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# **(Re)producing a dignified life.**

An exploration of the production and negotiation of classed and gendered subjectivities through reproductive practices among *pobladora* women in Chile

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Sociology, Goldsmiths, University of London  
Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)  
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## Declaration of Authorship

I, Valentina Álvarez López hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.



September 2018.

## Abstract

This thesis is an ethnographic exploration of the ways in which throughout their lives, mature and elderly *pobladora* women – women who live in working-class neighbourhoods in Chile – have negotiated classed and gendered positions through practices of social reproduction. It asks: *How have pobladora women produced their gendered and classed subjectivities through practices of social reproduction in their positions as mothers, homemakers and/or wives?* This research examines the values and the value that pobladora women have attached to the practices that ensure the social reproduction of their households, as well as the work of community organisations that respond to concrete reproductive needs. This, in light of historical configurations of gender and class in Chile.

This work draws on more than ten months of intensive ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2014 and 2017 in a working-class neighbourhood called *Nuevo Amanecer*, whose past and present are critical for the aims of this research. Ethnography with a feminist perspective has been used as both a method for gathering data and a form of writing, including a strong historical component.

The main contribution of this thesis is that, through ethnography, it offers a bridge between different perspectives and theoretical frameworks on class between materialist – in particular Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) – and symbolic/moral approaches to class, which have often been seen as divergent. It also contributes to SRT by stressing the relevance of subjectivity to an understanding of processes of capitalist accumulation and the gendered organisation of social production/reproduction. Furthermore, by providing a more nuanced and less moralised understanding of the effects of class in women's subjectivities in relation to wage work and care labour than that provided by mainstream feminist approaches, this thesis provides new insights to understand the persistence of social reproduction as gendered labour. It argues that, through the labours of social reproduction, pobladora women have waged symbolic struggles that position themselves and their families as dignified – classed and gendered – subjects.

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# Chapter one

## Introduction

*I pass in front of the house of Señora Fabiola, a housewife in her sixties who lives in a working-class neighbourhood, or población, that emerged in Santiago de Chile out of housing struggles during the 1960s and early 1970s. As usual, the gate and house doors are open, and I can see the dark corridor that connects the different spaces of the self-built dwelling. I ring the bell. Señora Fabiola appears from the kitchen with a broom in her hands and greets me. I tell her I am leaving for good. She leaves the broom leaning against the wall and comes outside to talk. "I was cleaning the floor. I don't like step marks in the kitchen and toilet floor tiles", she tells me, and continues: "this is how I spend my day". She complains about the lack of cooperation in the domestic duties from the other members of her family. We talk about me leaving, about her holiday time. One of her sons – in his mid-twenties – comes out of the house, greets us, tries to join the conversation; but Señora Fabiola remains silent. When he leaves, she tells me in a gossiping tone that she does not like his son's new partner. The woman swears a lot and drinks with him; he wastes his money on their vices and does not contribute to the household as Señora Fabiola thinks he should. A female neighbour interrupts us, bringing Señora Fabiola some of her prescription pills and apologising for the shouting we had just heard coming from her house. She briefly explains to us the reason for her family troubles and leaves after a few minutes. Señora Fabiola goes back into the kitchen and reappears with some diced pineapple, which, she notes, she has been given by her neighbour, who works in the open market and who would otherwise discard it. Interested in the subject, I ask her to tell me more about her cooking strategies. She describes to me how she manages in a creative way to bring food to her family table every day and make "everyone happy". After more than half an hour of animated talk, I ask her about her thoughts on the new generations of women. She replies by offering as an example her youngest son's new partner who, according to Señora Fabiola, instead of helping out with domestic chores expects to be served by her son. She states "today, young women are very lazy. They don't endow with value whom they have next to them [their partner]". I leave to continue with my goodbye visits but this phrase resonates in my head, as if encapsulating powerful meanings. I attempt to keep it in my mind and write it down when I am back home.*

In the perspective of Señora Fabiola, helping partners to stay on the 'right' path of family responsibility, or serving them lunch, making her family happy with a meal despite economic scarcity, providing them with a clean environment by cleaning the step marks on the kitchen floor, are values. Through these activities, she produces

values – use-values, Marxist-feminists would say – as they are to be consumed by the family. She might not be fully pleased with devoting herself to this labour ‘for love’, but this is no reason for her to dismiss its relevance in the everyday life of her family. Furthermore, she links the performance of these very different activities for the maintenance and reproduction of her household as a measure of a woman’s worth, made explicit in the comparison between generations. I heard a similar statement from another woman of the same neighbourhood: “*That woman’s not even worth a penny*”, complaining about her own son’s new partner who, like Señora Fabiola’s son, drinks with him. For Señora Fabiola, reproductive labour is a valuable activity not only for what it produces, but also because it endows with value both those she loves and the woman who carries it out, thus connecting reproductive labour with certain forms of valued subjectivity. Her narrative reveals how her subjectivity is constructed in specific cultural discourses of valuable womanhood grounded on the labours for the social reproduction of her household, especially domestic work.

This particular form of womanhood Señora Fabiola believes is desirable is also classed, although this nuance appears more surreptitiously. She is a *pobladora*<sup>1</sup>, a woman inhabitant of a *población*, an urban space associated with the lower classes, whose contested meanings will be further explored here. Such classed location among the lower classes is revealed if we look more closely at the material conditions that surround Señora Fabiola’s narrative: the strategies she follows for assuring the reproduction of her household despite economic scarcity – such as creativity in food preparation – her concerns with the economic contribution her children are not making to the household, or the fact that she herself carries out cleaning labour that in middle- and upper-class arenas is more likely to be delegated to a domestic worker (Bustamante, 2011). As will be revealed in this thesis, the value she attaches to more ‘traditional’ gendered subjectivity is also classed, through the centrality she gives to reproductive labour as a means of endowing her family with value – value that, for pobladora women who inhabit a symbolically devalued position, has been an everyday struggle throughout their lives.

This thesis explores how pobladora women’s classed and gendered subjectivities have been produced through “the activities associated with maintenance and reproduction of people’s lives on daily and intergenerational basis” (Ferguson,

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<sup>1</sup> Singular feminine; singular masculine: *poblador*; *pobladora*; plural masculine/inclusive: *pobladores*; feminine plural: *pobladoras*.

LeBaron, Dimitrakaki, & Farris, 2016, pp. 27–28), or social reproduction. I examine pobladora women’s experience of such activities carried out in their own households as well as community organisations. Understanding social reproduction as a site of struggle around its conditions, organisation and regulation – which, it will be argued, has strongly shaped historical formations of class and gender – in this research I enquire into the ways in which pobladora women have experienced those positions throughout their lives. In other words, I examine how different practices oriented to social reproduction on a daily basis – thus excluding from the analysis biological reproduction – have been actively carried out, signified and valued by pobladora women in their positions as mothers, homemakers and/or housewives, and emphasise the negotiations between envisioned subjects and concrete material conditions that make them possible (or not). I ask, *how have pobladora women produced their gendered and classed subjectivities through practices of social reproduction in their positions as mothers, homemakers and/or wives?*

My understanding of subjectivity starts from Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Couze and Walkerdine (1998) who highlight the double meaning of the French word *assujétir*: both ‘to produce subjectivity’ and ‘to make a subject’ (p. 3). Different discourses produce different subject’s positions – i.e., the dutiful housewife, or the ‘woman of the street’ – historically available and differently valued. In this perspective, practices are interpreted as investments in specific subject positions and not in others (Henriques et al., 1998, p. 205). As investments, such practices are here analysed with attention to the conditions and context in which they take place; in some circumstances, people might be forced into certain practices that they would otherwise do not. Everyday life practices are “produced and reproduced as an integral part of the production of signs and signifying systems” (Lawler, 2000, p. 22) through which they produce a subject. In this line, subjectivity is understood as the “experience of being subjected” to multifarious and sometimes contradictory and ambivalent subject positions (Blackman, Cromby, Hook, Papadopoulos, & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 6). Attention to subjectivity thus emphasises the ways in which personal experiences are shaped by the social.

My research draws upon and aims to overcome the limitations of current and previous Latin American scholarship in understanding how classed and gendered subjectivities are related to concrete practices of social reproduction. On one hand, I discuss a trend in feminist scholars’ work in Latin America which has shown the

relevance of class in the gendered distribution of social production (wage work) and reproduction. They have shown how women from the lower classes tend to shoulder reproductive labour to a greater degree than their counterparts in the middle and upper classes, mainly because they embody a more 'traditional' subjectivity 14/09/2018 10:32:00. Such subjectivity, however, is not explored but often dismissed and perceived as in need of transformation as they envision the 'autonomous' individual as the realisation of the subject of feminism (Araujo, 2009; Espinoza Miñoso, 2016; Gargallo, 2006; Schild, 2015). On the other hand, I draw on the work of scholars researching the 'strategies of survival' deployed by households of the lower classes - mainly developed between the 1970s and 1980s - which emphasised the effects of class in this process. As I show in depth in the literature review, they moved from a structural approach to one of class as a structure of opportunities. Such movement allowed them to understand social reproduction as a site of agency, of negotiation among its members, to underscore the relevance of networks beyond the household and how the organisation of social reproduction is mediated by culture through which they understood gender (de Barbieri, 1989; de Oliveira & Salles, 1988; Raczynski & Serrano, 1984), all dimensions upon which my own perspective on social reproduction draws. Nevertheless, their analysis worked with a materialist approach to social reproduction which often forgot its social and cultural dimensions and overlooked the multiplicity of ways in which classed and gendered subjectivities are embedded in this process.

I am interested in exploring how these practices are both shaped by and productive of women's classed and gendered subjectivities. Thus, my research makes a shift from these understandings of social reproduction and class anchored in describing *what* is done and by *whom*, to an exploration of *how* reproductive practices are carried out, assessed and *experienced* by the women, this being the unit of analysis. Such exploration is carried out by using ethnography as a method and a heterodox approach to class that brings together Marxist feminist Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) with symbolic/moral readings of class. I understand class in terms of its historical formations, out of struggles in the sites of production and reproduction. At the same time, I emphasise with Skeggs (2014, 2010) how class is inscribed in symbolic systems and experienced in moral terms. Thus, I explore the effects of such history of class formation in the contemporary symbolic system of class and gender and how they are experienced by these women through morality. In doing that, this

thesis offers a proposal for rethinking class with the site of social reproduction and with women's labour at the centre.

This thesis offers insights for linking two different approaches to class – a Marxist approach to class, in particular Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) and symbolic/moral readings of class – this being its main contribution. Often seen as contested approaches (see, for instance, Bottero, 2004), this research shows how they both work empirically while it casts light on the theoretical affinities between the two. Such a bridge is built, theoretically, in three different levels. Firstly, I emphasise social reproduction as a process intricately shaped by the social and cultural context in which it takes place. The relational character of use-values and the needs they satisfy are central in my ethnography as they are informed by ideas about how life should be lived in concrete historical contexts and social locations. Moving beyond a purely materialist perspective, my approach avoids moral judgement in questioning whether certain labours and goods are indeed necessary or could be considered secondary. Instead, such definitions emerge from the ethnography as central markers of classed and gendered positioning. Secondly, and directly related with the first point, rather than considering class and gender as two analytically differentiated variables, I approach them in terms of their concrete historical co-constitution, as categories articulated in modes of social production/reproduction along gender lines. Finally, the historical and social dimension of social reproduction become attainable through attending to different fields of value, their circulation and the ways in which they relate to each other.

Given its multiple meanings, it seems necessary to briefly define the fields of value at stake in this thesis. The Domestic Labour Debate (for a review, see, Molyneux, 1979) argued that domestic labour produces use-values – a clean environment, a cooked meal – seems helpful for the aims of this research. Such values are to be looked at in the ethnography while the debate on whether this labour produces, or not, surplus value seems to expand beyond the scope of this research. Rather than analysing such practices in terms of the ways they increase capitalist value, I am interested in the ways in which such practices became valuable for those who carry them out. As such, I attend to the ways in which such practices are embedded with values – such as cleanliness, hard work or respectability – found central in the creation of classed moral boundaries in the Chilean context (Martínez & Palacios, 1996; see, for instance, Mayol, Azócar Rosenkranz, & Azócar Ortiz, 2013; Mella, 2013). I also

explore the value or importance of such practices for the women who carry them out. From an emic perspective, the value of reproductive labour is understood as “the way in which actions become meaningful to the actor by being incorporated in some larger, social totality – even if in many cases the totality in question exists primarily in the actor’s imagination” (Graeber, 2002, p. ix). It is in this totality in which actions are assessed and classed and gender positioning are to be found. Furthermore, I engage with another field of value: the assessments of moral-worth that, Skeggs (2004, 2010, 2011) notes, underpin class. Practices actualise, reinforce and/or contest hegemonic notions of moral worth. As this ethnography shows, attention to the different fields and circulation of value, illuminates an understanding of pobladora women’s experiences of social reproduction and their classed and gender subjectivities.

The ethnographic approach to class subjectivities offered here also contributes to current scholarship on how class positioning is framed by morality in the Chilean context. This body of literature has shown how class is read in moral terms by claiming to embody some values and ascribing different (negative) values to others differently positioned. For instance, they have argued that the value of *decencia* or respectability is central for those who are located at the lower end of the social hierarchy to endow themselves with value in the light of negative moral ascriptions (see, for instance, Martínez & Palacios, 1996; Mayol, et al., 2013), or have shown how the middle-class claim to embody the value of effort in legitimating what they have (Lapierre, 2008; Mella, 2013). An ethnographic approach contributes to bring such reflexions one step further, to explore how those values are enacted and are negotiated in everyday life. As ethnographers in other parts of the world have also shown (see, for instance, Corboz, 2013; Cosacov & Perelman, 2015; McKenzie, 2015; Skeggs, 1997), in everyday life, moral and classed boundaries are more blurred and permeable than in the spoken discourse gathered by interviews.

By bringing together an ethnographic approach to social reproduction and symbolic/moral dimensions of class, this research also offers new insights to look at the struggles of Chilean subaltern groups – known in Latin America as *popular* classes – during national-popular and dictatorial periods and to make visible the different ways by which women engaged with them. Latin American popular movements – urban squatters, peasants and proletarians – that in Chile were particularly intense between the 1960s and 1980s in different political contexts, have been widely studied



and discussed in academia and the political realm. My research makes visible the symbolic dimensions of these struggles and different forms of women's engagement with them. In the case of the *pobladores*, the symbolic/moral dimensions that shape those struggles have been acknowledged, but only exceptionally analysed in depth. If, as Murphy (2015) notes, pobladores claimed the right of property by virtue of their propriety or, as Angelcos (2012) suggests, the notion of dignity is at the core of the demands of pobladores movements, the ways in which social reproduction was achieved at both the level of the community and the household acquire great significance in claiming the latter.

The main argument of the thesis is that, through their practices of social reproduction, pobladora women have waged symbolic struggles through which they have produced themselves and their families as subjects of value: as respectable, dignified subjects. Most of the women who were part of the collective struggles of the twentieth century grew up in a period in which they were encouraged to become good mothers and housewives, responsible for the labours of reproduction of their families. Such a position, I argue, enabled some forms of participation in social processes, which was always fraught with ambivalences (For some examples of this debate see Baldez, 2002; Chant & Craske, 2002; Tinsman, 2002). Thus, the domestic space and the labours of reproduction were, for the majority of pobladora women, the most stable sources for grounding their self-worth and the worth of their families, for embodying the notions of dignity and respectability. This thesis also argues that, through contemporary forms of social participation, pobladora women produced themselves as subjects with needs and interests beyond their positions as mothers and wives, endowing themselves with a different type of value and bringing gender content to the notion of dignity.

Attempting to do justice to the experience of social reproduction among pobladora women who lived in and were part of these processes of collective action, this thesis navigates through different temporalities and sites in which the social reproduction of the pobladores have taken place. I start by carrying out a historical excavation of the processes of modernisation in Chile, its formations of class and gender and the positions they made available, in particular, those of 'mother', 'housewife' and '*poblador(a)*'. I explore the experience of the women who arrived with their families more than 40 years ago to create, in the context of housing struggles, the neighbourhood where they still live in Santiago de Chile. I propose a reading of the

past in which community organisations shaped the processes of social reproduction, revisiting not the contemporary but the 'classic' housing struggles of the pobladores during the 1960s and 1970s, and communitarian productive organisations from the end of the 1970s and the 1980s. The emphasis of this reading, however, is on examining the subjects that were produced and contested through the collective organisation of social reproduction at the community level. I also ethnographically explore how practices such as cleaning and provisioning shape and are shaped by classed and gendered positioning, how they have been transformed throughout women's lives as well as continuities, and ruptures in the ways they are carried out and understood by new generations of pobladora women. The last empirical chapter describes pobladora women's contemporary social participation around the making of handicrafts, in which I push further the concept of social reproduction beyond the maintenance of people's lives to include those dimensions that are seen as central to having a worthy life.

Methodologically speaking, ethnography has been used both as a method for gathering data and a form of writing with a strong historical component. The ethnography here is focused on the experience of women who live in a neighbourhood currently called Nuevo Amanecer in Santiago de Chile. It was carried out during approximately ten months distributed over three different visits from 2014 to 2017, including a six-week pilot stage. The main stage of fieldwork took place between August 2015 and March 2016, a period in which I lived in Nuevo Amanecer for about eight months. In 2016 and 2017, I spent a further six weeks in the field, in a follow-up stage. Throughout this time, I shared afternoons and mornings talking with mature and elderly women and their families, helping them with some of their domestic tasks, taking part in a knitting workshop, shopping in local markets and local shops, and spending summer afternoons doing handicrafts with them. Interviews were central to gathering historical information and were also a complement to incorporate the experiences of other women who were less centrally involved in this thesis. In the analysis, attention to the life cycle of the households and the stage of life of the women was central.

In the following two sections, I provide the necessary context and develop the main theoretical frameworks that are necessary to understand this thesis.

## **Contextualising the research**

In this section, I give a brief overview of the historical processes that are fundamental to understanding the context and the questions that underlie this research. In broad terms, this historical context is signalled by the capitalist modernisation that took place during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Latin America, with an emphasis on two themes. The first is the economic and extra-economic conditions that allowed for the emergence of a proletarian class differentiated from other sections of the popular classes. The second theme is the process by which the *pobladores* became social actors demanding dignified living conditions. The process of emergence of the *pobladores* and the particularities of their struggles are given special attention, since they allow a wider understanding of the questions that underlie this research.

### **Capitalist modernisation in Latin America during the national-popular period**

The economic reorganisation that came with the Great Depression of 1929 set the conditions for prompting another cycle of capitalist modernisation in Latin America, following the 'developmental paradigm' or *desarrollismo* proposed by the United Nation's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). After achieving independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, young Latin American countries came to be ruled by oligarchs who controlled all productive sectors – land, mines, industries, commerce and finance – with little re-distribution and high levels of exploitation (Carmagnani, 1984). In contrast, *desarrollismo* believed that economic and social development would be achieved if the state took control of the national economy to boost industrialisation – with planned substitution of imports – encouraging agrarian reforms and the increasing incorporation of wider social sectors into political and social citizenship (Faletto & Cardoso, 2003, p. 3). In Chile, this model of development was followed between the end of the 1930s and 1973.

In this context, governance was assured through new institutional arrangements around the notion of the 'national-popular': national, because this state arrangements aimed to develop national economies embodying an anti-imperialist impulse, seen as the cause of underdevelopment (Faletto, 1979, p. 44); popular, because it claimed to represent the interest of 'the people', an ill-defined group which constituted itself in opposition to the oligarchy (Calderón & Jelin, 1987; Faletto & Cardoso, 2003). The notion of 'the people' at the same time made reference to the idea of the national in

the sense of that opposed to what is foreign, against imperialism, supporting the existence of “a relative continuity of popular traditions” (Calderón & Jelin, 1987, p. 12 my translation). The previous oligarchical state had assured governability through “exclusionary and violent forms of dealing with popular classes” (Roseblatt, 2000, p. 4), usually through coercive ways of stabilising the workforce and massacres as response to the demands of the popular sectors (Illanes, 1990, 2003; Salazar & Pinto, 1999). In contrast, the national-popular state was conceived as an alliance or ‘compromise’ between social classes to avoid conflict and thus achieve a complex equilibrium in sometimes contradictory ways (Faletto & Kirkwood, 1976). The national-popular character of the state thus obscured class conflict (Faletto, 1979, p. 47) by increasingly integrating demands from the popular and excluded classes for social and political citizenship.

This model of development created a particular class structure. It strengthened the national bourgeoisie, initially not well defined based on the previous oligarch sectors (Calderón & Jelin, 1987, p. 7), and expanded the middle classes associated with the state, becoming the main beneficiary of social welfare. This gave shape to a mesocratic state (Calderón & Jelin, 1987; Faletto & Cardoso, 2003; Roseblatt, 2000). Proletarians expanded as a consequence of industrial development, but so too did a wide sector of urban non-proletarian classes which could not be absorbed by formal or what were understood as the ‘productive’ sectors of the economy. As Cardoso and Falleto (2003) state: “[T]he rhythm of expansion of the latter [urban non-proletarian classes] was usually higher than the capacity of the new forms of urban employment created by industrialisation to absorb it, which made possible the formation in Latin America of what was thought of as ‘urban mass society’, based on insufficiently developed economies ” (p. 42, my translation). Since the majority of welfare was articulated through stable employment, those who could not be absorbed by the dynamic sectors of the economy could only gain access to a ‘second-class citizenship’ (Roseblatt, 2000).

