5	>50	500	>50	2000	>300	2000
Alta escala	>5	20	>500	2000	>2000	5000	>2000	10000
Gran Escala	>20		>2000		>5000		>10000	

	SUSTANCIAS PSICOTROPICAS					
	Anfetaminas		Metilendioxifenetil amina (MDA)		Extasis (MDMA)	
	Mínimo	Máximo	Mínimo	Máximo	Mínimo	Máximo
Minima escala	>0	2.5	>0	2.5	>0	2.5
Mediana escala	>2.5	5	>2.5	5	>2.5	5
Alta escala	>5.0	12.5	>5.0	12.5	>5.0	12.5
Gran Escala	>12.5		>12.5		>12.5	

Retrived from Alvarez Velasco 2014. Source: Oficio No. CONSEP-SE-2014-0579-0, sent by CONSEP to the Public Defender's Office on June 10th, 2014. In effect by August 2014.

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