These very material divisions among the popular classes were also symbolically constructed in moral terms. In Chile, only work in industry, mines, ports and transport was conceived as productive labour (Roseblatt, 2000, p. 54), a notion that, although contested, lasted until the early 1970s (see Power, 1997). At the same time,

the peasant economy, small sectors of industry and informal sectors were deemed backward. The male worker was thus symbolically legitimated through

a set of distinctions related in complex ways: male/female, productive/unproductive, patriotic/unpatriotic, progress loving/retrograde, cultured/ignorant, disciplined/unruly, European/Indian. Implicit in these distinctions was a notion of male worker respectability in which all the positive traits cohere". (Roseblatt, 2000, p. 55)

The symbolic system through which class was understood – and conflated with specific locations in the labour structure – was co-constructed in relation to categories of gender and sexuality and became inscribed onto the urban space. As is developed in depth in chapter four, the ‘respectable’ working class was represented as committing to the model of family that I call here ‘modern industrial’: the (heterosexual) couple and the children, ideally living independently in adequate housing of their own, where the man is the sole breadwinner and the woman is in charge of the reproduction of the family. This model of family was encouraged from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as it was thought to moralise and provide a solution to a crisis of social reproduction of labour power, widely debated as the so-called ‘Social Question’ (1880–1920). Later in the century, the national-popular promoted this model of family, although with different emphasis. The More orthodox versions were developed during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the dictatorship that followed the national-popular period (1973-1989).

Despite the material differences and their representation in moral terms between a ‘respectable’ working class and the ‘immoral poor’, the promises of inclusion held by the national-popular modernisation project produced a “revolution of expectations” (Di Tella, 1974 cit. in Calderón & Jelin, 1987, p. 10) among the popular classes. These expectations clashed with the limits and exhaustion of the developmental model<sup>2</sup> by the 1950s (Faletto, 1979), which slowed down the pace of social integration, undermining states’ ability to channel social demands. The victory of the Cuban

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<sup>2</sup> The exhaustion of the model gave rise to the theory of dependency in which underdevelopment was not explained as a difference of stage but instead as a function of global capitalism (for a review see Kay, 1991).

Revolution in 1959 also renewed revolutionary expectations within the Left (Pinto, 2005, p. 10), while the US attempted to avoid any possibility of revolution by compromising aid for social development in the Alliance for Progress in 1961 (see, for instance, Dunne, 2016). Latin American countries became increasingly polarised, which resulted in a wave of coup d'états between the 1960s and 1970s. The national-popular period thus ended with the imposition of authoritarian governments, perpetrators of human rights violations.

In Chile, this process of polarisation was signalled by the arrival of the leftist alliance of the Unidad Popular (UP), the name by which the whole period of its rule (1970–1973) is recognised. The UP proposed to overcome capitalism, which was to be blamed for poverty and underdevelopment, by constitutional means, or in 'The Chilean Way to Socialism' (Unidad Popular, 1969). Once in power, the UP fostered economic restructuring by nationalising banking and mining exploitation and creating an area of social property, and deepened agrarian reform (Petras, 1973, p. 58) at the same time as deploying several measures to improve the living conditions of the popular classes (Illanes, 2005; McGee Deutsch, 1991). The UP was strongly contested by national and international opposition. Financial suffocation via a blockade of international credit, a producers' boycott and increasing levels of political violence led to increasing tension and political polarisation. After 1,000 days of government, Allende was overthrown by a coup d'état on 11 September 1973.

The dictatorial government that followed proscribed all liberties, suspended parliament, and made leftist political parties illegal, and persecuted, tortured, killed and 'disappeared' thousands of those that had been popular organisers at different levels. The military administration, and the civilian administration that came after it, implemented neoliberal policies, led by the Chilean disciples of Milton Friedman, the so-called 'Chicago boys' (Fuentes & Valdeavellano, 2015; Valdes, 1995). If previously, the state had benefited middle classes and 'integrated' working classes, the radical version of neoliberalism applied during the dictatorship was marked by a sharp decrease in social expenditure, which aimed to address only the most urgent needs of the extreme poor (Dalmar Raczynski, 1995). After the return to democracy in 1989, this model of development was maintained, although increasingly expanding towards social protection (Todaro & Arriagada, 2012, p. 28).

## **The habitation crisis and the emergence of pobladores as a social actor**

While the national-popular governments sought to modernise society, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century important parts of Chile's urban population lacked the minimum infrastructure of a modern city. Migration to the cities had steadily risen since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (de Ramón, 2000), yet the devastating effects of the Great Depression initially, and the state-led industrialisation later on, exponentially increased this flow to the main cities from the 1930s. Santiago, the favourite destination for urban migration, tripled its inhabitants in 30 years: from 696,231 in 1930 to 1,907,378 in 1960 (Hurtado, 1996 cit. in Garcés, 2002, p. 100). The city was not prepared for this intake. The urban landscape started to expand into illegally settled shantytowns, the so-called *callampas*<sup>3</sup>, with dwellings built using light materials and without a sewage system (Garcés, 2002b, pp. 80–87; Urrutia, 1972, pp. 37–41). The so-called *conventillos*, old, poor-quality buildings with many unhealthy rooms also housed thousands of people. There, entire families squeezed into one room used as dining room, kitchen and usually workplace, and shared a toilet with numerous others (Garcés, 2002b, p. 31). Furthermore, families of the popular sectors usually received relatives or friends as lodgers, which increased the levels of overcrowding. The living conditions of the popular classes were thus far from what were then the basic expectations of a modern country

In the 1950s, the housing shortage<sup>3</sup> became a matter of public concern in which not only the material but also the moral status of the inhabitants of the *callampas* and *conventillos* was at the centre of debate. The National Housing Census of 1952 reported that 1,773,124 Chileans lacked appropriate housing, corresponding to 29.9 percent of the total population. In Santiago, the figures were relatively higher, reaching 30.5 percent of the total population, meaning that 534,771 people lived in inadequate conditions (Garcés, 2002b, p. 68). The number of people living in *callampas* peaked over the decade, rising from 16,502 in 1952 to 32,307 in 1959 (Duque and Pastrana, 1972 cit. in Garcés, 2002b), causing dramatic changes in the urban landscape. Inadequate housing and its inhabitants became the object of state research led by social workers, architects and urbanists who studied living conditions and the social composition of this forms of housing, quantifying and categorising them.

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<sup>3</sup> In English, mushrooms. This concept finds its origin in the idea that these settlements appear suddenly and multiply like mushrooms in a forest.

Housing shortage was also a concern among politicians, making the issue a matter of debate in parliament and electoral campaigns (Valdés, 1987a, p. 268). The debate usually centred around whether living conditions were the cause or effect of inhabitants' immorality or if, on the contrary, those living in precarious forms of habitation were as dignified as any other members of the working class (Castells, 1973; Garcés, 2002b, pp. 53–109; Murphy, 2015). Thus, inhabitants of callampas and conventillos became the bodies upon which the symbolic categories of the non-respectable working class were inscribed.

By the end of the decade, these moral ascriptions that operated in everyday life came to be challenged by the housing struggles that reclaimed citizenship and compliance to the modernist project. During the 1960s the category of poblador came to signify a new subject position. While this category had emerged during the 1920s (Murphy, 2015, p. 58), only in the 1960s did it become more widely used to refer to the urban popular classes (Garcés, 2002b, p. 14; Salman, 1997, p. 145). A landmark in the emergence of the pobladores as a social actor was the seizure by hundreds of families in 1957 of a plot of land that had been promised to them for more than 12 years. They called the seized land *La Victoria* (the victory). The act of seizing land – commonly known as *toma* – was a public political act: led by the Communist Party, the families demanded the right to dignified housing and resisted eviction with the support of universities, students, professional associations, the Church and other organisations of civil society (Espinoza, 1988). Callampas had various degrees of organisation and legal claims to property rights and some of them had been politicised (de Ramón, 1990 in Garcés, 2002b, p. 32, 2005). Nevertheless, the poblador emerged as a new form of political subjectivity (Angelcos & Pérez, 2017) that claimed a place in the city.

The land occupation of La Victoria forced the state to create housing solutions for those at the lower end of the social hierarchy. Housing policies had hitherto only benefited the middle classes and the integrated working classes, via formal employment (MINVU, Departamento de Estudios, 2004). The Habitational Plan in 1959 included a programme of re-location of inhabitants of 'unhealthy housing' to urbanised plots with small sanitary facilities for kitchen and toilet, a programme refashioned in the following decade under the name '*operación sitio*' (plot of land operation). Firmly aligned with the policies of the 'Alliance for Progress', during the reformist government of the Christian Democrats (1965–1970), urban reform was



central as a “means to provide stability, create modern citizens, and prevent subversion among the urban poor” (Murphy, 2015, p. 82). This programme was accompanied by other measures, such as promises to build 360,000<sup>4</sup> new family housing units, which families organised in housing committees could access if they fulfilled saving requirements and appropriate behaviour (Mann, 1972).

Throughout the decade, pobladores managed, paraphrasing Murphy (2015), to carve a ‘place in the state’. They were able to legitimise illegal *tomas* through their demands as they claimed to have accomplished the requirements. This was facilitated by the government’s policies of ‘popular promotion’, which encouraged community organisation, especially through the creation of mothers’ centres and institutionalising neighbours’ committees, through which the pobladores became strengthened (Valdés, 1987a; Valdés, Weinstein, Toledo, & Letelier, 1989). Furthermore, they diversified their political allegiances to parties that ranged from the political centre to the Left, even though they tended to claim this was not a political action but followed the needs of their families (Espinoza, 1988, p. 260; Murphy, 2015, p. 92). Among these parties was the Revolutionary Leftist Movement (MIR, by its acronym in Spanish), which connected the struggles for housing to wider revolutionary struggles. In 1967, the sharp decrease in the rate of construction of housing for the popular classes, as a consequence of economic crisis, started another cycle of *tomas*. The Christian Democrats had initially responded to land seizures with harsh repression, yet the excessive use of police force became increasingly delegitimised after a number of pobladores were killed by police repression in two different *tomas*<sup>5</sup> (Castells, 1973). The presidential election of 1970 was read by housing committees as a political opportunity, and the number of *tomas* exploded (Castells, 1973; Cofré, 2007a). It was in this context that the neighbourhood in which this research was carried out was born, under the name *Nueva Habana*, to honour revolutionary Cuba and its capital.

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<sup>4</sup> Only 213,000 were effectively built (see Murphy, 2015, p. 88).

<sup>5</sup> Critiques raised by the death of a toddler in the fierce suppression of the *toma* of Herminda de la Victoria in 1967, and, months later, the violent eviction of hundreds of squatting families in the southern city of Puerto Montt that left eight dead and numerous injured, created a climate in which political pressure decreased the legitimacy of repression (Castells, 1973, p. 25; Garcés, 2002b, p. 350).

The Unidad Popular became a very favourable scenario for the demands of the pobladores. Housing was recognised as a right “that cannot be given up, that should not be an object for profit and whose provision should be one of the main responsibilities of the state” (Hidalgo, 2000 cited in MINVU, Departamento de Estudios, 2004, p. 135, my translation). This principle was accompanied by raising construction standards, which were detached from payment capacity, as well by ‘regulating’ and providing urban facilities to established settlements<sup>6</sup>. Pobladores also benefited from health or education programmes orientated to improving the wellbeing of the popular class (Illanes, 2005; McGee Deutsch, 1991; Vidal, 1972). Despite the increasing number of tomas, the government avoided repression, privileging dialogue. Nevertheless, tomas exponentially increased, with their proliferation calculated at one toma per day in 1973 (Garcés, 2005, p. 72). Seizures also advanced to encompass recently built flats, as a strategy of oppositional parties for destabilisation (MINVU, Departamento de Estudios, 2004, pp. 141–142). This wave of land seizures stopped with the coup of 1973. In the following years of dictatorship and civilian rule, this strategy was carried out only a few more times, and nowadays the pobladores movements have other strategies of struggle (see Angelcos & Pérez, 2017).

### **Gender, social reproduction and pobladores politics**

The mobilisation of pobladores’ families did not end with the assignation of plots of land. Families arrived in settlements or ‘*campamentos*’ with what they had: some of them with fabric tents, shacks made of cardboard, fabric, pieces of metal; those who had more resources would have pre-built wooden shacks. Whether they had acquired the land via illegal seizure, assignation or negotiation by committees, or through programmes of re-settlement, pobladores had to transform what used to be vacant land that usually lacked urban facilities such as a sewage system, potable water – meaning a constant threat to sanitary conditions – or electricity into what they believed to be an appropriate neighbourhood. As such, the initial urban living conditions of a great majority of inhabitants of campamentos were quite far from what was perceived to be modern and adequate housing (an idea further developed

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<sup>6</sup> In order to make housing a right, building standards were increased at the same time as the price of housing decreased to levels that the poorest could pay (MINVU, Departamento de Estudios, 2004, pp. 135–136)

in chapter four) and too close to the callampas. The category of the pobladores was thus a contested one, between negative moral ascriptions of the hegemonic symbolic system and the claims of integration and citizenship made by the pobladores as movement.

In these conditions of habitation pobladores struggled towards achieving what they deemed to be dignified living conditions. Social reproduction was at the centre of their politics. The organisation of space and the control of behaviour were central to ensuring hygiene, health, safety and endow their demands with authority. The inhabitants of the new neighbourhoods, usually organised around neighbourhood committees, had to pressure and negotiate with local councils and/or housing ministers to be provided with sanitary infrastructure and services such as health centres or education. In some cases, they received the support of civil-society institutions (such as NGOs) towards achieving adequate standards in neighbourhoods and homes. The pobladores became the 'producers of the urban space' (Espinoza, 1988, p. 9), becoming able to shorten the gap between what their homes and appropriate neighbourhood were expected to be, and their concrete living conditions. In other words, they were active agents of the transformation of the campamentos into well-established poblaciones.

The poblaciones became places that experienced a transformation of everyday life practices of social reproduction via efforts towards improving sanitary conditions and health standards. As Illanes (2005) argues, during the UP the bodies of the people or '*el pueblo*', their everyday life experiences and living conditions, were positioned at the centre of the historical project of social transformation. Given the levels of poverty and precarious living conditions of campamentos, pobladores were the main beneficiaries of health programmes such as the national programme against child malnutrition. This included measures such as a policy ensuring half a litre of milk a day per child, prevention of children's diarrhoea and implementation of neighbourhood health clinics, but also sanitisation of precarious settlements (see, for instance, Andreas, 1977; McGee Deutsch, 1991; Pemjean, 2011). Illanes (2005, p. 127) notes how state professionals, students and religious agents turned to the poblaciones to directly work with their inhabitants towards those aims, thus developing a new concept of political involvement between the middle classes and organised pobladores. Being in charge of reproductive labour, these policies were

mainly implemented through the cooperation of pobladora women, keen to improve the wellbeing of their families. They were visited in their dwellings by professionals coming to see in-situ if there was any source of infection or bad practices that could promote the spread of diseases. Some women were trained in child nutrition, hygiene, prevention of alcoholism and sexual and reproductive health, and were expected to mentor their peers, thus helping to lower the need for medical assistance (Illanes, 2005; Pemjean, 2011, p. 112). Achieving a dignified life was thus also pursued through the transformation of reproductive practices of everyday life.

In the Campamento Nueva Habana in Santiago – the origin of the neighbourhood in which this research was carried out – the activities of community organisations and the regulation of pobladores’ behaviours were particularly intense. It was the most emblematic campamento led by MIR, the most radical group of the period. The MIR’s campamentos established a new relation between the housing struggle and the takeover of power (Castells, 1973), which was synthetised in the slogan “from the seizure of land to the seizure of power”. Organised around the notion of *poder popular* (people’s power) (Neghme & Leiva, 2000), a particular organisation of justice regulated neighbours’ accomplishments based on a local code of conduct (Fiori, 1973). Regulation of the private practice of social reproduction through daily cleaning checks, or the project of a community laundry and kitchen are of particular interest to this thesis, since they blurred the boundaries between the ‘public’ and ‘private’ spheres as they had developed historically. Both the particular history of Nueva Habana and the present of Nuevo Amanecer (as the poblacion was called after the putsch in 1973) -located in a borough of Santiago de Chile whose social composition is representative of the neoliberal transformations of the last 30 years- are the two main reasons that led me to choose this neighbourhood for carrying out this research.

In the campamentos and poblaciones, the women were to some extent less confined to the domestic space. The concrete housing conditions forced them to carry out many of their gendered familiar duties, such as fetching water, in the public space. It has been argued that the presence of women in the pobladores movement was greater (Garcés, 2002b; Murphy, 2015, p. 92) than in other movements of the popular classes, arguably because social reproduction was at the centre of pobladores’ politics. At the same time, the construction of the poblaciones mostly developed in a period of social and cultural transformations that destabilised orthodox ideals of the industrial

modern family. This process was signalled by the achievement of the women's vote in 1949 and the creation in 1962 of mothers' centres by the Christian Democrats' presidential campaign, organisations that were continued and expanded during the UP (Valdés et al., 1989). Mothers' centres aimed to mobilise popular women and encourage feminine civic participation, which was thought to "improve family and community wellbeing and deepen democracy", thus conceived as a first step into citizenship (Tinsman, 2002, p. 230). In practical terms, they provided women from the popular classes with skills that would help them in their domestic duties and craft skills that could help them to obtain extra income for their households.

During the UP, some pobladora women participated at the local level through mothers' centres and neighbourhood committees. Mothers' centres usually mediated the implementation of the above-described health policies (Illanes, 2005) and set up local Supply and Prices Committees (*Juntas de Abastecimientos y Precios*, JAP) (Valdés et al., 1989), institutions created by Allende's government to tackle the producers' boycott aimed at destabilising it. Other pobladora women, especially those who took part in mothers' centres that remained loyal to the Christian Democrats, a party located in opposition to the UP, took part in the opposition campaign, especially motivated by the effects of political polarisation in the daily reproduction of their households. Unlike middle- and upper-class women, women from the popular classes did not have the economic resources to get goods on the black market. Thus, a small but qualitatively significant number of women from the popular classes joined the 'march of empty pots and pans' that blamed the government for the food shortage and claimed they were prevented from accomplishing their duties as mothers (Baldez, 2002; Crummett, 1977; Mattelart, 1980; Power, 2002). The subject position of mothers and wives was thus politicised by both the Right and the Left.

During the dictatorship that followed the putsch that defeated Allende, in a very different economic and political context, other types of organisations emerged in the poblaciones to assure the reproduction of households threatened by extreme poverty. The organisations founded in the previous period had been disarticulated, some leaders persecuted, imprisoned or killed while others escaped. Beside increasing levels of repression, curfews and human rights violations, life in poblaciones and campamentos was marked by rising levels of poverty, a consequence of the economic restructuring through deindustrialisation that started in 1974 (Schkolnik &

Teitelboim, 1988, p. 21). Unemployment rose to 20 and 30 percent in the 1970s and 1980 respectively (Ibid.), reaching 80 percent in some poblaciones (Fisher, 1993, p. 27). Poverty encouraged pobladoras to organise, this time less focused on producing their urban space than on ensuring social reproduction via production for direct consumption, or via income-generating activities. Under the umbrella of the Catholic Church and NGOs, a diversity of organisations – production workshops, jobs listings, community soup kitchens or *ollas comunes*, health and cultural organisations – slowly spread in the poblaciones (see, for instance, Alvarez, 2014; Razeto, Klenner, Ramirez, & Urmeneta, 1990; Valdés, 1987b). It is calculated that 80 percent of the members of these organisations were women (Clarissa Hardy, cited in Baldez, 2002, p. 137). The way in which participation in these organisations produced certain forms of subjectivity, is reviewed in chapter five.

## **Bringing together Social Reproduction Theory and moral readings of class**

### **Social reproduction as the production of a subject**

According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of immediate life. This, again, is of a twofold character: on the one side, the production of the means of existence, of food, clothing, and shelter and the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. (Engels, 1972, p. 71)

As described by Engels (1972) in the above, endlessly reproduced quotation, social reproduction refers to the “production of human beings themselves”: eating, sleeping, cooking, giving birth, caring; but reading or going to school are also activities associated with the daily and generational maintenance of people’s lives. They produce human beings in their physiological, social and cultural dimensions. The ‘labours of love’ carried out by women are understood here as labours oriented to the maintenance of people’s lives, in relation to concrete modes of capitalist production. In this section I outline the significant elements of Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) that highlight the socially and culturally shaped nature of this process and make it a site of (class) struggle. As such, I aim to provide some theoretical keys

to how, in ethnography, this approach works together with a symbolic/moral approach to class.

In capitalist societies, the great majorities are dispossessed from the means of production, forcing them to sell their labour power in exchange for a wage through which they can purchase their means of existence such as food, shelter or books. Social reproduction is here central: it is the need of accessing the means of subsistence for the (re)production of themselves that drives people to engage in wage work in a capitalist context (Battacharya, 2015). As a consequence, the capitalist “may safely leave this to the worker’s drives for self-preservation and propagation” (Marx, 1976, p. 718). Social reproduction often<sup>7</sup> take place “beyond direct capitalist purview”. As the Domestic Labour Debate (for a review see Kaluzynska, 1980; Molyneux, 1985; Vogel, 2000) argued, women’s reproductive labour in the household reproduces labour power and thus, is central to capitalist accumulation. This is why the process has been subject to control and regulation by capitalist forces, as shown in chapter 4. More contemporary approaches have emphasised how social reproductions also takes place in public, private or community institutions – such as hospitals or schools – and is carried out in both waged and unwaged ways, usually by feminised and racialised bodies (Ferguson et al., 2016, p. 30). In this thesis, I approach the ways in which pobladora women have navigated between the domestic space and the ‘public’ space of the población to assure the reproduction of their families and communities.

Social reproduction is understood as a site of class struggle and formation. As Ferguson and MacNally (2015 n.p.) highlight, labour power is “essential to, but also a drag on, accumulation (because capital pays indirectly for this through wages, benefits, and taxes)”. Contemporary Marxists (see, for instance, Battacharya, 2015; Federici, 2012; Lebowitz, 2003; Macherey, 2005) have emphasised that capitalists seek not only to increase the amount of surplus value in absolute terms – though expanding labour time or cutting off wages – but also in relative terms via increasing the productivity of wage labour and/or reducing the cost of living. As a consequence, struggles take place around the definition of which needs should be “rendered necessary by habit and custom” or, in other words, be deemed as *necessary needs* (Lebowitz, 2003, p. 40). The definition of such needs is crucial as they “underlie the concept of value of labour power” (ibid.) that define not only the margin of capitalist

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<sup>7</sup> I use the word often, though it might not be the case, for instance, when the system relies on slavery.

profits. Such needs also shape the “moral element” of the value of labour power, which emerges from the socially legitimated minimum for its reproduction in concrete historical and geographical location (Marx, 1976, p. 275). The struggles for housing and adequate neighbourhoods of the pobladores are here therefore understood as class struggles waged in the realm of social reproduction (see, also Baño, 1985; Castells, 1973; Pastrana & Threlfall, 1974), embedded in a wider symbolic and moral system that were attendant to such subjectivities.

My approach underscores the very social dimensions of the process of social reproduction. Use-values through which a need is satisfied are not intrinsic to the good or services provided but inherently social: it is the consumer who sees use-value in them. As Bolívar Echeverría (1998) points out, while in the first instance we aim to assure our biological existence, the way in which those needs are satisfied are always culturally defined in a concrete society. In his words, “[I]n using that thing and not another that could have been in its place, the subject not only satisfies his/her general – animal – need for that kind of thing, but his/her need for the form of that concrete thing” (p. 170, my translation). Thus, the concrete ways in which the physiological need of eating is satisfied are telling of a particular ‘sociality’: pigs, lambs and cows would have eatable use-value depending, for instance, on the religion of the potential consumer. From a materialist point of view then, the process of social reproduction is intricately related to that of production: the production of combs would only make sense in a society that values combed hair. Use-values are also relational as they are considered as such by their comparison to the use-values through which others satisfy their needs. As Lebowitz (2003) notes, the same good might not equally satisfy differently positioned people and, for instance, a house might be deemed big or small depending on the size and quality of the houses that surround it and the position and expectations created around it. In other words, “our desires and pleasures spring from society; we measure them, therefore by society and not by the objects which serve for their satisfaction. Because they are of social nature, they are of relative nature” (Marx, 1849, p. 149 cit. in Lebowitz, 2003, p. 37). As such, our specific needs and the ways in which we satisfy them, is telling of our positioning.

Furthermore, and central to exploring practices, social reproduction as investment in positions are, from a materialist point of view, understood as labour or, in other words, as activities oriented by an idea of its product (Marx, 1976, pp. 283–293). Social



reproduction is, as Lebowitz notes, 'purposeful activity', a labour oriented to a concrete goal, being

(...) the worker's conception of self – as determined within society. It is this that 'creates the ideal, internally impelling cause for production'; it is this which '*ideally posits* the object of production as an internal image, as a need, as drive and as purpose' (Marx, 1973: 91-2). That preconceived goal of production [of herself] is what Marx described as 'the worker's own need for development' (Marx, 1977: 772). (Lebowitz, 2003, p. 69)

Attention to the ideas that guide the labours of reproduction are central. Such ideas, it will be shown, are historically produced in relation to (although not reduced to) concrete forms of capitalist development and processes of classed (and gendered) formation. The category of the housewife and its attendant subjectivity is indeed the result of such processes. Through attention to practices, such an idea of the self is explored.

In this line, my ethnography examines pobladora women's experiences of social reproduction and the value they entail for the reproduction of their own lives and that of their families, in which an idea of themselves is at stake. In this perspective, I only focus on practices of social reproduction carried out by the women for themselves, their family and community, where they "dominate the conditions and results of their labour, and their labour is not distinct from selves but is indeed activity for self, activity 'in his own interest'" (Lebowitz, 2003, p. 69), excluding from the analysis the reproductive labour that some of the women of this research might carry out in exchange for a wage. The notion of interest, however, assumes the existence of an autonomous individual which – as discussed in depth in the following chapter – does not represent pobladora women's subjectivity, especially since motherhood and housewifery is defined by attention to others, whether the children or partners. Throughout this thesis, I show how attention to the values that shape practices and the value or importance that such practices entail in a 'wider totality' in which they make sense (Graeber, 2002), seems more appropriated to explore classed and gendered subjectivities.

While Feminist Marxist tradition seems not much concerned with subjectivity, my thesis advances an understanding of these process and the ways in which reproductive labour is experienced, in terms of the subjectivities they involve. In the

Domestic Labour Debate developed in the 1970s, that explored the relationship between the position of the housewife and capitalist accumulation was only reflected Dalla Costa and James (1973), perhaps because they were less interested in providing a 'proper' Marxist understanding of domestic labour. The housewife, they argued, not only produces use-values to be consumed but also produces disciplined children and husband as docile labour power. In other words, they produced what Macherey (2005) calls the 'productive subject', adequate to the needs of capital. While such relation between capitalist development is here central to understand processes of class formation, my ethnography does not aim to explore the mechanism by which such labour allows capitalist valorisation. Instead, it further explores the value, the importance that specific ways of carrying out this labour entails for the women's lives as classed and gendered subjects.

It is this more encompassing understanding that I have preferred in the framework of social reproduction over the concept of 'care'. Such a concept is currently widespread in both the global north and Latin America, as Perez Orozco (2014) argues as an attempt "to capture the cutting across sites of feminine practice" (p.165). While care attends to the activities that 'sustain life' carried out in order to satisfy perceived needs, such a framework overlooks its centrality in the reproduction of labour power and thus, of the ways in which is linked to concrete forms of capitalism. Finally, since I am interested in pobladora women's experiences, I refused to categorise a priori different activities of social reproduction. Regardless of the theoretical framework used for explaining women's labour - whether social reproduction, care or domestic labour - scholarship commonly separates women's activities into different categories. Just to give some examples, Bakker (2007) differentiates between the 'reproduction of the species', 'reproduction of labour power' and 'the reproduction and provisioning of caring needs' (p. 541). Discussing the distribution of care labour in Bolivia and Ecuador, Flavia Marco Navarro (2010) conceives housework as functional for fulfilling more important caring needs (p. 161), defining categories for these different labours that are similar to those employed in surveys of time usage (see Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, INE, 2015a). While I do not explore women's decisions regarding biological reproduction - i.e., pregnancies and birth - I argue that it is not possible to differentiate a priori between care labour and housework. Can childcare be disentangled from activities such as feeding (which implies managing, shopping, cooking, washing dishes) (De Vault, 1991) or ensuring

a hygienic environment for healthy growth? Is childcare an activity that can be differentiated in itself? In their study of motherhood, Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) noted that this was not the case in women's experience. For instance, they noted that children's education takes place while mothers carry out various everyday life activities. Like these authors, I also privileged an emic or insider perspective.

### **Re-framing class through social reproduction, gender and morality**

For decades, those who lacked adequate housing and its resultant struggles were not recognised in class terms. In the fifties, ECLAC had coined the concept 'urban marginality', for the shantytowns and informal settlements in Latin American cities which lacked of urban services that, by then, were expanding the limits of cities (Cuéllar Saavedra, 2013; Gutierrez, 2007). By the end of the sixties, the Centre of Social Development for Latin America (DESAL - its acronym in Spanish) consolidated the concept of marginality to understand those who, they believed, did not belong to working-class then, symbolically reduced to the industrial proletariat. While shantytowns grew in a context of increasing internal migrations and massive housing shortages, it was however too quickly assumed that their inhabitants had directly arrived from the countryside and embodied a traditional peasant subjectivity that made them passive in the solution to their own problems (Cofré, 2007b; Cortés, 2014; Pastrana & Threlfall, 1974). Inheriting long historical legacies, this theory stated that these groups participate neither in the institutions of organised society - they were part of informal economies with no access to welfare - nor in the culture of established society (Vekemans, 1966). In other words, they were understood as 'traditional', backwards, 'the marginal ones' to the overall project of Latin American modernity.

By the 1970s, in a context in which popular movements - proletarians, pobladores and peasants - increased and strengthened, such ideas started to be contested. Those structural approaches that understood class as the outcome of "processes of formation and interaction between different social groups and/or classes and, for specific perspectives, in relation to the style of capitalist development that each conglomerate achieves in concrete historical processes" (Ruiz Encina & Boccardo, 2014, p. 42, my translation) claimed pobladores as belonging to the working class. Not only most of them they hav working-class jobs but struggles for housing were also considered as class struggles waged in the site of social reproduction - or

consumption (Castells, 1973; Pastrana & Threlfall, 1974; see, also Baño, 1985). These studies, however, were more interested in the particularities of the pobladores as a social movement than in further exploring the intricacies of locating social reproduction as the site of class formation, while studies of social reproduction in the following period, forgot the struggling dimensions of class and reduced it to certain material conditions (see chapter 2).

Given the position of mothers and wives, structural approaches to class left women at the peripheries of the analysis. Concerned by the ability of the centre-left to attract the votes of the women from the popular classes, Pastrana and Threlfall (1974, n.p) noted: “[F]ew studies explicitly analyse the presence of pobladora women who, in their majority, do not form part of the workforce, and even less in the *productive* sectors of the economy (almost half of the working women who work are domestic workers)” (my translation, italics added) that resulted in housewives and working women being categorised as sub-proletarians<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, in such a perspective, attention to class consciousness was central as they enabled the transit from a ‘class in itself’ to ‘class for itself’ and the collective action in which different classes engaged (for a discussion, see, Savage, 2000). Indeed, some studies tend to incorporate attention to the levels of consciousness among the pobladores. This perspective was also problematic when applied to women. As I show in this thesis, women’s participation in collective actions was often undertaken through their position as mothers and housewives (For some examples of this debate see Baldez, 2002; Chant & Craske, 2002; Tinsman, 2002)..

In order to bring women to the centre of analysis, my approach to class is constructed from social reproduction. It inherits the historical and political tradition of Latin American studies by its attention to class formations. Class formation is however analysed not from the labour structure but as a result of process of regulation and struggles at the site of social reproduction. As I demonstrate in chapter four, the traditional modern family – the housewife and the male breadwinner – were absolutely central in the process of class formation and thus, gender should not be understood as a separated variable, but co-constitutive of processes formation of class. Furthermore, and precisely as a consequence of this process, an approach to

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<sup>8</sup> At this point, it seems there were no debates in terms of how to categorise the class position of housewife. For a discussion in the global north, see Crompton (1989) and Hammond (1987).

class with women at the centre should not reduce struggle to collective action. Instead, by underscoring how the daily labours of social reproduction produce a subject according to social and cultural expectations in relational terms, my approach to class aims to incorporate the material and symbolic struggles that take place in everyday life.

The perspective developed by the so called 'cultural approaches' to class is helpful in this exploration precisely because they emerged as a response to the decline of class-based struggles and consciousness in the post-fordist societies of the global north. They also aimed to counteract the claims of some theorists who argued that class had become a 'zombie category' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), seemingly irrelevant to understand subjectivities, identities and contemporary class struggles that were understood as 'new social movements'. Despite some theoretical differences between them, cultural approaches "inflate 'class' to include social and cultural formations" and made a reconfiguration of the causal model of consciousness and collective action, to an understanding of class not as distinct or cohesive class identities sought by traditional class analysis but instead on individualized processes of social differentiation (Bottero pp. 986–87). As such, this scholarship is interested in how class is 'lived'; understood, experienced and made through everyday life practices. If the historical formations of class and gender gave the women the position as being responsible for the daily and generational maintenance of their families, such approach provides interesting insights to further explore how class is made in the everyday life.

In an attempt at differentiating themselves from gradational approaches, cultural approaches have claimed to be relational. Yet, their understanding of relational is less focused on the 'objective' relations<sup>9</sup> between classes as in Marxist or Weberian approaches (for a discussion, see, Crompton, 2008; Savage, 2000), but instead, on how class identities and subjectivities are formed in relation to others. Interested in exploring how class is lived, the word relational often refers to how recognition and positioning as classed subjects is made in relation – by comparison – to others similarly or differently positioned. As Savage notes, "identity involves a relational comparison with members of various social classes" (Savage, 2000, p. XIII), hence is

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<sup>9</sup> Authors have claimed that class relations are reproduced by processes of exclusion created by unequal capitals (Reay, 2006; see, for instance, Skeggs, 2004)

contextual and situated: how one classifies oneself/others is telling of one's classed (and gendered) position. This position, as will be shown, is central in defining the ability of people to see or not use-value in certain goods and services. In this thesis, attention to this relational dimension of class allows seeing more clearly how multiple positions – for instance, gender, generation, living conditions, marital status, race, living space – nuance the experiences/understanding of class. This renders categorisation itself a site of struggle<sup>10</sup> and makes relevant the symbolic dimensions that underpin class not only in the ways it is experienced, but also, it will be argued, in processes of class formation.

Most cultural approaches to class draw on Bourdieu's (1986) notions of capital. Understood as accumulated labour materialised or embodied, capital can be social (i.e., quantity and quality of 'connections') and cultural (i.e., years of formal education, type of cultural consumption and taste). When legitimized, capitals ultimately become symbolic, or the 'right' forms of capital in concrete fields. In this perspective, it is understood that inequalities are reproduced because those embodying symbolic capital move in social space as if 'knowing' the rules of the game in different fields, making them able to transform their capital into economic capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). As in the UK, in Chile studies of the notion of capital have been used to explore processes of social differentiation among the middle and upper classes (see, for instance, Aguilar, 2009; Gayo, Teitelboim, & Méndez, 2013). Such an approach, however, seems limited for exploring how class is made through social reproduction among pobladora women. As seen in chapter two, the concrete ways in which social reproduction is carried out is shaped but not determined by class position, as the characteristics of households and gender discourses seem to play a major role. Hence, it would not be possible, for instance, to assume similar cleaning practices or standards among pobladora women as an expression of taste or habitus. Secondly, through the lenses of the accumulation of capital, the popular classes seem here as lacking. Researchers such as Loveday (2011), Skeggs (2004) or Lawler(2000) have argued that it is mainly the middle-classes who are able to navigate and accrue value through the accumulation of capitals, because their resources are legitimated, in ways that are less available for the working classes.

While the concept of capital, symbolic or otherwise, can explain some dimensions of pobladora women's experiences, morality seems more suitable for grasping the ways in which class is experienced and *made* through practices of social reproduction. As Skeggs

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<sup>10</sup> Authors like Bottero (2004) and Bradley (2014) have claimed that an important part of this literature is not relational but gradational, as it creates hierarchies based on the accumulation of capitals and arbitrary cuts in social hierarchies that erase the struggling dimensions of class.

(2010) argues, morality is one of the main forms by which class becomes intelligible for the subject as “it is in the attribution of morality that the link is made to ‘living class’ and possibilities for identification” (p. 342). This is especially relevant for pobladora women whose position made them less likely to identify in class terms in the language of the Left.

I explore the relation between class and morality in two different levels. As Lamont (1994, 2000) has argued, people produce moral boundaries – a claim to comply to a specific set of values, to differentiate and/or identify themselves with concrete class positions. Those who share similar class positions, research has found, not only tend to hold similar values but also ascribe other values to differently positioned people (Lamont, 1994, 2000; Mella, 2013; Skeggs, 1997). Following this route does not mean I understand class position as the sharing of a particular culture or ‘moral project’ (Back, 2009; Graeber, 2002) – as constructed by the notions of ‘culture of poverty’<sup>11</sup> or the theory of ‘marginality’ in Latin American literature – but to focus attention on how a specific set of values might have become useful in concrete material conditions and/or have been historically consolidated as a means of social differentiation. Class is also seen in relation to measures of moral worth. As Skeggs (2004) argues, while some people embody the ‘right’ kind of capitals through which distinction operates by default others do not. Thus, examining the perspective of those who have the ‘wrong’ types of capital, she states that

(...) the process [of misrecognition of power] also occurs in reverse. That is, at the opposite end of the social scale subjects are also misrecognized as having ascribed and essential characteristics. They do not have to achieve immorality or criminality; they have been positioned and fixed by these values. (p. 4)

In this perspective, for those who embody the ‘wrong’ kind of capitals, morality becomes a resource to assert their moral worth. Here, it might be useful to remember how, at the beginning of this chapter, Señora Fabiola connected reproductive labour with the act of endowing herself and her family with value. Indeed, as Skeggs and Wood (2012) note, “[M]orality may operate as a form of cultural capital if it can be traded to gain a realizable capital value” (p. 215), as is the case of some working-class

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<sup>11</sup> The idea that people who live in poverty share a differentiated subculture, with different values from those hegemonic in capitalist societies was proposed by the US anthropologist, Oscar Lewis (1966a, 1996b), This perspective is reviewed in the following chapter.

celebrities in the reality television they describe. While I am not interested in how morality become 'realizable capital value', in this research I further explore the ways through which notions of moral worth are experienced in class terms and asserted in wider processes of class formation.

In such an exploration, the *población*, the space of habitation of the popular classes, and its contested meanings become a focal point to understand not only processes of class and gender formations but also of class positionings. Struggles for housing, it will be seen, had been framed in contestation of historical legacies that positioned the *pobladores* as immoral or simply 'marginal'. Being social reproduction oriented by an ideal of the subject that is produced through this labour, the understanding of this realm in the production of classed and gendered subjects should not be reduced to collective actions and processes of class formations. Rather, a theorisation of class with social reproduction and gender at its centre, which is able to grasp the complexity of class among the *pobladores*, should also include the relational ways in which class and gender subjects are produced in everyday life and the practices that allow *pobladora* women to resist/challenge/embody/commit to certain classed and gendered categories.

## **Looking forward**

### *Chapter two: Literature review*

The following chapter discusses the three different bodies of literature upon which I draw and to which I attempt to contribute. Firstly, I show how women's labours towards the reproduction of the family have been thought by Latin American mainstream feminism primarily as a burden. I show why this conceptualisation cannot fully explain the subjectivity of *pobladora* women and argue for the need to attend to concrete historical processes in which the organisation of this labour produced classed and gendered subjectivities. Secondly, I engage with Latin American literature on the strategies of reproduction deployed by households of the popular classes. I stress the importance of understanding social reproduction as a process grounded in concrete material conditions, shaped by cultural norms, related to the life cycle of the household and the result of negotiation within the household, dimensions that were central in the process of analysis. Finally, I attend to recent research on the moral dimensions of class in Chile, highlighting the relevance of the concept of 'decency' in providing grounds on which the popular classes can claim



value for themselves and propose to further advance on these representations are negotiated in everyday life

#### *Chapter three: Methodological considerations*

After reviewing the literature, I provide an in-depth account of the methodological underpinnings of the research, including its aims and research questions. I describe and justify the methods deployed in the fieldwork and the approach taken for analysing data. This chapter also describes the main social, urban and historical characteristics of the setting in which this research was carried out: the Población Nuevo Amanecer. It provides an explicit reflection on the grounds by which the research claims to be feminist and reflects on questions of power relations, reflexivity, representation, positionality and ethics. This reflection is framed by differentiating two stages of the research: fieldwork and writing. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the political implications of this research.

#### *Chapter four: Configurations of class, gender and urban space in the context of Chilean modernisation*

This chapter explores the process of 20<sup>th</sup>-century modernisation in Chile, to set a wider context for understanding the ways in which pobladores have been symbolically positioned in class and gender categories, and to examine how these processes have been inscribed onto the urban space. I show how housing differences are understood in the contemporary context of the población and attempt to reveal the historical legacies these categories have inherited. I demonstrate how a specific idea of home - underpinned by notions of property, adequate housing and the modern industrial family - was central in the process of 'modernisation' of popular subjectivities. I briefly provide some evidence on how this model of home and family was encouraged by state and capitalist, and how it served to produce and reinforce a process of differentiation within the popular classes throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I argue that, by claiming property through propriety, for pobladores their struggles for housing became a route to proletarianisation.

*Chapter five: Organisations and participation around the reproduction of a dignified and revolutionary life*

In this chapter I explore the ways in which community organisations and different modes of participating in them, at different historical periods, unsettled the hegemonic notions of classed respectability and women's domesticity. I examine the classed and gendered subjects that were produced – or aimed to be produced – through these organisations. I do this by navigating through the various ways in which organisations served the reproduction of different dimensions of pobladores' lives and how they related to the domestic space, emphasising how women experienced their participation in them. In particular, this chapter focuses on the period of Nueva Habana, in which the women experienced their position in the domestic and community space with ambivalence, given the different gendered and classed discourses more widely available at the time. I also explore women's participation in the community organisations that emerged to face poverty during the dictatorship.

*Chapter six: Uncomfortable stains. Negotiating cleaning practices in everyday life*

In chapter six, I explore how the categories of clean/dirty are used by pobladora women to position themselves and others in classed and gendered terms and examine actual cleaning practices they carry out in their domestic spaces. Thus, I reflect on the ways in which discourses and practices produce subjectivity and create grounds on which pobladora women can claim self-worth. I provide wide ethnographic evidence to argue that, pobladora women being symbolically positioned by hegemonic symbolic system of class as 'dirty', cleanliness is a category through which they produce themselves as subjects of value, as dignified and respectable. I show how, while the categories of clean/dirty are spoken of as if producing rigid moral boundaries, the endless nature of cleaning labour and multiple demands of everyday life force the women to negotiate standards to do other activities, or to realise other values they consider equally or more important. I emphasise, however, how this negotiation is shaped in terms of its exposure to the gaze of judgemental others beyond their intimate networks.

*Chapter seven: Provisioning practices and social differentiation in Nuevo Amanecer*

In chapter seven, I explore pobladora women's practices of provisioning, as conceptualised by Susana Narotzky (2005). I show how pobladora women navigate between intimate networks and the market as two different modes of provisioning they rely upon. I ethnographically describe the classed meanings given to goods and services, and the channels of distribution through which they are available: the open market, the supermarket and the shopping mall. I argue that the material and symbolic dimensions of class shape these practices and how they are experienced as well as the meanings given to different types of goods and channels of provision. I conclude that, through investing time and labour, women aim to provide their families with the widest possible availability of goods to enhance their possibilities to produce themselves in ways they believe to be desirable.

*Chapter eight: Crafting time and space for themselves*

In this chapter I move away from 'traditional' activities of social reproduction and turn to women's participation in handicraft workshops, which, although not related to the material reproduction of the household, are a central site in which women produce their subjectivities beyond their positions as mothers and homemakers. I unravel what pobladora women's participation in handicraft workshops, the making of handicrafts as a process and artefact *do* in their lives, and the needs to which they respond. I provide ethnographic evidence to argue that the values that are attached to the workshops are drawn in sharp contrast to the domestic space, as a space for sharing and conviviality. I also show how the women value handicraft as part of social and cultural expectations of the aestheticisation of both homes and appearance. I argue that handicraft artefacts also allow the women to express love and care in ways that invisible domestic labour cannot, creating other grounds on which pobladora women can endow themselves with other types of value.

*Conclusion*

This concluding chapter argues that through the gendered labours of reproduction carried out by pobladora women and community organisations at different historical periods, such women have waged material and symbolic struggles to produce themselves as dignified, respectable and worthy subjects. Through unravelling such

an argument, the chapter discusses the contributions of this thesis to debates in Social Reproduction Theory, class and gender. It argues for the relevance of subjectivity in the gendered organisation of social production/reproduction, processes of class formation and modes of capitalist development. Bringing back ethnographic material, it discusses the ways in which attention to morality helps to undermine the theoretical boundaries between what Bottero (2004) has identified as collective/public/material vs. individual/private/cultural approaches to class. Finally, it discusses the reasons why class makes a difference in the ways in which women approach the labours of reproduction and the ways in which they produce their subjectivity. I conclude by signalling the dimensions that could not be covered in this research and present interesting pathways for future research.

In sum, this research is an ethnographic exploration of the production of classed and gendered subjectivities through community organisations and, especially, through the reproductive labour carried out by pobladora women in their positions as mothers, wives and homemakers. I approach this question through a Marxist definition of social reproduction and an understanding of class that underscores its symbolic and moral dimensions. In the following chapter, I discuss the main bodies of literature in which I draw upon and contribute to.

## Chapter two

### Literature Review

In this chapter I discuss three different bodies of literature which I draw upon and to which I attempt to contribute to in this thesis. Firstly, I show how women's labour of reproduction, and specifically domestic labour, has been thought by Latin American feminism as a burden. I claim there is a need to change the analysis to understand popular women's subjectivity in this regard. Secondly, I engage with literature on strategies of reproduction which analyses how households in the popular sectors manage to reproduce themselves as a unit. From this literature, I highlight important conclusions that shape my work, especially my methodology. Finally, I turn to recent research on how social difference is represented through values and morality in Chile and argue for the need to go beyond representation and attend to practices.

#### **Women's subjectivity and labours of reproduction in Latin American scholarship**

In this section, I engage with different bodies of literature on gender in which the relationship between reproductive labour and women's subjective constitution has been reflected upon. To my knowledge, in Latin America, this task has been mainly undertaken by mainstream trends of feminist thought, labelled here as 'modern' feminist scholarship, which is the focus of this review. By modern feminism, I refer to the trend of thought epistemologically grounded in Western ideas of progress and women's liberation, which tends to overlook women's differences in favour of a "unity in oppression" (Espinoza, 2016, p. 145). In Latin America, this trend of feminism is mainstream in academia and NGOs work, and is funded by international bodies which, since the 1990s, act to advise policy makers on issues of gender (Gargallo, 2006). In the last decades, Latin America has seen a flourishing of other trends that question the epistemological and political basis of Western feminism, such as indigenous and communitarian feminism (See Paredes, 2008) or the broader trend of de-colonial feminism<sup>12</sup>. I share with the latter an unease about modern

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<sup>12</sup> De-colonial feminism attempts to bring together an intersectional approach to multiple oppressions with the project of decolonisation of knowledge, putting the articulated history of gender, sexuality, race and class at the centre of their reflection (see, for instance, Espinoza Miñoso, 2016; Gargallo, 2006; Lugones, 2008). Given their centrality to the project of de-

feminists' idea of progress, especially because of the limitations of the concept of the individual in which they ground their analysis, for understanding the subjectivity from women of the popular classes as I develop below. Nevertheless, it is this modern trend of feminism that has most explored, theorised and quantified women's reproductive labour in the household and the social organisation of care, reflecting, in more or less depth, their relationship with the production of women's subjectivity. In particular, I touch upon studies of time usage, care labour and women's incorporation into the workforce in the region, with especial emphasis on the Chilean situation. I highlight the important contributions of this scholarship and argue that the focus on a prospective future – on how things should be – has foreclosed further examination of how this labour is productive of subjects and subjectivities.

In the last decade, the unequal distribution of reproductive labour has been studied in research on time usage by quantifying and comparing the number of hours that men and women spend in wage labour, domestic and care labour<sup>13</sup> and leisure. In Chile, the National Survey of Time Use, carried out in 2015 by the Chilean National Statistics Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas*), showed that women spend more than double the hours in unwaged labour per day as do men – 5.8 against 2.74 hours per day (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas INE, 2015a). This differential slightly diminishes when moving up the social classes, and middle- and upper-class women show a more equal distribution of this labour (Silva, 2010, p. 86). Participation in wage labour makes no significant difference to the time women spend in social reproduction. There is little variation in time usage between employed and unemployed women – 3.73 against 4.36 hours, respectively – and the time is always greater than the time spent by men in these activities, regardless of their employment status (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas INE, 2015a, p. 39). Furthermore, women have greater flexibility for reorganising their time according to variations of family context and wage labour arrangements (Soto, 2015, p. 84), showing that women maintain the main responsibility over this labour, especially when it comes to care labour. Similar to what happens in other parts of the globe (Matxalen, 2008;

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construction of colonial knowledge, race and mestizaje have been strongly researched, leaving unattended, however, a reflexion on the position of 'housewife'. For this reason, this body of literature is not reviewed in-depth here.

<sup>13</sup> Unlike in this research, the time usage research reviewed here differentiates domestic and care labour as two different measures.

Rodríguez Henríquez, n.d.), in Chile the unequal distribution of unwaged labour persists, and such practices continue to be carried out by women.

More attention has been given to reproductive labour by the increasing body of literature on care labour, as part of a global trend (see, for instance, the *International Journal of Care and Caring*). In Latin America especially, this has been fuelled by the work of feminist economists who aim to reform the economy to put care at its centre (see, for instance, Benería, 1999; Carrasco Bengoa, 2013; Pérez Orozco, 2006). Care, as a concept that acknowledges the activities that 'sustain life', is conceived as a basic human need which is however required at different intensities over a person's life (Pérez Orozco, 2006, pp. 165–168). In the region, one of the main concerns of these scholars has been to understand how the provision of care is organised through the interaction between state institutions – public policies, laws, notions of citizenship – the sociodemographic characteristics of a particular society, the labour arrangements within families, and migration (see the compilation edited by Montaña & Calderón, 2010), (Todaro & Arriagada, 2012) among other dimensions. In general, they have claimed the existence of a crisis of care, as a consequence of women's greater participation in the labour force, the increase in life expectancy, the lack of public funding for care, migration and the formation of 'global chains of care' (Pérez Orozco, 2006; Todaro & Arriagada, 2012; Montaña, 2010; González Torralbo, 2016; Pautassi, 2010; Marco Navarro, 2010; Rodríguez Henríquez, n.d.; Durán, 2010; Esquivel, 2011). Thus, they have made visible the social relevance of care and have advocated for its recognition and the need to advance towards more equal and fairer distribution.

While this literature highlights the centrality of care, some of it also underscores the negative impact of this labour on other dimensions of women's lives, even seeing it as a 'bastion of women's inequality' (Pautassi, 2010, p. 86). Reproductive labour is usually conceived as a burden that prevents women from taking other positions in the 'public' sphere. This has indeed been the perspective adopted by the Integration of Women in the Social and Economic Development of Latin American and the Caribbean conferences, and their 'Regional Plan of Action'<sup>14</sup>. The main obstacles

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<sup>14</sup> This plan, agreed on the first conference in 1977 in La Habana, has been consecutively updated in accordance with the agreements of regional and global conferences, especially the UN's World Conferences on Women (CEPAL Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, n.d.)

identified in the sixth conference for speeding up the pace of 'women's integration' are

(...) the persistence of social roles assigned to women at the familial level, the lack of services to attend to basic social needs, the lack of recognition of motherhood and related practices in everyday life as a social responsibility, together with the predominant conception of the patriarchal family. It demands attention to *incorporating women into wage labour* and observes that both discrimination and the prevailing model of family relations obstruct this objective". (Montaño, 2010, p. 15 my translation, italics added)

In this perspective, women's personal, social and economic development is conceived as being constrained by their position within families and by the burden of labour for which they are responsible, the unwaged nature of this labour and its lack of social recognition. Interested in women's participation in the economy, modern feminist literature reads women's engagement in wage labour as an advance towards women's rights. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that wage labour is valued by working women, especially since it is conceived as a space of self-development (Mauro & Guzmán, 2004). However, to the extent that wage labour is assumed to be an advance, as a way of embodying more 'emancipated' forms of womanhood, those women dedicated exclusively to the labours of family reproduction in unwaged forms are conversely perceived as 'traditional' or backward.

This understanding of two opposed forms of womanhood is built upon the notion of an individual who is constrained by the burden of reproductive labour. According to Kathya Araujo (2009), the figure of the individual as self-determined, autonomous, responsible and subject of rights permeates the 'modern', mainstream Latin American feminism. The individual, she argues, operates simultaneously as a normative goal – that recognises women as citizens with rights and duties – and as a political tool that can be mobilised for social transformation. It is also conceptualised as a field of action, thus understanding social transformation as "the result of the work of the individual on herself" given its "auto-transformative capacity" (p. 142). In this sense, women's responsibility over reproductive labour is perceived as preventing this model of individuality. Like the scholarship on care labour or time



usage described above, I do believe a fairer distribution of this labour and state provision of care is necessary to achieve a more equal society. However, I argue the use of the notion of the individual as a working assumption is counterproductive in terms of exploring the ways in which reproductive labour is productive of certain forms of womanhood.

In Chile, the cultural model that associates women with reproductive labour and domesticity seems still to be overly influential. In the Latin American region, the country appears with the lowest figures of women's participation in the workforce<sup>15</sup>. Since, from the point of view of economists, this is counter to the steady economic growth and the increase of the years of education among the female population, a group of economists have attempted to explain what they call 'the Chilean exception'. They found that "perceptions of women's role in the domestic sphere and family care are central in explaining the Chilean exception, to a greater degree than traditional variables such as female education or age" (Contreras, Hurtado, & Sara, 2012, p. 14 my translation). In a qualitative study, Mauro and Guzmán (2004) arrived at similar conclusions. Most of the working women they interviewed "still ground an important part of their identities in motherhood and their performance as partners, wives and homemakers" (p. 342, my translation). Furthermore, they showed that once women become mothers, they perceive domestic duties as their responsibility, even if prior to giving birth they had a fairer distribution of this labour with their partners. This finding, they argue, "allows us to understand why many women remain outside or find themselves temporarily or permanently withdrawn from the labour force" (Ibid.). This shows that despite the fact that women value wage labour, they also value reproductive labour as part of the practices they seem to perceive as inherent to being a woman (see, also Jelin & Feijoó, 1980), and especially being a mother. This leads us to think that there is a valued feminine subject that is produced through the activities of social reproduction, that 'competes' with the position of the working mother. Thus, there is much to be explored to understand why and how reproductive practices are valuable for women in their position as mothers and wives, and what these practices bring to their subjectivities.

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<sup>15</sup> Datasets of the OECD, indicates that, in 2015, female participation in the workforce in Chile was of 48,2 percent, in comparison to the Latin American average of 55 percent (OECD Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2016).

Understanding reproductive labour through the notion of the individual becomes even more problematic when attending to the experience of women of the popular classes. Women's participation in the labour market increases with education (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas INE, 2015b), and those from the popular classes are more likely than members of the middle and upper classes to devote themselves to reproductive labour. Their lower level of education might have effects in the lack of participation of popular women in the labour force (for a similar discussion in the UK see Crompton, 2006). Yet, as Contreras et al. (2012) stress, cultural factors are more relevant in explaining this lack of participation than level of education. It can thus be assumed that these notions of womanhood are stronger among the popular classes and older generations, groups whose participation in the workforce is determined by family needs to a greater degree than among women of higher social class (Mauro & Guzmán, 2004; Valdés & Valdés, 2005). If the individual is perceived to reveal an "auto-transformative capacity" (Araujo, 2009, p. 142) by not participating in the workforce, women from the popular classes appear as less able to 'transform themselves' in order to embody what have been depicted as emancipated forms of womanhood.

Indeed, the decisions taken by women from the popular classes seem oriented by other scales of values and interests than that of the contemporary ideal of empowered, independent women. Research carried out more than thirty years ago showed that the search for partners and prospective families was the moment of 'maximum individuality' in a pobladora woman's life (Raczynski & Serrano, 1985). In a context in which popular young women always had domestic duties at their family homes and were subject to surveillance of their sexual behaviour, they expected partnership and motherhood to increase their status and provide spaces for autonomy (Raczynski & Serrano, 1985; Valdés, 1988). In contemporary times, teenage mothers in the popular classes still perceive maternity as an opportunity for a "change of status" and give "more significance and relevance to this role over others, such as that of young woman, partner or student" (Alvarez et al., 2005, p. 148). Among the lower classes, women prioritise "staying with the baby" for over a year after birth, even if this risks paid labour positions and relationships, in contrast to their middle-and upper-class counterparts, who come back to work by month six (Murray, 2015). They also receive significantly less 'help' from partners in domestic duties compared to women from higher social classes (Instituto Nacional de

Estadísticas INE, 2015a; Silva, 2010; Soto, 2015; Soto Hernández, 2013). Thus, the subjectivity of women from the popular classes has been, and seems to still be in present times, less related to employment or 'personal project' than grounded in their family as their own project (Soto Hernández, 2013, p. 97). The importance of reproductive labour for women of the popular classes, to the point that it 'prevents' an individual being developed, remains a dimension to be further explored.

As a particular form of rational, self-interested and reflexive self, Skeggs (2002, 2011) has argued, the individual is a classed formation that represents a form of personhood of the middle and upper classes. The inadequacy of the concept is even greater in a context in which it appears as imported, particularly to interpret the historical and cultural particularities of the Latin American region (for a de-colonial feminist critique see Espinoza Miñoso, 2016). As such, Araujo (2009) argues, this notion loses "the multiplicity of modes in which the individual can be produced or the subject can be configured" (p. 147), resulting in domination when it applied to a context in which it does not find the grounds of its realisation. If we want to understand the ways in which popular women experience social reproduction, it seems necessary to suspend for a moment the notion of the autonomous individual. This will allow us to stop focusing on what should be changed and instead start exploring *what* and *who* this labour actually produces, what class and gender subjects and subjectivities makes available.

A brief review of the reflections of some black feminists<sup>16</sup> might be useful to this endeavour. They demonstrated the centrality of concrete historical formations of class, gender, race and sexuality in the production of gendered subjectivities. Davis (1972, 1981), discussing black women in the US, stressed black women were never confined to the domestic space; there was an equal presence of men and women in productive work since slavery, being black women's subjectivity anchored in their work towards strengthening black communities. (Davis, 1981, p. 230). As Katsarova (2015) nicely summarises, "as wives and mothers, workers and breadwinners, notions of black womanhood often revolved around strength, resilience, and independence rather than femininity and subordination, the white middle-class norms of womanhood". As such, the concrete history of black communities made

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<sup>16</sup> Latin American de-colonial feminism has also been shaped by the perspectives of black feminism (see Espinoza Miñoso, 2016; Lugones, 2008).

available – and valued – forms of womanhood that were different from those of white women.

These ideas also show how women's oppression is not univocal but differently experienced, thus revealing the illusion of a feminism which makes universal claims of liberation. Hazel Carby (1997) expresses this clearly:

Three concepts central to feminist theory become problematic in their application to black women's lives: 'the family', 'patriarchy', and 'reproduction'. When used they are placed in a context of the herstory of white (frequently middle-class) women and become contradictory when applied to the lives and experiences of black women". (p. 112)

Through attending to the actual experience of black women, these scholars have been able to give other meanings to women's labour of reproduction and home, unsettling second-wave feminist understandings<sup>17</sup> (that mainstream Latin American feminism seems to reproduce). During slavery, Davis (1972) notes, "Domestic labor[sic] was the only meaningful labor for the slave community as a whole" (p. 32). Reproductive labour was thus experienced as a site of autonomy which allowed the slave to recover a little of her humanity in a context in which black people were considered as someone else's property. During the nineties, some black feminists revisited the role of black women within their communities and saw value in the care and support historically provided by black mothers. As such, they re-signified home as the backbone of a "meaningful community of resistance" (hooks, 1990, p. 47) or where a "political and cultural resistance to racism" was grounded (Carby, 1997, p. 112). This resignification was possible insofar as

[b]lack women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds

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<sup>17</sup> For instance, one of the central figures of Western feminist thought, Simone de Beauvoir (1956), interpreted women's concern with home and attention to domestic labour – that usually develops into obsession with cleanliness and neatness – as expressions of women's bitter search for a denied individuality. Similarly, Betty Friedan (1971) and Ann Oakley (1976) showed how housewives' experiences in industrialised countries were marked by boredom, dissatisfaction, neurosis and isolation. Fortunately, more positive approaches to homemaking have been more recently developed (see, for instance, Young, 1997), usually inspired by black feminists.

and hearts despite poverty, hardship, and deprivation, where we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world". (hooks, 1990, p. 42)

In a society where black bodies were read as value-less, they concluded that black women's reproductive labour served – at different historical periods – to make black people's lives meaningful and endow them with value.

While this research cannot claim to follow a black feminist approach, two lessons are drawn from this. Firstly, attention to the ways in which women differently positioned along the axes of 'race', class and sexuality have experienced productive and reproductive labour is central to explore how different forms of womanhood have been produced and valued. Secondly, the meanings of social reproduction and home cannot be detached from this formation, especially, given the differential value attached to different social positions. In this line, in chapter four I detail the process of formation of class, gender, and to a lesser degree of sexuality and 'race' in Chile, in order to provide a larger framework to understand the values attached to social reproduction by pobladora women.

## **The reproduction of popular households in Latin America**

The findings of the body of literature on 'strategies of reproduction' have been useful to shape this research, especially in terms of the methodology (see next chapter). Developed during the 1970s and especially during the 1980s, this field of research in Latin American social science studied how concrete material conditions shaped the social and biological reproduction of households of urban popular classes. This interest was part of a wider concern with the relation between population, the reproduction of labour power and society (de Oliveira & Salles, 1988). Of this literature, only the studies with a micro social perspective, which sought to understand "the reproduction of the individuals and their structural determinations" (Montaly and Patarra, 1992, quoted in de Oliveira & Salles, 1988, p. 625) are reviewed here. Usually through the concept of 'strategies' – of survival, reproduction, life or existence<sup>18</sup> – these studies highlighted social reproduction as a process which is not

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<sup>18</sup> Different names were debated for this notion of strategies, such as strategies of 'life' (Torrado, 1981), 'survival' (Duque & Pastrana, 1973) and 'existence' (Saenz & Dipaula, 1981),

determined but is instead conditioned by class position. In this section, I show how these findings have informed my own research and how attention to cultural and symbolic dimensions can contribute to a better understanding of the process of social reproduction among the popular classes.

As seen in the introduction, after almost three decades of state-led capitalism, an important part of the population remained excluded from social integration or, as it was understood by some, 'marginal'. The survival of urban popular groups that could not be integrated into a 'social citizenship' became to be a matter of concern in the social sciences. For an important part of the popular classes, their wages and labour stability were not enough to satisfy their basic needs (Palma, 1984). In this context, questions such as, How do those whose income is not enough to satisfy their basic needs survive? (Duque & Pastrana, 1973), or, How do marginal people survive? (Lomnitz, 2003), acquired especial relevance. As Palma (1984) notes, while in industrialised countries the concept of strategies was used to approach processes of adaptation of racialised migration in the city (see, for instance, Bennet Justus, 1978), in Latin America the concept served for a study of the whole range of economic and extra-economic activities that were central for the survival of the popular classes.

The concept of strategies allowed for a new understanding of the effects of class position in the process of reproduction, resulting in a shift from structuralist understandings of social reproduction. In what became a seminal article<sup>19</sup>, Duque and Pastrana (1973) applied the concept of strategies to urban popular households in Chile. In particular, they attended to the participation of family members in the workforce, other income generation activities, consumption levels and couples' reproductive behaviour (fertility rate). The lower figures of fertility among the families of industrial workers in comparison to those they understood as 'marginal' urban households led them to suggest it was appropriate to talk of "'objective

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among other terms, each of these authors discussing the scope and social classes in and to which they should be applied. For an overview of the debate, see (Gutierrez, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> These authors, however, did not create the concept. As Cuéllar Saavedra (2013) states, the concept of strategies emerged from two different lines of thought. On the one hand, the sociology of development and urban marginality - especially as developed by ECLAC (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America) in the mid-sixties and early seventies, with wider influence in South America. On the other, Mexican anthropology between the mid-seventies and early nineties had an especial focus on the reproduction of the peasant family unit, as conceptualised by Chayanov (1974).

survival strategies' to account for this phenomenon" (Cuéllar Saavedra, 2013 my translation). In this structural account, individuals were conceived as 'depositories' of social norms that emerged from their objective class positions (Jelin, Llovet, & Ramos, 1999, p. 2). As such, it was assumed they will behave in similar ways when confronted with the same circumstances.

Later empirical research demonstrated the variability in the strategies deployed by different households occupying the same class position<sup>20</sup> (Acosta, 2003; de Oliveira & Salles, 1988; Gutierrez, 2007, p. 50). Research on strategies in the context of unemployment and poverty as consequences of structural adjustment and the 'crisis of debt' during the 1980s finally undermined determinist approaches. Class shifted from being understood as a determining factor to establishing the conditions in which strategies were deployed (Jelin et al., 1999). As de la Rocha et al. (1990) stress, the perception of strategies implied a focus on "the rationality in the process of adaptation to specific circumstances in different regions and cities" and resulted in "a critique of studies that highlighted the 'marginal' (Vekemans, 1969), or 'disorganised' (Lewis, 1966) character of the structuration of poverty" (p. 351). In this sense, this body of literature empirically demonstrated one of the central assumptions in this thesis: that social reproduction is a dimension of life in which people have a degree of agency and autonomy that includes negotiation between the different members of the household and their particular expectations.

This body of literature also demonstrated that the material reproduction of the household was commonly achieved beyond the level of the nuclear family, especially in the critical contexts on which the research was focused. As central strategies deployed by households of the popular classes in order to survive, these scholars identified the intensification of paid and unpaid labour carried out by almost all of the members of the household, the selling of belongings, the fusion of households and informal networks in the provision of goods and services<sup>21</sup> (See, for instance, González de la Rocha, 1988; Margulis, 1989; Raczynski & Serrano, 1985; Schkolnik & Teitelboim, 1988; Selby, Lorenzen, Murphy, Morris, & Winter, 1990). Nevertheless, and despite usually carrying out their research among inhabitants of seized lands (see the Chilean process in the introduction), the relation between community

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<sup>20</sup> These are useful dimensions to compare and be aware of during data analysis.

<sup>21</sup> These networks are revealed in this thesis as still relevant.

organisations and social reproduction of households has been rather less explored<sup>22</sup> by this literature. In Chile, the feminist sociologist Teresa Valdés (1988) published a book on pobladora women's reproductive strategies and another about their organisations (Valdés & Weinstein, 1993). There are few linkages between the two books and they tend to represent pobladora women very differently. My research contributes to a deeper understanding of pobladora women's lives in terms of the process of reproduction, by incorporating a more nuanced perspective on how community organisations in the settlements contributed to and tensioned this process.

While I am not interested in how the household itself achieves its reproduction, three dimensions are useful to approach and nuance the analysis of pobladora women's experiences of reproduction. Firstly, strategies of reproduction are the result of a negotiation among members of the household who hold unequal levels of authority and power (González de la Rocha et al., 1990; Selby et al., 1990). Secondly, an understanding of the strategies of reproduction of the household must consider its domestic cycle<sup>23</sup>, such as young couple with young children, retired couple who live without children, as well as the life stage of women (Jelin, 1991a; Jelin & Feijoó, 1980). Thirdly, and crucially, strategies are deployed by "social subjects with identities" (Jelin et al., 1999, p. 3), a topic which I develop below. Here it suffices to note that subjects give meaning and significance to the decisions taken in reproduction. Thus, whether a woman engages in wage work to provide for her family would depend on her age and that of her children, the significance and meaning she and her partner give to wage and/or reproductive labour, and of course, the level of shortage they perceive they are living through. Thus, the importance given to different activities of social reproduction is evaluated in consideration of the other strategies and the wider context in which these are developed.

Attention to how 'social identities' shape the reproduction of the household is central here. Scholarship on the strategies of reproduction who undertook a gender approach started exploring how gender subjectivities shaped social reproduction at the level of

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<sup>22</sup> An exception seem to be Gutierrez (2007), who includes in her analysis of strategies the relevance of community organisations. Working on social reproduction drawing on Bourdieu, she places, however, more emphasis on the reproduction of class.

<sup>23</sup> Studies of family life and life course developed in the United States (see, for instance, Hareven, 2000) have also permeated Latin American scholarship on strategies (Jelin, 1991a).



the household (Jelin, 1991b; Jelin & Feijoó, 1980; Raczynski & Serrano, 1985; Valdés, 1988 di Barbieri 1989). They showed that adapting shopping to available income, knowledge of alternative channels of provision of goods and services, small production of durable foodstuffs, creativity for making cheap meals, clothing repair, managing of timetables and conflicting interests are all part of the strategies deployed by the women of the popular classes for the reproduction of their households. These activities were highlighted as central to the material reproduction of the household, so much so that “the level and quality of family life to a great extent rest on domestic tasks carried out by the women” (Raczynski & Serrano, 1985, p. 250). This research also showed how gender shaped consumption strategies within households, and argued that women’s consumption needs were usually sacrificed (González de la Rocha et al., 1990; Hardy, 1986; Jelin, 1991b). The emphasis on the material reproduction of the household as a unit and on gender as a source of women’s inequality (based on the concept of the individual discussed above) prevented these authors from further analysing how classed subjectivities are produced through the labours of reproduction.

This research expands the work developed by the studies on survival strategies and social reproduction among the popular classes by ‘socialising’ the needs that motivate them. In other words, I underscore the social and historical nature of every need and its satisfaction. As Selby et al. (1990) have argued, staying alive does not mean that ‘survival’ is achieved (p. 371). Wearing a particular item of clothing might be a need in order to participate in social interaction with peers, and thus social spaces might be closed off if specific needs of clothing cannot be satisfied. Similarly, notions around what is ‘nutritious’ or what ‘a clean house’ means are historically constructed and vary among differently positioned subjects. Interestingly, from an emic perspective, Selby notes (and this research confirms) that people use the word ‘struggle’ to name the endurance of difficult conditions. It is this ‘struggle’ waged in everyday life which is informed by certain ideas of what are dignified living conditions, despite increasing precariousness. By attending to the social dimensions of those needs, and how they are satisfied, I make links to the classed and gendered subjectivities that are produced through reproductive labour.

I also move from the emphasis on the actual reproduction of the household to women’s labours and their meanings and values. These are also explored in terms of

the symbolic dimensions of class and their association with morality reviewed in the following section.

### **Class and morality in Chilean society**

At different historical moments, Latin American social sciences have used cultural and/or moral features to characterise those who live in poverty, with especial intensity between the 1960s and 1970s. The existence of a 'culture of poverty' was proposed by the US anthropologist, Oscar Lewis (1965, 1966, 1966) who worked in slums in México and Puerto Rico, and in Puerto Rican neighbourhoods in Manhattan. He argued that such a culture, generationally inherited, was the result of long-term adaptation to deprived material conditions. He recognised at least 70 traits of this 'culture', among them, "the disengagement, the non-integration, of the poor with respect to the major institutions of society" (p. 21) associated to feelings of despair and apathy, difficulties in the deferral of desires and planning for the future. While this approach had some influence (see, for instance, Barriga, 1994), Gutierrez (2007, pp. 31–33) notes, this work was severely criticised and responded to by other researchers within and beyond Latin America. In contrast, the theory of 'marginality' (Vekemans, 1966) seemed by the 1960s more adequate to the concrete economic realities in the region, and informed regional public policies (see, also introduction). Making a genealogy of the concept of marginality, Gutierrez (2007) situates its origins in the school of Chicago during the 1920s and locates its re-emergence in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century to name the expansion of informal settlements at the peripheries of cities. She shows how the concept of marginality, originally used to refer to the lack of urban infrastructure, shifted to become understood as the lack of participation in established society, arguably inhering the proposals of the culture of poverty approach. In the following decade, with the advent of the concept of strategies above reviewed these culturalist approaches were abandoned.

As part of a global trend, in the last decade, attention to the moral dimensions of class has re-emerged in Latin America although in a different fashion. These studies have aimed to understand how class is represented and experienced by people through values -or definitions of what is important- connecting class with particular forms of morality. An important part of this research has comprised studies on stratification among the middle classes (Lapierre, 2008; Mella, 2013; Maria Luisa Méndez, 2008), motivated by the tendency of wider segments of the contemporary Chilean

population to recognise themselves as 'middle class' (see, for instance, 2011; Espinoza & Barozet, 2008). Martínez and Palacios (1996) carried out a pioneering study which attempted to understand processes of stratification and differentiation with regard to welfare benefits within poverty. Attempting to contribute to the study of social structure, Mayol, Azócar and Azócar (2013) have shown how class difference is culturally legitimated through morality, providing an interesting general picture of ascribed values for the poor, the middle classes and the rich.

This empirical research provides important notions to understand the values that are represented as marking class differences, especially among the middle classes and the lower echelons of society. The middle classes perceive themselves as embodying a form of living that follows 'values', in opposition to others they perceive do not (Lapierre, 2008; Mella, 2013; Maria Luisa Méndez, 2008; see, also Bozzo, 2006). This research shows how 'effort' is transversally deemed as the value by which the middle classes represent themselves. Making a more detailed analysis, Mella (2013) also highlights the values of family and work transversally for the middle classes, although showing they have different meanings intra class. While the upper echelons of the middle classes perceive work as a site of self-development, in the middle classes it appears as the means of obtaining income; meanwhile for the 'integrated lower class' (manual workers with incomplete education), labour is perceived as an obligation and effort throughout their life's course, and thus, as a struggle. The middle classes, especially those in their lower echelons, represent the upper classes as abusive and discriminatory and the lower classes, as in many modern societies (see, for instance, Bayón, 2015; Corboz, 2013; Lawler, 2000; Skeggs, 2010), as lazy, full of social resentment, embodying the wrong values and habits and prone to victim narratives.

This middle-class representation of class difference seems to be the hegemonic symbolic system of class in contemporary Chile. Mayol et al. (2013) argue that there is a 'pact of silence' around the social structure that makes it inappropriate to speak about class and which, when broken, results in painful social interactions. With a singular rhetoric, they explain what happens when class differences are disclosed:

(they) appear, the superior beings, from another planet, from another category, those who would be gods, those who have conquered average dignity and normality: the humans. And the fallen ones, those who have

not been able to get rid of their dirt<sup>24</sup> [*sacarse la mugre*] that surrounds them, who fall lower than humans, who do not perform the rituals of purification, and accept instincts and bestiality: the animals, symbols of the loss of morality (p. 40, my translation).

In other words, breaking the silence on class makes visible the differences between humans and their differential moral worth. What is central in this research is that despite the differences imposed at the material level and the negative moral ascriptions given to those located in the lower levels of society, the latter can escape from this 'animal-like' life through *decencia* (decency) or respectability<sup>25</sup>, as understood in the English context. This is a moral statement that, as Candina (2009) notes, the middle classes have historically used to differentiate themselves from the working classes.

In Chile, decency, or respectability, is a currency in everyday language, especially among older generations. As a moral code, Martínez and Palacios (1996) note how it allows those who are in the lower echelons of society to differentiate themselves from those who live in the 'culture of poverty'<sup>26</sup>, who refuse to enact a decent way of living. In contrast, those living under the 'culture of poverty' seem to be orientated to goals with no attention to means. As such, if I desire a pair of trainers, it makes no difference whether I get them by buying them with money earned honestly or dishonestly, or simply steal them. In contrast, those who claim to follow a decent life value honesty, hard work, temperance, honour.

This body of literature has shown how decency in the Chilean context is a significant concern among the lower and lower-middle classes. According to Mella (2013), among subjects in the category of 'integrated lower class', a 'decent life' - idea that shows the conflation of decency with dignity-was perceived as an objective' marker of belonging to the middle classes, -while for the middle classes this marker is

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<sup>24</sup> For an in-depth analysis of this Chilean popular saying, see chapter six.

<sup>25</sup> In the UK, there is a wide body of literature on how respectability was an emergent value in Victorian England among the middle classes, associated with domesticity, cleanliness and sexual restraint, and which was also imposed by different mechanisms onto working-class women (see, for instance, Hepworth, 1999; McClintock, 1995; Nead, 1988; Skeggs, 1997; Stacey, 1975). The historical legacies of these categorisations can be seen recycled in post-industrial capitalism (see, for instance, Skeggs, 2001; Watt, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> In their definition, however, they do not make references to the work of Oscar Lewis.

signalled by a technical or professional degree (p. 143). Martínez and Palacios (1996) demonstrated how the 'culture of decency' is discursively structured as embracing the subject position of the hard worker and a conscious refusal to occupy that of the criminal – thief, drug dealer or prostitute – the 'other', devalued representation of the working classes. Living through decency implies rejecting sexual promiscuity to defend the family name or rejecting a substance abuser who does not care about herself or others. It fixes the minimum conditions that assure one's location, paraphrasing Mayol et al. (2013), on the side of 'humans' and not 'animals'. In other words, living a decent life can endow those who live in poverty with moral worth, despite their devalued position in the class divide.

The meanings of respectability are not reduced to class but also relate to 'race', gender and sexuality. Working in Chile and Perú, Chaney (1979) noted how decency limited women's opportunities to enter into formal politics, an activity then considered inappropriate for women: a decent woman was a mother and housewife, who self-sacrifices for her family and children. Similarly, the step back from the public sphere taken by the Chilean feminist movement soon after achieving the vote in 1949 was called by Julieta Kirkwood (1990) a "return to decency" (p. 171, my translation). Marisol de la Cadena (1997) shows how in Perú, the label of 'decent people' served to "amplify the concept of 'race' beyond the phenotypical criteria. It allowed race definitions to emphasise moral ideas: culture and education" (p. 8, my translation). She showed how this concept allowed *mestizos* (mixed-race people) to claim moral superiority, through notions that were always embedded in sexuality. The category of 'decent' thus seems desirable for those whose social position might raise doubts over their moral worth.

It is important to note, however, that while moral boundaries can be drawn at the level of the symbolic, they become problematic once we come to more closely understand the multidimensionality of peoples' lives. As Rapp (1991), referring to working-class families in the United States, notes:

The value of a label like 'hard living'<sup>27</sup> is that it stresses a continuum made up of many attributes. It is composed of many processes of which the working class has a lot of experience. Given national statistics on

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<sup>27</sup> This is the US equivalent of 'rough' in the UK.

alcoholism, desertion, divorce, premarital pregnancy and the like, everyone's family has such experiences, either in its own domestic cycle or in the wider family network. (...) In a sense, the 'hard livers' keep the settled livers more settled: the consequences of leaving the normative path are well known and are not appealing (p. 206).

In my own research, I met a dedicated divorced mother, with a stable job and a very tidy and clean house, but who swears a lot and is undergoing some problems because of drinking. Is she part of the culture of poverty, or of decency? The difficulties of locating people once we come to know them make evident the permeable boundaries and the contextual nature of these categorisations.

The Chilean literature reviewed has usually tended to investigate the moral representation of class through methodologies that privilege an understanding of the symbolic, such as interviews or, as in Mella's (2013) research, the games of classification as proposed by Boltanski and Thévenot (1983). We know that class difference is represented through moral values and that for the lower class, living 'decently' is central to the ability to claim moral worth. Yet, in the Chilean case we have little knowledge on how moral ascriptions are lived by those categorised as such. US scholar Elsa Chaney (1979) noted how decency in Latin America<sup>28</sup> was assessed in '(...) everything that is capable of passing public muster. A house, a neighbourhood, an article of clothing, an occupation, all can be decente and hence, deserving of respect' (p. 34). If decency - or its absence - can be seen in everything, how do contexts shape the grounds in which this 'decency' is evaluated? How does one's multiple positions inform this categorisation? Given its multidimensionality, how is decency produced and negotiated? How does it interact with the notions of dignity and struggle of the popular movement?

Ethnographic research in other latitudes has shown how categories are contextually negotiated. McKenzie (2015) shows how council estate residents navigate through the stigma they are subjected to by both acknowledging internal difference among neighbours and investing in being respected at the local level. In the UK, Skeggs (1997) has shown how working-class women dis-identify from the category 'working class' through attention to their self-presentation. While having appropriate clothes

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<sup>28</sup> Her research was carried out in Perú and Chile.

is not always possible, the women negotiate, for instance, by privileging their children's being well dressed over themselves. Cosacov and Perelman (2015) have noted how the negative moral values attached to inhabitants of the *villas* (Argentina's poblaciones) become invisible when they enter middle-class neighbourhoods as workers, a position in which they are respected. Thus, my research expands ethnographic efforts to understand how negotiation of classed and gendered moral ascriptions are negotiated in everyday life, with an emphasis on everyday practices of social reproduction.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have briefly described the bodies of literature upon which this thesis draws, and/or to which it contributes, specifically the wider debates on social reproduction and moral dimensions of class in Latin America and Chile. I started with contemporary feminist debates over the labours of reproduction. Through the lenses of time usage and care economies, research has shown this type of labour remains largely shouldered by women. I argued that since mainstream feminism in Latin America draws on the idea of an autonomous and self-determined individual, reproductive labour tends to be reduced to a source of inequality which is contrasted with wage labour depicted as emancipatory. I discussed how this notion of the individual is unsuitable to understand popular women's experiences of reproductive labour, since they can only appear as embodying traditional or 'disempowered' forms of womanhood. I argued for the need to explore reproductive labour in terms of the ways in which the subject who performs it becomes classed and gendered. Learning lessons from some of the debates developed by black feminist, I suggested that revealing the historical configurations of class, gender, sexuality and 'race' appears as central to understanding the subjects and subjectivities at stake in reproductive labour.

I then turned to the empirical research on the reproduction of popular households in Latin America, specifically studies on the strategies of reproduction, to highlight how some of their conclusions were relevant to shaping this research project. These studies concluded that social class does not determine but instead sets the conditions in which families deploy strategies for their reproduction, as evidenced by differences in the type of strategies developed by households positioned in the same class. These differences emerge because the particular strategies developed by a

household are the result of negotiation among its members and the availability of resources, the different stages of the family cycle, and the various positions of the different members and their particular cultural norms. I suggested that in order to understand the ways in which subjectivities are produced through social reproduction, attention to the socially constructed character of needs is central.

Finally, I discussed how morality is used to understand class difference in Chile and how class positions imply the embodiment of different values. I highlighted how those who are positioned in the lower classes are ascribed negative moral values, but also how they can resort to embodying notions of 'decency' to claim moral worth and respectability. I underscored the contextual character of those categories and gave some examples of negotiation of practices and class positioning in everyday life. My research makes an empirical contribution to expand our understanding of processes of negotiation around categories in everyday life through reproductive labour. Having provided an overview of the relevant literature, in the following chapter I describe the aims and research question that have guided this research journey.



## **Chapter three**

### **Methodological considerations**

In this section, I present the methodology that underpins this research. I start by making explicit the research questions and the smaller questions that have helped to operationalise this enquiry and go on to defend the suitability of ethnography as the methodological approach to answer them. After this, I give details of the specific methods deployed in more than 10 months in fieldwork: different activities identified as 'deep hanging out' (Geertz, 2000) that include observations and participant observations, meetings and conversations with women, seventeen interviews, and an activity inspired by Frigga Haug's (1987) method of memory work. A brief insight is given into the questions of ethics, confidentiality and the ways in which the information was analysed. Then, I characterise the setting in which the research was carried out, a población now called Nuevo Amanecer.

The last part of the chapter is a reflection on some of the key concerns of feminist researchers, in particular of feminist ethnography. Echoing contemporary notions of what it means to do feminist research, I believe that "it is the methodology and outcomes rather than the methods which define the research as being feminist" (Small, 2010, p. 1). In line with this, I propose my research is feminist because of the methodology it adopts. The last part of the chapter critically discusses issues of power relations, ethics and politics in relation to both data collection and ethnographic representation of women.

### **Research problem and questions**

In this thesis, I explore how pobladora women's classed and gendered subjectivities have been produced through practices of social reproduction carried out by community organisations, and especially by pobladora women themselves in their positions as mothers, wives and homemakers. Since social reproduction is understood as a site of struggle around its conditions, organisation and regulation which, it will be argued, has been central in the historical configurations of class and gender, I interrogate how pobladora women have experienced it throughout their lives. In other words, I examine how different practices oriented to social reproduction on a daily basis - thus, excluding biological reproduction - have been

actively carried out, signified and valued by pobladora women in their positions as mothers, homemakers and/or housewives, and emphasise the negotiations between envisioned subjects and concrete material conditions that made them possible (or not). I ask, *How have pobladora women produced their gendered and classed subjectivities through practices of social reproduction in their positions as mothers, homemakers and/or wives?*

I see practices of social reproduction as being already inscribed in discourse, and thus as laden with values that inflect experience in terms of available (and/or normative) subject positions. Within the framework of this research, experience is not understood as something that happens to us, but rather as something that constitutes us. As Scott (1992) argues, “it is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience” (pp. 25–6). Understood in this light, this main question can be broken into smaller questions:

- To what extent is the self-worth of pobladora women of the Población Nueva Habana/Nuevo Amanecer assessed through reproductive practices? How do pobladora women evaluate others in terms of their perceived performance of reproductive labour? Is reproductive labour a source of self-worth for the women? To what extent? How are decency and/or respectability read by pobladora women through reproductive practices? Do these values experienced with tensions between the public and private sphere? Is there any other source of self-worth for pobladora women? This set of questions is transversal to all chapters of the thesis.
- How have class and gender been historically configured through the organisation of social reproduction in Chile? What systems of value have informed the particular history of the pobladores of the Población Nueva Habana/Nuevo Amanecer and how have they informed community organisation? This set of questions is addressed especially in chapters four, five and eight.
- What values do pobladora women of the Población Nueva Habana/Nuevo Amanecer attach to different practices oriented to the social reproduction of their households? This question is addressed in chapters six and seven, which analyse ‘classic’ practices of domestic labour, namely cleaning and provisioning.

The value – or the importance of actions (Graeber, 2012) – of these practices for the social reproduction of women and their families can only be explored through attention to the everyday life context in which they are performed. While the expectations of certain forms of reproduction are historically and discursively produced, literature on strategies of reproduction shows they are contingently negotiated in relation to the concrete material conditions and the multiple demands of everyday life. As such, to answer the questions that guide this research – with the exception of the first set of questions, which aims to set the historical context of the research – everyday life must be examined. This is why this research has been developed as an ethnography: it has been conducted in the settings in which practices take place, that is, carried out over a prolonged period of time and using a mix of methods, among which participant observation has centrality.

## An ethnographic journey

### Introducing the Población Nuevo Amanecer

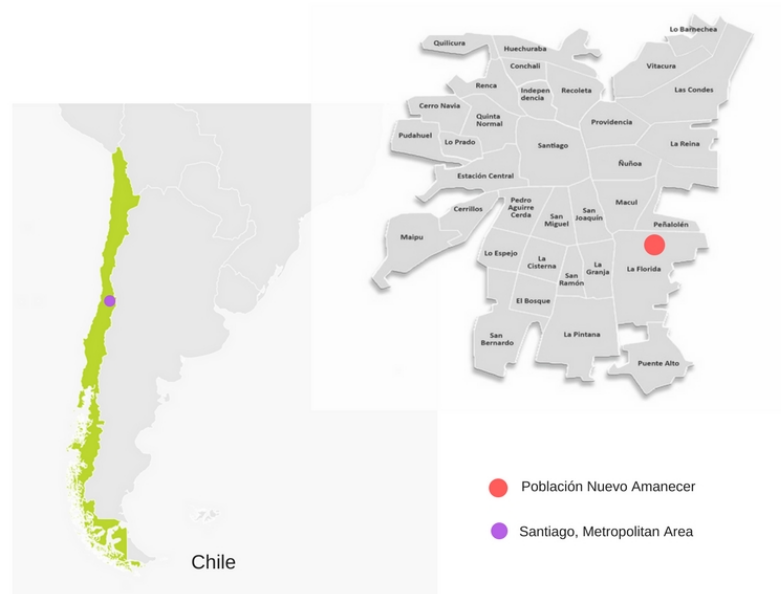


Image 1 Location of población Nuevo Amanecer, Santiago de Chile

The población Nuevo Amanecer is located in a borough in the south-east of Santiago de Chile caalled *La Florida*. The social composition of the borough is very diverse: it includes residential areas inhabited by people from the popular to middle and upper-middle classes, for which reason Bozzo and Wolf (2005) have called it a “borough of

contrasts". Eight percent of its population live in a condition of poverty (Municipalidad de La Florida, 2008, p. 19). According to La Florida's Council Development Plan (2008), the rural character of the borough, traditionally perceived as a route to Puente Alto Village (today another of Santiago's boroughs), started to change in 1960s through housing projects for the popular classes. The for the middle classes, later in the mid-1980s. The arrival of one of the city's metro lines and shopping malls in the 1990s helped the development of the most important urban sub-centre - absent in the previous decades - in which public services, banks, educational institutions and shops are concentrated. Nuevo Amanecer is located fifteen minutes by public transport from this local centre.

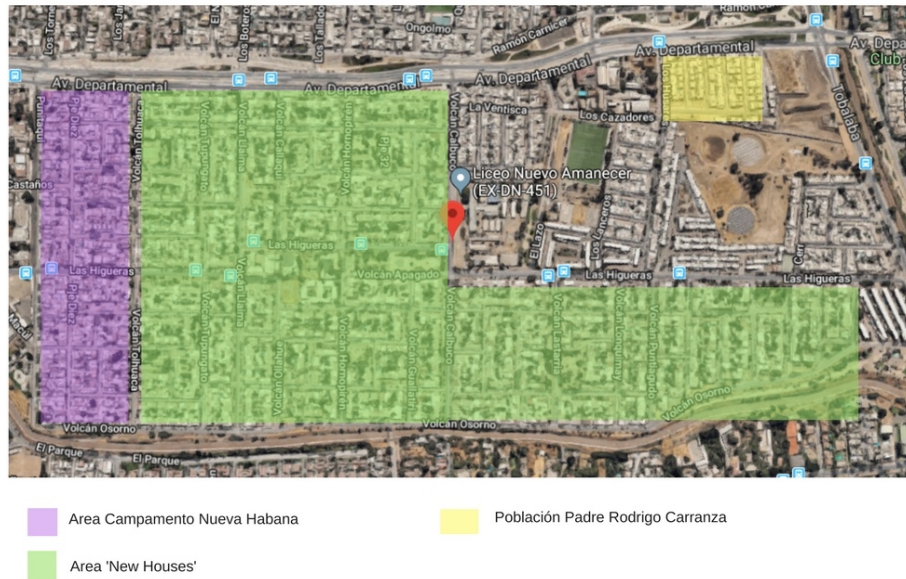
Nuevo Amanecer is situated at the north-eastern corner of La Florida at the feet of the Andes Mountains. It is separated from the borough of *Peñalolen* by the well-known *Departamental Avenue*, which cuts across Santiago from east to west. In 2006, a metro station opened five minutes away by bus or '*colectivo*' (shared cars with pre-determined tariffs and routes), the latter also an important means of mobility in the población and the borough more generally. As a whole, the neighbourhood covers a massive area of 83 acres, and the census of 2002<sup>29</sup> counted 13,458 people living in the población, with a density of 0.03 people per square metre (Pinto, 2002, pp. 42-43). In terms of urban facilities, the población has a school for children from pre-school to high-school age, three social centres in which different workshops and elderly clubs take place, police and a fire stations, a cultural centre run by the youth and supported by the municipality, Catholic and several Evangelical churches placed on family homes and two small sports courts.

Nuevo Amanecer is divided into two sectors - one known as the '*campamento*', and another called the '*new houses*' - which are visually distinguishable from each other. The '*campamento*' is the continuation of what used to be Campamento Nueva Habana (historical details provided later in this chapter). There, housing design and quality vary widely: some very precarious houses might be placed next to others of high-quality construction. In contrast, the '*new*' sector is composed of a total of 1,248 brick houses each occupying an area of between 36 and 44 square metres (Pinto, 2002,

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<sup>29</sup> The last census was carried out September 2017, as that carried out in 2012 was invalidated because it presented methodological problems. At the time of writing, the results have not yet been processed.

p. 47). Originally, these dwellings had massive backyards, which have served to allow enlargements of original dwellings, often using low-quality materials (see image 3). I settled in this 'new' sector of the población and rented a room in a house with many bedrooms to let.



*Image 2 Areas Población Nuevo Amanecer and Población Rodrigo Carranza  
Rodrigo Carranza is a recently built housing development for new generations of  
pobladores from Nuevo Amanecer.*

## **Landing in the Población**

The decision to live in the neighbourhood responded to the need to approach the universe that was the core of my sociological enquiry – that of the women who had arrived to the campamento Nueva Habana as young mothers. From the pilot stage carried out in 2014, I knew a community leader and two other women I had interviewed because of their participation in community-led soup kitchens during the 1980s. Yet, I wanted to expand my scope, especially to include other women who did not necessarily have organisational experience. In the población, families are connected by more than 40 years of neighbouring relationships and getting to know one family can eventually lead you to know others. Therefore, I planned to live in the población as a means to have more autonomy and to increase my chances of meeting other women without being formally introduced by someone else, which is in fact what happened.

More importantly, while the struggles for housing or survival organisations are a source of dignity and pride for pobladores – especially for the leaders, who are used to talking about these issues and of whom many have been interviewed over the years by researchers like myself – most of the themes surrounding this research are ‘socially’ sensitive. As seen in the previous chapter, Mayol et al. (2013) noted how in Chilean society, the ‘class talk’ is avoided through a ‘pact of silence’ which helps to hid the pain caused by inequality. An approach to class is made even more complex given the attention I give to women’s reproductive labour, such as cleaning or childcare. These practices have been historically regulated (see next chapter) and indeed they are dimensions to be assessed in contemporary systems of social welfare (Han, 2012; Vidal, 2005); therefore, research conducted on these activities is always at risk of being perceived as moral judgement. It was necessary for me to establish a high level of trust.

Living in the población seemed to me to be a good way to overcome these obstacles. And, since I had projected a long period of fieldwork, I needed to rent a place to live during this time in any case. I imagined myself travelling from the more central middle-class neighbourhoods of my social circle, arriving every day to visit and talk to the women, who would have had to set time aside, and being forced to leave before the last bus. Instead, I rented a room in the ‘new’ area of the población. Living there gave me time to cultivate every encounter, to stop by and greet, to meet people when out to buy bread or in the local market, to propose participant observations when it felt appropriate. It made my presence part of everyday life and not an event, and thus allowed me to account for its dynamics. As Bernard (2006) argues, “[P]resence builds trust. Trust lowers reactivity. Lower reactivity means higher validity of data” (p. 354). This certainly does not mean that my living in the neighbourhood abolished difference, a subject I develop later in this chapter. Rather, living there provided the space and time to gain the necessary intimacy to access women’s practices of social reproduction in a way less shaped by the mores imposed by moral ascriptions.

## **Activities and methods**

### **Ethnographic activity or 'deep hanging out'**

Most of the 10 months I spent overall in fieldwork was organised based on what Geertz (2000) has called 'deep hanging out': activities more or less related, that together help to give a sense of the matters of research. I regularly visited six women from the first generation of settlers, and two who arrive to Nueva Habana as children. Each of them was differently positioned in terms of their relation to wage work, stage of life and participation in community organisations. Visits usually involved interaction with different members of the family – children or grandchildren – from other households, which provided a perspective on long-term transformations. For instance, I regularly visited Señora Herminia, who lived with her husband and cared for her granddaughter a few times per week. Her daughter lived on the same road, so we had contact outside Señora Herminia's house.

During these visits, we usually talked of everyday life, the past and the present. In some of these encounters, I followed what they wanted to narrate to me and heard about family problems, concerns of everyday life in the domestic sphere and the community, and, since they knew I was interested in the past, many stories from the times of Campamento Nueva Habana or the dictatorship. During other visits, I purposefully guided our conversation towards my research project. Also, I had the chance to both observe and help with everyday reproductive activities, such as cooking lunch, hanging up/taking down clothes. This also included explicit dates for participant observation of cleaning and cooking practices with five women. Instead of focusing on one practice in all cases, I observed the reproductive practices that each woman was willing to share with me; with some I cooked, with others I both cleaned and cooked, with others I went shopping. With four of them I carried out structured interviews to obtain more 'formal' information: frequencies, distribution of tasks, memories of the past.

I also engaged in more occasional 'hanging out' with at least five other women, whose experiences are also included in the ethnography to illustrate the arguments made. I also attended and helped with some commemorative activities, such as the

población's anniversary or the annual '*mateada histórica*'<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore, living in the población implied other activities that were not part of the fieldwork in *stricto sensu*, but which yielded data that was used in the analysis. Sometimes, everyday life activities, like shopping in local shops or on the market, allowed me to meet people or gave me new ideas or insights for the research more generally. These activities, this 'deep hanging out', including participant observation in a knitting workshop introduced below, were recorded daily in a fieldwork diary. I also had another diary for more reflexive notes.

### **Participant observation in a handicraft workshop**

From the end of August until the beginning of December 2015 and December of 2016, I took part in a knitting workshop and, during the follow-up fieldwork, I attended a couple of sessions plus a few informal sessions in which the women met without a teacher. Initially, my aim in participating in this workshop was to meet women and establish relationships for the exploration of reproductive labour. After a few weeks, I came to understand the relevance of the workshop in women's lives. I decided to take this space more seriously as a site of participant observation. I devoted attention to the dynamics of the organisation, the things they talked about, the disposition of space and the ways in which they related to each other, at the same time as I attempted to learn loom and crochet.

### **Interviews**

In total, I carried out 17 semi-structured interviews, most of them audio-recorded and with different degrees of structuration, according to whether they were explorative or aimed to obtain a particular type of information. Interviews were the main method to explore how the reproduction of everyday life was organised at the level of the community during the time of Campamento Nueva Habana, and how grassroots organisation served the reproduction of households during the dictatorship. A significant amount of information regarding the particular forms of organisation in the población in different historical periods is available in some monographic work (see Cofré, 2007a; Fiori, 1973; Fuentes, 2007). Interviews served to delve more deeply into relevant aspects, especially with regard to the regulation of so-called private

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<sup>30</sup> *Mateada* is a get-together around *mate*, a South American hot beverage. This get-together has the aim of promoting the collective memory of the history of the población.



practices of everyday life during Nueva Habana. A total of nine interviews attempted to convey the participation of women in those organisations, gender relations within them and the problematisation of existing tensions between community participation and the women's positions as mothers and wives, but also as working women.

During the pilot of stage of my fieldwork, I realised the limitations of the interview as a method in terms of exploring reproductive practices in everyday life. They were useful to explore some of the tensions between social participation and the women's position as mothers and housewives in the home, among women of the settler generation. The women were keen to talk about conflicts with partners, but when bringing these tensions to bear on reproductive labour, answers became more normative. They claimed their participation in community organisations did not prevent them from fulfilling duties associated with their positions of mothers and wives. They claimed full commitment to certain moral rules; refrains such as *'poor but clean'* or *'my kids were always clean'* were repeated, sometimes foreclosing the exploration of this dimension of women's lives, for instance regarding their priorities in domestic labour.

Carol Steedman (2000) has warned that autobiographical narratives might not necessarily represent people's experiences. Her statement emerges from an analysis of autobiographical narratives between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries from potential beneficiaries of poor relief, as recorded by state agents. In those narratives, "the interlocutor has been removed and structured through answers" (Skeggs, 2002, p. 8) and thus, the narratives do not represent the experience or voice of respondents; instead, they are "autobiographical injunctions: a history of expectations, orders, and instructions rather than one of urges and desires" (Steedman, 2000, p. 28). Certainly, the context in which I carry out interviews is quite different from that studied by Steedman, yet my interviews were still framed within an institutional context and I am positioned in a more privileged class position with respect to the women researched. As I noted above, expectations around proper housewifery still surrounded the context of the interviews.

This does not mean that the interview has no value at all for the purpose of understanding women's reproductive practices. I believe, with Nick Couldry (2010), that

The exchangeable narratives that constitute our voices are not random babblings that emerge, unaccountably, from our mouths, hands and gestures. Voice is a form of agency, and the act of voice involves taking responsibility for the stories one tells, just as our actions more generally, as Hannah Arendt argues, 'disclose' us 'as subjects. (p. 8)

A voice might be given shape through the interview: what the subject chooses to tell and not to tell is expressive of forms in which the subject presents herself to another. Interviews were not understood as 'truth' but instead interpreted by attending to the discourses and power relations that surround them. As Loveday (2011) argues, "(...) the interview process allows the researcher to interrogate the embodied position of the interviewee by attending to the contextualization of 'voice', that is, the discursive formations which allow - or indeed prevent - the production of a subject" (p. 38). If during the interviews carried out with the women during pilot fieldwork, they stressed their fulfilment of their duties as housewives, what is important is not whether they actually did fulfil them, but rather the ways in which housewifery is a relevant discourse for women to construct and represent themselves to others.

Despite its limitations, the use of the interview as a research method still served to widen the scope of the research to include the experiences of other women besides those most directly and closely involved with it. I carried out a total of eight interviews with women of the first - those who arrived to the Campamento Nueva Habana - second and third generation. The second- and third-generation women were better able to tell themselves through the interview. They did not seem forced to claim a total commitment to the normative discourses of (classed) housewifery and motherhood, and were able, for instance, to talk about their 'failures' without shame. As such, the interviews made it possible to expand and contrast experiences around reproductive practice.

### **Memory work-inspired activity**

A collective exercise inspired by Frigga Haug's (1987) memory work was developed during fieldwork. This method aims to explore how past experiences construct subjectivities, under the assumption that "everything remembered constitutes a relevant trace - precisely because it is remembered for the formation of identity" (p. 50). It seemed a good option to explore past practices of reproductive labour avoiding

the production of normative narratives. This method was created in opposition to biographical interviews which, Haug (1987) states, work “by ordering our perceptions of childhood experience to accord with our present view of ourselves as handicapped learners” (p. 46), usually resulting in “the production of a coherent and whole self” (Byrne, 2003, p. 47). In contrast, memory work attempts to explore subjectivity by recalling a single experience (“one day, it happened that...”), instead of a general construction of the past (“we used to do it like that”). This way of working with memories seemed potentially productive for my work, given the very normative ways in which accounts of oneself were produced during the pilot stage when exploring women’s labours of social reproduction. Widerberg (2008) justify the fruitfulness of this way of recalling memories:

The focus on the theme also makes it easier for the I to unfold in all its varieties because the aim, the focus, is not to construct a coherent I throughout the stories. It is the history of the experiences on the theme chosen – not of the I – that is to be told. As such the method can be used to produce images of identity and the I as multiple and thoroughly social [...] (p. 126).

I thought that bringing the past into the present in this way could trigger other narratives and connect with feelings, expectations and values, allowing a textured image of past everyday life at the same time as providing other ways to explore the production of subjectivity. Furthermore, I was interested in memory work’s potential for constructing collective knowledge. While in this methodology power relations are not necessarily erased (for a critique see Onyx & Small, 2001), at least it unsettles the hierarchical differences between the subject and object of research, seeking for a collaborative construction of knowledge. As ethnographer, I was observing, asking, interviewing, making connections and contrasting them in the fieldwork, from which I was producing my own interpretations of the women’s lives. I wondered what a collective process of creating knowledge would bring up.

The activity carried out in fieldwork was inspired by these notions. Haug (Haug, No date, 1987) suggests a series of steps to follow, but leaves the researcher to modify as necessary. Memory work is a collective process in which a group of women gather to work on a concrete topic and define a related research question that is of interest to everyone. Then, every participant selects an experience that ‘answers’ that question and writes about it in the third person as a means “to explain themselves as not self-

evident" (Haug, No date, p. 4) in the most detailed possible way. Written memories are later shared and collectively discussed looking at common-sense underlying theory, activities that are included, linguistic particularities, emotions, vacuums and contradictions, motivations, characterisation of the 'others' present in the narratives, and finally how the 'I' is constructed (Haug, No date). This process, however, seemed somewhat complex for working with mature and elderly pobladora women. As Onyx and Small (2001) have shown, it is a method that has been only used among female graduates or university students.

In my exercise, the central element of memory work – the writing of stories – was eliminated. Given their lack of formal education, for many of these women, reading and writing are not activities with which they feel very comfortable. Instead, I invited the women to have tea with me, and served them sandwiches containing canned pork – of the brand Spam, which I had brought from the UK. Canned pork, now hardly available in Chile, is one of the symbols of the food shortage that occurred during the government of socialist president Allende (1970–1973). China sent canned pork (*chancho chino*) to be distributed among the Chilean population, as a mitigating measure against the bourgeoisie's boycott on food production and distribution. As such, I expected the flavour to bring back some of the memories of the times of Campamento Nueva Habana. The original idea was for the women to remember a scene in which *chancho chino* was involved and they had felt either happy or worried, to tell the stories to their peers, and together explore similarities and differences. I also brought some pictures of the period, for the sake of remembering together.

Only three out of seven women I had invited arrived for the session, held on a hot Tuesday afternoon in January – all of them, women with whom I worked more closely. The others could not attend (some had to care for grandchildren, or had doctor appointments for themselves or family members), or showed little interest. I did not invite community leaders, in order to prevent their voices about the past becoming the entitled ones and turning the activity into a talk about organisation and politics. The women were very excited about the pork, but I did not achieve the goal of focusing on a specific memory. "*We arrived in those times!*" said one woman, and they started talking about how they prepared the pork in different ways. They did not bother to focus on a particular experience, and instead talked in more general

ways about the past and about topics that had been a matter of debate such as the process of the assignation of 'new' houses. I also showed them photographs of that period. I managed to obtain some insights into the performance of the normative self, especially through contradictions and silences. Nevertheless, the women subverted the activity, using it to fulfil their own desire to share memories and to talk about their lives and try to recognise the people depicted in the pictures.

## **Ethics**

In line with the research ethics guidelines of the British Sociological Association, BSA (2017) and Association of Social Anthropologists, ASA of the UK and Commonwealth (1999), consent - understood as a process and not as a once-and-for-all prior event - was obtained from all the women who took part more directly in this research. This process was facilitated by my constant presence in the neighbourhood during fieldwork and by keeping in touch through social media. Some of the women were contacted during the writing-up period to ask them for permission to use specific information. Establishing a relationship with some of the women gave me access to their domestic life and family relations, as well enabling me to interact with members of their families, all of whom knew about my position as a 'researcher of everyday life' and, while they did not explicitly consent, they did not object to being part of the research. Some of these scenes have been described when they serve to contextualise the experience of pobladora women; however, care has been taken not to expose very private and personal issues. Paraphrasing Les Back's (2007) metaphor, the relationship with research participants is established in an interaction between exchange, gift and theft.

I have aimed to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. I have used pseudonyms for most of the individuals named here, and in some cases, I have been deliberately vague or have made minor changes to details regarding family or community relations when the characters featured in this ethnography have remained too identifiable in the local context. Participants were also informed of the limits of this confidentiality. In few cases, I retained the women's real names, especially among those who were more strongly involved in community organisations of the past, and whose experiences are already publicly available in other published work. This was a difficult but thoughtful decision, based not only on the extreme difficulty of assuring these women's anonymity but as a means to

recognize their political contributions. Nonetheless, real names were retained *only* if the women themselves preferred to be identified as such *and* if such recognition did not threaten the confidentiality of other research participants. I do not foresee any harm coming to the women as a consequence of this research, although they might potentially feel uncomfortable about their representation here, despite their consent. I deal with issues of representation in more detail later in this chapter.

## **Analysis**

I developed a method grounded in the data registered in the fieldwork diary and in transcripts of interviews, and in the memory work-inspired activity. I elaborated mind-maps of themes that appeared relevant, in which I located disparate types of data: observation of practices and related scenes of everyday life, what the women said they do, what they said others do, ideas and reflections, in some cases concepts or passages from the literature related to the topic. I kept a record of the methods by which data was obtained, in order to ensure reflexivity regarding the different modes of data collection. Some of the themes in the mind-maps referred to concrete practices or dimensions of everyday life, such as 'politics' or 'shopping', and other themes cut across these practices and dimensions, such as 'class' or 'women's image' or 'values'. For instance, the 'laundry' mind-map includes different types of information: discourse on cleanliness, ironing, hanging clothes, use of technologies, 'past and present', new generations, stage of life (ageing body) and other 'loose bits' of information that could not be grouped in any branch. These mind-maps signalled a comparison of practices and discourses (where available) and generational differences among the women.

I spent between seven and eight months organising the data, reading the fieldwork diary and transcripts and placing fragments on the mind-maps, establishing resemblances and differences, making connections between the data sets and across themes, expanding, synthesizing and reorganising maps, re-reading the diary and transcripts and incorporating more information. To start writing the ethnographic text, it was fundamental to sediment and develop understanding of the data. In parallel to the analysis, I wrote the first pieces that later developed into chapters. After this time, I had assembled interesting material, especially in terms of representations, but still the practices did not make sense to me.

During six weeks of follow-up fieldwork, I came to understand the central relevance of material conditions in defining practices. Previously, I had emphasised the symbolic dimensions, and struggled to understand the incongruence between the representation of practices – how they ought to be – and real practices. Furthermore, I also came across scholarship on the social reproduction of households, as reviewed in the previous chapter. Their emphasis on the ‘strategies’ deployed by households of the popular classes to assure their material reproduction allowed me to bring more ‘materialist’ insights into the analysis, which was key to the final argument of the thesis.

The literature on strategies of reproduction showed that different households in the same class positions deploy different strategies (Acosta, 2003; de Oliveira & Salles, 1988). In particular, these studies noted that decisions around who enters into wage labour, who carries out other income generation activities, or who devotes to the labours of reproduction, are to a great extent determined by the characteristics of the household. Its structure and life-cycle stage (young families with young children, retired parents with adult children living in the home or independently), the stages of life of women in the household, but also cultural aspects, all act as ‘mediations’ (Hareven, 2000; Jelin & Feijóo, 1980; Jelin et al., 1999; Margulis, 1989; Oliveira, Salles, & Pepin Lehalleur, 1989; Raczynski & Serrano, 1984). In this particular research, the notion of the family life cycle became a central dimension for understanding the variation of reproductive practices throughout women’s life span. This enabled me to make sense of the present times, in which the women in this research no longer occupy the position of the ‘traditional’ housewife, since they do not live with their children and have a smaller burden of domestic duties.

The analysis was finished during the process of writing-up (an in-depth analysis of strategies of representation follows later in this chapter). When I focused my attention on the details and texture of everyday life while writing ethnographic vignettes, brought information about other social sectors into the account, compared such information with my own practices or discussed related concepts and theories, some of the explanations became stronger and convinced me that others were becoming redundant. It was during the ethnographic writing-up that the arguments made in this thesis became consolidated.

## **The research setting. From Nueva Habana to Nuevo Amanecer**

What is today known as Población Nuevo Amanecer, where this research was carried out, originated in Campamento Nueva Habana, founded in 1970. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, this campamento was the most emblematic led by the Leftist Revolutionary Movement (MIR), the most radical political party of that period. It emerged as a provisional habitational solution for three different land seizures led by the *Jefatura Provincial de Pobladores* (Revolutionary Provincial Leadership, JPR), the MIR's branch among the pobladores. According to Cofré's (2007a) historiographical account, throughout 1970 the JPR had established different campamentos. On 7 August, the JPR announced it was in a state of "alert and constant mobilisation" (Ibid., p. 106) to provide housing solutions in response to the demands of six campamentos. Different actions to apply pressure were carried out, including a demonstration in the city centre, the occupation of an emblematic, recently built tower of flats for the middle classes, and a women's hunger strike in the gardens of the National Congress. On 21 August, the JPR secured an agreement with the housing minister and the universities that owned the seized plots. The pobladores of Campamentos *Elmo Catalán*, *Magaly Honorato* and *Ranquil* decided to relocate to the feet of the Andes, to a farm called *Los Castaños*, a site that would later be called Nueva Habana (see image 1).

On 1 November 1970, about 1,200 families arrived settled in the farm Los Castaños urbanised by the *Corporación de Vivienda* (CORVI), then, the Chilean housing corporation. The land had demarcated of plots, four latrines per block, public lighting, showers, potable water fountains and tap networks. According to Cofré (2007a), only 10 percent of the land was assigned for the provisional housing while the major part was reserved for CORVI to build the prospective permanent houses. The campamento was organised around 23 square blocks, each containing 64 sites: 63 assigned for families' dwellings, the last one reserved for social centres, making a total of 1449 households. This made a total of Families settled as they could in their allocated sites, some in fabric tents or dwellings built with a variety of light materials, others in dwellings assembled from pre-built pieces, usually with the collaboration of neighbours.

The development of an organisational framework that regulated the reproduction of everyday life in Nueva Habana, in a way that blurred the boundaries between the



public and private, was the main reason for locating the research in this particular población. Following the notion of *poder popular* (people's power) (Neghme & Leiva, 2000), Nueva Habana was conceived by its inhabitants as a liberated territory in which they established their own norms. They organised to secure urban services - such as a surgery, a school and social centres-, and to properly develop the empty land into what they believed to be something closer to an adequate neighbourhood. During the three years that this experience lasted, the Campamento Nueva Habana developed a system of justice that assigned community duties and defined a list of forbidden behaviours, subject to penalties and even expulsion (see Fiori, 1973). While this is described in-depth in chapter five, it is important here to note that norms and community duties also extended behind 'closed doors', including injunctions on emptying chamber pots or sweeping dwellings early in the morning, the prohibition of domestic violence and were developed projects for collectivising domestic labour. The organisational mode that emerged during the period is examined through a gender perspective in this thesis in order to understand the classed and gendered subjects projected and produced by the radical forms of organisation that took place in the context of the Unidad Popular government.

The coup d'état of 11 September 1973 changed the fate of Nueva Habana. The campamento's main leader, Alejandro 'Miki' Villalobos, and other leaders escaped to protect themselves and the pobladores. For weeks, the pobladores remember seeing bodies by the nearby roundabout and in the ditch. In the days following the coup, the community organisations were dismembered and, according to some testimonies, some pobladores were relocated to other poblaciones of Santiago. This recollection describes those events:

On the third day after the coup, military forces entered the campamento and started working systematically: first, they raided the area in which the new houses were being built and detained some of the workers; they followed this by detaining the best-known leaders who remained within the campamento, and on top of that, at twilight, patrols went through the streets and roads shooting their guns in the air to scare the pobladores. This frightening practice was repeated every day after the curfew started, lasting until the end of 1973. (Colectivo Memoria Histórica Corporación José Domingo Cañas, 2005, p. 133 cit. in Cofré, 2007, p. 239, my translation)

The military officials appointed a new neighbourhood committee to change the name of the campamento to remove political connotations (Ibid.), a practice that was imposed in all poblaciones. *Nuevo Amanecer*, which translates as 'new dawn', today denoted a massive area, a neighbourhood that includes the site of the former campamento and the solid brick houses that were under construction by the time of the coup.

In 1975, the houses that during the period of the UP were being built directly by CORVI were finished by a private company under the policy of 'real cost'<sup>31</sup> (Cofré, 2007b, p. 230). However, not all the inhabitants of what used to be Campamento Nueva Habana were allocated houses. Cofré (2007a, p. 247) has estimated that at least 60 percent of family plots were assigned new houses (he does not indicate his sources, however). Official documents<sup>32</sup>, however, only make explicit the assignation of houses to 440 families, about a third of the total households in Nueva Habana. The actual mechanism by which housing was allocated is not totally clear, although all the families that were assigned new houses had achieved the stipulated savings goals that were part of housing policy. Many women claimed that they had fulfilled the savings requirements, but they were still not allocated housing, believing this to be due to their conflicts with the new neighbourhood committee. The mainstream explanation among pobladores organisers, which is supported by Cofré (2007), is that house allocation was also influenced by political criteria and the goal of dividing the pobladores. This explanation seems plausible, especially given the significant presence of police and army officials living in the 'new' sector, which does not appear in official documents. Nevertheless, as can be proven in the field and by examining official ministerial documents, all the inhabitants of Nueva Habana who were allocated housing were concentrated in the same area, something that does not make sense if the idea was to divide the community. The remaining houses were occupied by applicants from other campamentos, emergency situations and housing committees from different sectors of the capital, as well as by individuals who responded to government calls for applications published in newspaper.

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<sup>31</sup> This was against the policy implemented during the Unidad Popular era, in which construction was carried out by the Housing Corporation of the Housing Ministry. This formula eliminated private profits and thus allowed an increased quality of housing.

<sup>32</sup> Minutes and other legal documents that informed the process of assignation of housing from 1975 to 1987 (Chilean Housing Ministry, MINVU).

*Image 3 Población Nuevo Amanecer, 'Campamento' area  
Photograph by the author.*



*Image 4 Población Nuevo Amanecer. 'Campamento' area  
Photograph by the author.*

In 1974, after a part of the pobladores received the new houses, the 1,384 family plots were re-organised into 392 plots (Cofré 2007). It was not until 1985 that pobladores who remained in the area of Campamento Nueva Habana were provided with sanitary cabins that included a small toilet and kitchen connected to the sewerage system. For some of those who do not share the history of Nueva Habana the area of the campamento is loaded with spatial stigma, especially because, unlike the 'new' part, it looks like a población (given its self-construction).

As in many other poblaciones (see introduction), survival organisations also appeared in Nuevo Amanecer during the dictatorship. Handicraft workshops, Church and community soup kitchens were active from the second part of the 70s until the end of the dictatorship in 1989, although it seems they did not have the same prominence as in other poblaciones in the struggles against the dictatorship. By the end of the 80s, neighbours' committees supported by the community had been reactivated. These achieved some improvements, such as the paving of roads and streets in 1992 and the resumption of celebrations of the Nueva Habana Anniversary. Today, the organisational network has widely changed, and is mainly represented by handicraft workshops mostly attended by mature and elderly women (described in chapter 8), clubs and health groups for the elderly and religious organisations. A few cultural and political organisations for young people are active in the población. Today, they are the main organisers of the anniversary celebrations and other activities for the revitalisation of the collective memory of Nueva Habana. A significant number of pobladores from different parts of Nuevo Amanecer take part in the anniversary celebrations, which feature street carnival and a stage with performances from bands and dance groups. The organisers bring to the present not only the symbols of the past, but also political reflections on present times, attempting to create a sense of community. The classic chant "Campamento - Nueva Habana!" is revived by the crowd in the festivities every year.

Finally, it is also important to note that new generations have continued the struggles for housing into the present (Angelcos & Pérez, 2017). My research however, is focused on the experience of the generation of women who arrived in Nueva Habana as young mothers. I have worked with women who live in both areas of the población and have made links to the new generation of women through their daughters and granddaughters.

*Image 5 Población Nuevo Amanecer. Area of 'new' houses  
Photograph by the author.*



*Image 6 Población Nuevo Amanecer. Area of 'new' houses  
Photograph by the author.*

## Politics, representation and ethics from a feminist perspective

*(...) while some youngsters [in the población] have the opportunity to pursue higher education, at the same time, many have been forced to quit just because they cannot afford it (they have to do it while engaging in paid work). The possibilities of living as a 'young' adult, of living a life away from the gaze of parents and other family member, of partying, working, of sharing housing with friends [and not family], or alone as a young adult [without children] seem much more restricted for them. Most live with parents until they start cohabitation, generally as parents themselves. Unmarried people living on their own or with friends are still quite uncommon. This is why my position as a woman living on my own – that is, with no parents, known husband and no children – seems overtly interesting for the people I meet ([I am 32], I could be a mother of three!!!). I am continuously asked whom I live with, where my parents live (also, if they miss me too much!), if I have family, if I cook and clean for myself. When I was introduced me to the knitting workshop she remarked on the fact that my parents live in another city. The curiosity that my position generates in the neighbourhood and the difficulties that men and women of older generations find in naming me (girl, señorita [Miss], señora [Mrs]) made me realise how singular my situation is. 'Youth', as I knew it, seems to me a middle-class luxury now.*

*...And on the radio which plays the [chart-topping] reggaeton, I hear, "How beautifully it suits you, that little skirt! She is a señora, she is not a señorita, she dances sexily and leaves me wanting [her]".*

Translated excerpts from fieldwork notebook, January 2015.

One of the premises of ethnographic work is that gathering data in the setting in which practices are produced, and getting close to the lives of research subjects, allows researchers to gain a wider understanding of 'others' lives. Feminist ethnographers (see, for instance, Abu-Lughod, 1990; Ghosh, 2016; O'Connell Davidson, 2008; Skeggs, 2001; Stacey, 1988) have argued against feminist conceptions of ethnography that prevailed during the 1980s, as the most suitable method for feminist research. It was argued that the method allows an exploration of women's experiences and voices – then, quite invisible to the social sciences – and to produce knowledge in a non-hierarchical relationship. Since then, it has been agreed that ethnography is not free from power relations but is shaped by them, in its

relationships and its representation. Stacey (1988) even went so far as to argue that ethnography “places the research subject at grave risk of manipulation and betrayal by the ethnographer” (p. 23). Instead of defining whether feminist ethnography is or is not possible<sup>33</sup>, “[T]he current cohort of feminist ethnographers argues that for qualitative fieldwork to be truly feminist, the collection of data as well as its presentation must be embedded within discourses of power” (Ghosh, 2016, p. 5). In this line, in this section I discuss questions of difference, ethics, representation and politics of power relations in this research, in order to position this thesis as a feminist exercise.

### **Developing a research relationship**

If I were not a woman, I would not have been invited to take part in a knitting workshop – explicitly a women-only space in which women’s practices and talk take place – which became a central location for starting and developing research relationships. Being a woman certainly facilitated my access to participant observation of domestic labour, another practice associated with women. Yet, while ‘woman’ was a shared position between the research subjects and myself as researcher, womanhood had been quite differently experienced throughout our lives. As shown in the excerpt from my field notes transcribed at the beginning of this section, these experiences were marked by our different positions in terms of class, age and sexuality. Such differences were recognised and shaped our relationship, but not in fixed ways, as they were transformed over time.

In the space of the workshop, humour was a mean to publicly recognise such difference. Since I am between 20 and 30 years younger than the generation at the centre of this research, a non-married woman – and, then, a *señorita* – but also a newcomer to the workshop, I became a favourite target for jokes, given my lower status in those respects. The women usually made fun of my supposed ‘ignorance’ in

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<sup>33</sup> ‘Can there be a feminist ethnography?’ was the title of two different papers that appeared almost simultaneously in the anthropological literature in the US. They both approached the question very differently, Abu-Lughod (1990) being more interested in the representation and style of ethnography, in line with contemporary debates within the discipline of anthropology. Stacey (1988) was more interested in the research relationship and the ways in which the product of the research served the aims of women’s liberation. Beyond specificities, these works are important here as they are telling of the contemporary debates around the relationship between a feminist way of doing research and ethnography.

sexual matters, with comments like *“she is too young, poor her, she does not ‘know’”*, my lack of skills in the art of knitting<sup>34</sup> or the colours I had chosen for my knitted pieces. Such ‘public’ recognition of our different positions also allowed me to carve a space as an outsider/insider within the workshop, facilitated, I believe, by my willingness to accept that position and follow the rules of their game.

In my relationship with the women at the individual level, our differences in terms of class, sexuality and age were further explored through questions about family bonds and educational background. The first question for them to position me was almost always whether I had children and, facing a negative answer, the women went on to ask questions about my relationship with my parents and marital status: *Are you married? Where do you parents live? Do you see them often? Who do you live with?* They also asked about my particular path in the educational system. Other questions – *“You get used to new places very quickly, don’t you?” “Where are you going to live when you are back in Chile [in the población or in another part of the city]?” “When you go back to your country [England!]...”* – recognised my temporary and instrumental presence in the neighbourhood. As such, these questions were not only aimed at exploring difference out of curiosity, but, more importantly, at understanding the character of this presence and further exploring my intentions for our relationship.

While living in the población did not make me a pobladora, it certainly created another relationship between the researched women and me as researcher, that of neighbours. Even if my presence was temporary, we could share the good and bad things about living there. Knowing where exactly I was living was revealed important for some of the women as it grounded our relationship in the space of the neighbourhood. The first time I visited Marta, I left her house around 11 pm, accompanied by her daughter and grandson, who walked with me to my house, more than 15 minutes away. Rosa, from whom I lived just few blocks away, asked me whether my parents knew where I was living and if they had come to visit me; after I replied affirmatively, she went on to ask what they thought of my new house. Bringing my ‘posh’ parents to the población I believe it positioned me as a more as ‘determined’, as she and Isabel told me once, and maybe more reliable person. This resonates with what a community leader told me warned me: pobladores do not like

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<sup>34</sup> I should say I am not that bad! However, they could more easily make fun of me than of their peers.



middle-class people who go to the población to take a 'bath of poverty', as she has witnessed over the decades.

Class difference was not erased but instead managed and negotiated through the possibility of engaging in similar practices and sharing experiences. The first day I went to María's for participant observation was a Wednesday. We cook a Chilean recipe called *porotos granados* – a soup made of beans and smashed corn. She gave me some of the food in a plastic container for me to eat the next day. The next Friday, when we met again, we ate the same lunch. In an informal handicraft meeting with some other women, she told them animatedly that I had been eating porotos granados for three days, and she was delighted that I was a 'good poor'. Similarly, my relationship with Isabel and Rosa was consolidated by going together to the feria, and especially around our shared enjoyment in shopping for second-hand clothing on the local open market. Like them, I could also wear second-hand clothing and could eat the same meal for three days. This, I believe, allowed me to expand and deepen our relationship, not by erasing our evident class difference but by constructing and negotiating difference *through* it.

The development of greater levels of intimacy was based on the women's assessment of me, an assessment strongly shaped by what they believed the relationship constructed by a person from a higher social class would be. My relationship with Señora Carmela is exemplary in this respect. My constant presence around her house and hanging out with her daughter initially worried her. Her daughter told me she thought that I might be a member of intelligence services or the police; such fears have accompanied her since the imprisonment of one of her sons during the dictatorship. After I talked to her directly and explained who I was and what I was doing, we started developing a relationship. A few times she told me I was a 'modest' person and thus deserving of being treated with care. Once, I asked her why she thought so, to which she responded in a way that made visible her careful observation of my behaviour. For her, it had been very significant that every time she invited me to take a seat, I just sat down, and did not shake the cushion before doing so. This shows how our relationship unfolded around her ideas about a trustable person, in which class seem to be central: unlike the way the women represented the middle classes, I engaged in a relationship that they perceived as being without moral

judgement, and thus I became for them not only the middle-class youn(ger) woman, but Valentina. My relationship with the women followed a similar trajectory.

Like the women, who held pre-conceived ideas about middle-class people, my acknowledgement of class, age and sexuality led me to initially relate to the women in ways I believed adequate or acceptable for them and likely to achieve a rapport. For instance, I sought to perform respectability in a context in which I felt morally 'too liberal': I followed a different route to the shop the few times I went with a housemate to buy some beers, or was really careful about language, avoiding swearing or using the coarse language that I would otherwise use with friends. Similarly, I found myself "lost in niceness" (Ryen, 2009), for instance, when I remained silent, or made a conciliatory comment, when confronted with a statement made by Señora Carmela on the servile position of women within the family, when facing racist comments, or the few times I was confronted with subtle, sexually laden commentaries from male members of the women's families. The relationship being established in the framework of a particular research problem, I often made interested comments or asked a particular question in the middle of a story that seemed useful to understand specific dimensions of the women's experience. I also had to re-build the relationship with Marta after she got angry with me because I invited her to the memory work activity as I had forgotten she had told me she dislikes remembering the past. Unlike Stacey (1988), who perceives such actions as the source of inauthenticity and manipulation, I believe they are inevitable part of the construction of a relationship that comes to exist as consequence of a research project and their potential to harm is dissolved with time.

In my own fieldwork experience, the negotiation of relationships and the unpredictability of everyday life made these types of performances difficult to keep up over time, and indeed put their utility into question. Uncountable times I had the feeling I had missed important ethnographic moments by failing to be attentive enough to concrete situations, or to ask the precise question that would have enabled me to further understand a topic. Performing respectability, I shamefully hid from the women with whom I had the closest relationship that I had a fling. Later on, I thought that disclosing this could have been very productive in touching upon women's discourses of gender and sexuality, central to my research. Which of the two options was more 'authentic' or 'ethical'? The results of such performances are

not univocal but contextual. Just as the women felt increasingly more inclined to share parts of their lives with me as the relationship was developing, I also felt freer to expose different opinions, or my own intimacies, when I was more confident that the women would not withdraw from the project (see, also Ryen, 2009). For instance, in the last months of my fieldwork, and during the follow-up period, I engaged one woman in discussion when she made racist comments or debated with a male political activist who insisted that male–female relations in Nueva Habana were marked by total equality.

What I found more problematic than the ‘authenticity’ of relationships<sup>35</sup> was that, in my becoming closer to and developing affection for the women, the boundaries of the research interaction became blurred. One woman, whom I helped several times to cook the food that she sells, did not want me to pay for the bread I was asked to buy for a housemate, on the grounds I had helped her a lot. I had to remind her a couple of times that I had not done so because I was a good person but because it was part of my job. Through telling me “*I know what your job is about. You’re snooping into other people’s lives,*” Señora Marta found a way to make sense of this rather loose way of researching. I deployed strategies to establish our differential positions, to carry out my work in the way I believed most ethical. Whenever possible, I kept my notebook visible to remind the women I was a researcher and not just a guest. With some of the women with whom I established the closest relationships, I never used my notebook, but I repeatedly reminded them that I was writing about our experiences together, that writing about our experiences was part of my work.

Thus, I believe that the question is not whether the ethnographer is authentic, but rather how the ethnographic relationship is negotiated over time – here, I believe, in the most honest and ethical way possible. In the context of this PhD thesis, writing seems to me more problematic because the women do not have the same ability to negotiate how they are represented. The next section further explores the ethics, aesthetics and politics of representation from a feminist perspective.

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<sup>35</sup> Indeed, what does ‘authenticity’ mean in the context of a relationship? Everyday life encounters are never fully transparent either.

## **A partial representation of pobladora women's experiences**

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, "it is the methodology and outcomes rather than the methods which define the research as being feminist" (Small, 2010, p. 1). In this sense, how the women are represented in this research acquires centrality. It is important to note that this project emerges from my own interest in my PhD topic. Therefore, the experiences of the women are mediated by this institutional context and the academic debates that shape this research (see, for instance, Mauthner & Doucet, 2000, p. 140; Skeggs, 2001). As such, this project does not claim to 'give voice' to the women. Instead, it is proposed as a partial picture of pobladora women's experiences of reproductive practices, located in the context of our ethnographic relationship and feminist political concerns.

The representation of Third World women as prey to local forms of patriarchy made by female Western ethnographers -who in turn, position themselves as self-actualised women-, has puzzled non-Western scholars and post- and de-colonial feminists of the global north and south (see, for instance, Espinoza Miñoso, 2016; Lugones, 2008; see Mohanty, 1991; Ong, 2001; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2008). As shown in the previous chapter, in Chile, the representation of women from the popular classes as 'traditional' or as failing to embody emancipated forms of womanhood has been (re)produced by local researchers occupying more privileged class positions. My research aims precisely to contest those representations. By bringing the symbolic dimensions of class into the analysis of practices of social reproduction, I hope to transcend this dichotomous representation of women as traditional/modern. I believe that highlighting the value of women's reproductive practices is a feminist task since, after all, they have been demonstrated to be a highly invisible, devalued despite being socially central.

Being a middle-class woman studying women from the popular classes, the ways in which class shaped the ethnographic relationship with pobladora women became central to the analysis. In some cases, the representation of class difference and the ways in which it shaped the fieldwork were transversal to all the relationships. As a highly educated person, it was assumed that I would be able to help with the knitting workshop's projects, with children's homework, or to provide an understanding of legal or medical issues. But class did not always shape the interactions between *me* and *them* in the same way.

Attention to the effects of class in shaping interactions also revealed differences *among* the women. Dimensions that were salient in one relationship were not in another. This was very clear in the specific ways the women assessed and came to understand my educational background in relation to that of their children. One woman constantly asked me where I studied, who paid for my studies, how I financed myself, how many years I had been studying. This dimension of my life was for her a source of useful information not only to get a sense of educational opportunities, but also to make available to her other standards by which to assess her positioning and her efforts towards upward mobility. Contrasted with my educational background, her daughter's technical degree in the area of health stopped being for her a source of 'distinction', as it had been considered among her extended family and the neighbourhood. Another woman's son holds a postgraduate degree and is a lecturer in a private university. For her, my educational background was perceived as a resemblance between her son and I, something about which she wanted us to talk, given his plans to study abroad. Another woman, probably the one with the lowest income, was not interested at all in exploring further this educational differential: it simply was. Attention to the different ways in which class difference permeated the ethnographic relationship highlighted how different markers of class shaped women's experiences in the context of their everyday life.

In this sense, this ethnographic text is not constructed as a naturalist ethnography, one that depicts a reality 'out there', left behind by the crisis of representation. I believe that, "[F]ield research is never something we do *to* research subjects, but something one *does* with research subjects. It is co-produced by researcher and subjects" (Fielding, 2004, p. 251 cit. in Ryen, 2009). In this sense, the interactions between the women and myself – as differently positioned subjects – became part of the ethnographic text as ways to explore the effects of class, gender, sexuality and generation. In this spirit, moments of conflict, tension, curiosity, misunderstanding and 'bad' feelings (shame, boredom, guilt) are in some cases analysed and become very productive in bringing to the narrative the textures of everyday life. Similarly, to contrast and compare, I include some autobiographical details<sup>36</sup>, or information from other ethnographic research about the practices undertaken in other social contexts, in order to illuminate meanings and the arguments made. In some cases, I

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<sup>36</sup> Here, I reproduce some of the styles acknowledged by critiques of naturalist ethnography (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) or used by women's ethnographies (Behar & Gordon, 1995).

have left explicit in the narrative what is uncertain, unknown, still problematic, leaving the door open to further interpretations. Through these strategies, I have attempted to represent the women in a way that is less biased by my own position, but that also provides the reader with clues to see how power relations have shaped the data and the analysis.

One of the main challenges in representing the women was dealing with the awareness that objectification of the research subject is inherent to all research. As O'Connell (2008) notes, "[T]o systematically investigate and document social action is to set oneself apart from it, and so to draw a boundary between researcher and researched" (p. 21). This is so, she argues, regardless of whether the research participants have given full ongoing consent or have actively participated in the process of shaping the research. It is the uncomfortable consequence of constructing the 'other' through writing, as a representation that is later published and disseminated, and over which the researcher loses control. Writing about others with a specific aim in mind implies "reifying certain aspects of their experience or identity" (p. 56). In this research, women's experiences are mediated by a process of selecting and editing fragments of speech and making decisions about which scenes of everyday life I would use to draw the research argument, a process entirely developed by me.

Given the centrality of morality in my understanding of class, at times, representation of women's lives has been particularly challenging. How to talk about practices of social reproduction motivated by lack of resources, or about the non-accomplishment of bourgeois standards of cleanliness, without hurting women who have historically been given the label 'dirty'? In this ethnographic text, I have put a great deal of effort into avoiding descriptions that could be read as moralising, by emphasising the contextual grounds in which practices are deemed as more or less important, and the extent they produce a sense of moral-worth. Even if the women gave me their consent to investigate their everyday life, there is no guarantee they will feel comfortable with the ways they are represented in this piece of research. The constraints of time and the distance involved did not allow me to further discuss the concrete representations here made. Nevertheless, I believe that, given the feminist aims of this research – those of bringing these forms of womanhood into the feminist debate and endowing them with value – it is worth the risk.

In this chapter, I have made explicit the research questions that have guided this research, the methods used in the ethnographic work and the grounds on which I claim the research follows a feminist methodology. In the following chapter, I start presenting the findings of this research by providing an account of how the pobladores are, and have been, symbolically framed in terms of class and gender.

## Chapter four

### Configurations of class, gender and urban space in the context of Chilean modernisation

On the way to school to pick up her son, Rosa tells me off because, in her view, I am getting thinner: the trousers I had bought during the previous period of fieldwork now fit me very loosely and she believes I should not wear them anymore. I defend myself, telling her it is not me, but the trousers. I make it clear that I will keep wearing them, since with them I can 'dress to impress' and they are comfortable. I add that this is especially great, because I bought them at the supermarket. She replies approvingly, "*You don't have a problem getting clothing from [the supermarket], do you?*" I confirm this, and she tells me how her daughter also knows how to buy cheap and nice clothing. But not everyone is like me or her daughter, she adds. In the context of a secret Santa at one of the workshops she attends, she is supposed to give a present to a woman who "*only likes expensive and branded clothing*". Rosa has bought her a pyjama suit at the supermarket and she is worried the woman might not want to wear it. I ask her if this woman lived in Campamento Nueva Habana. She replies affirmatively and adds, "*but she forgets she stank of fonola too*".

*Fonola* is a cheap roofing material made from thickened and corrugated cardboard and asphalt. *Fonola* shaped the landscape of past (and present) campamentos, and thus it is an icon of the poor, irregular and/or precarious settlements that shaped the urban landscape until the 1990s<sup>37</sup>. During the dictatorship, it was distributed charitably among the poor to repair the roofs of their dwellings. *Fonola* does not smell, but here it appears in a metaphor in which it is symbolically linked to poverty and unhealthy – smelly – housing conditions. For Rosa, that one '*stank of fonola*' in one's past remains a mark that can be concealed, but is not erased, by wearing expensive or branded clothes. To ignore this past is, for many mature and older women, perceived as pretentious. This comment by Rosa, which I heard repeated a

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<sup>37</sup>The historic housing shortage was reduced during the 1990s, when civilian governments, though lacking necessary urban infrastructure, raised the pace of construction of social housing. The organisation TECHO (roof), which works for the eradication of campamentos, counted 81 campamentos in the Santiago Metropolitan region, corresponding to 12.3 percent of the national total in 2016 (TECHO, 2016).



couple of times at Nuevo Amanecer, shows that precarious housing conditions remain a part of contemporary imaginaries of poverty. Only a few years ago, a newspaper parodied the poor condition of bus stops in Santiago by saying they are made of fonola<sup>38</sup>.

The inhabitants of población Nuevo Amanecer do not ‘stink of fonola’. Unlike in the campamentos, inhabitants of the población have legal ownership of their – in most cases – solid houses, connected to the sewage system, and which have access to paved streets and some urban services such as a local surgery, schools, sport centres and a few green areas. The women who participated in this research enjoy housing conditions that have been improved over time. Nevertheless, they live in a neighbourhood categorised by many as a población, a category of neighbourhood directly associated with popular classes, even though its inhabitants might present a great heterogeneity in terms of income or employment. For the women who participated in this research, and for some social researchers, this neighbourhood is, without doubt, a población. This was certainly so for María – probably the participant in this research with the best economic situation and not eligible for social welfare – who laughed over the phone when I told her I was “*in the barrio* [neighbourhood]”. She made sure to correct me: “*this is a población, Valentina*”. In her perspective, Nuevo Amanecer is not a barrio, a word that in Santiago is usually reserved for middle-class or traditional working-class residential areas, but a población. Even if some of its inhabitants – especially those who did not live in Nueva Habana – refuse that category.

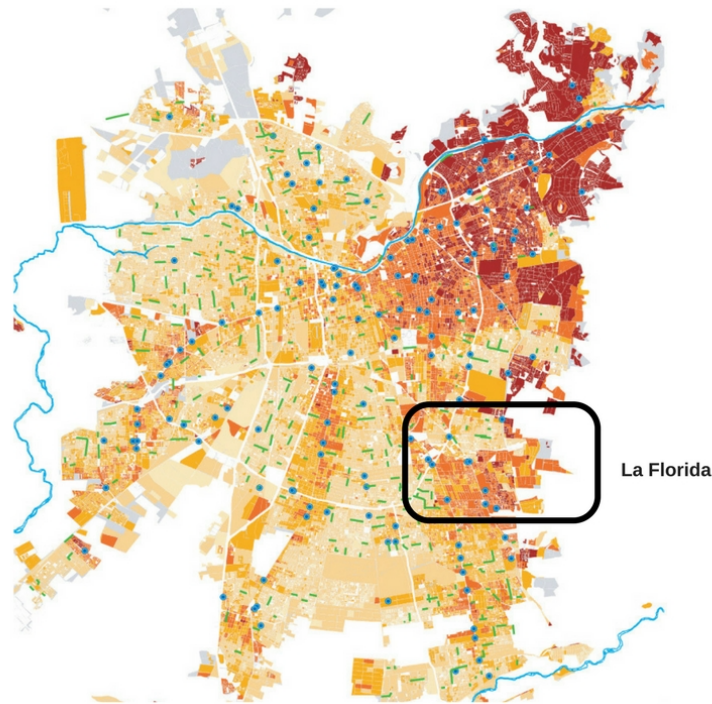
The concept of población is still used as a generic category to name the neighbourhoods where the popular classes live. It could be said that the contemporary landscape of poblaciones in Santiago is shaped by two different processes. Firstly, poblaciones which were the result of housing struggles and policies developed up to 1973. This includes poblaciones that originated from the eradication of the campamentos that, by the time of the coup, were located in the centre and north-east of Santiago which had not yet been ‘regularised’, and were re-located in peripheral boroughs (Leyton, 2015; Murphy, 2015, pp. 170–175). This, in a wider project to increase the market value of these ‘cleansed’ areas and promote urban ‘aesthetics of order’ (Murphy, 2015, pp. 164–79) in line with the neoliberal

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<sup>38</sup> The translated headline reads, sarcastically: “All that’s missing are bus stops made from fonola”. 6 July 2008 (La Cuarta, 2008)

transformation of the city and housing policies. This process resulted in a highly segregated city in which wealthier groups are concentrated at the North-East of the city (Greene, Opazo, Rosas, & Valenzuela, 2008), as demonstrated in the following map.

**Santiago de Chile, Metropolitan Area**



*Image 7 Social Segregation in Santiago de Chile*

*Lighter colours represent low-income households, darker colours represent high income households. Map extracted from Greene, et al. (2008).*

The landscape of poblaciones also includes housing developments created from the mid-1980s to the present,<sup>39</sup> targeted to families of the popular classes and those in extreme poverty, beneficiaries of individual or collective subsidies (Márquez, 2004, p. 187). These new poblaciones were built with poor architectural design and a lack of urban services that resulted in the marginalisation of their inhabitants (Rodríguez & Sugranyes, 2011). Many of these later housing developments have been named

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<sup>39</sup> Between the 1980s and 2006, almost two million housing units were built, about 500,000 targeted to low-income residents. From 1980 to 2000 some 173,000 homes for these groups had been built in Santiago, equivalent to 21 percent of the housing stock built in the Metropolitan Region (Rodríguez & Sugranyes, 2011).

*villas*. Nevertheless, in everyday and scholarly language, both kinds of development are still categorised as poblaciones (see, for instance, Aguilar, 2009; Besoain & Cornejo, 2015; Cornejo, 2012; Márquez, 2004; Méndez, 2002). This is so because the category of villa is more commonly used to refer to the lower middle and middle-class neighbourhoods where studies of the middle class have been often located (Bozzo, 2006; Méndez, 2002).

In this context, the boundaries between población and villa sometimes become blurred. Antonia, a woman in her mid-thirties, lives with her husband and three daughters in the housing development called “Padre Rodrigo Carranza” (see image 2), built in 2010 (Pinto, 2002, p. 47) and located north-west of Nuevo Amanecer. She obtained her house through a housing committee, founded by children of the original settlers of Nueva Habana, who mobilised and managed to have their houses built in the area. As Angelcos and Pérez (2017) show, contemporary mobilisations of pobladores not only demand their right to dignified housing, but also their right to the city. Instead of seizing land, they organise in housing committees and negotiate with the state for the building of housing solutions that do not imply radical changes to the area of the city in which their lives have developed. While Antonia’s neighbourhood is the result of this type of contemporary struggle, for some of its inhabitants the category of población is not adequate, although this is not the case for Antonia. Stopping the van in front of her house, she exclaims before getting off, “*We’re back in the población!*” and adds that some of her female neighbours feel uncomfortable with that category. “*Antonia, it’s not a población, it’s a villa*” they tell her, hoping to encourage her to change the ‘negative’ way in which she refers to the neighbourhood. She states she will keep calling it that to make fun of them. This is, of course, not the only reason. As she and I have discussed before, she feels proud of the historical struggles in which her parents took part, recognising that she was not as strongly involved in the process of obtaining her own house.

What this naming conflict reveals are the different meanings associated with the category poblador, its fuzzy boundaries and actualisation in relation to who claims it, and in which context. For older women, living in a población is without a doubt an improvement on the campamento in which they were at risk of ‘stinking of fonola’. This is the reason why Marta refuses to call the area where she lives a ‘campamento’, as it is still locally recognised today, which corresponds to the area where the ex-

campamento Nueva Habana was placed. For her, it is clear that, “*this is not a campamento anymore*”, and the word painfully reminds her of a past of poverty she wants to leave behind. Similarly, María makes sense of what she judges the dirty practice of some of her neighbours of washing away dog waste by running soapy water from their private patios to the street, by saying, “*they still believe we live in the campamento*”. In comparison to a campamento, in which certain practices might belong (even though she remembers Campamento Nueva Habana as quite clean), for María, there has been an improvement. Nonetheless, the word ‘barrio’ seems to her too pretentious to refer to the población where she lives.

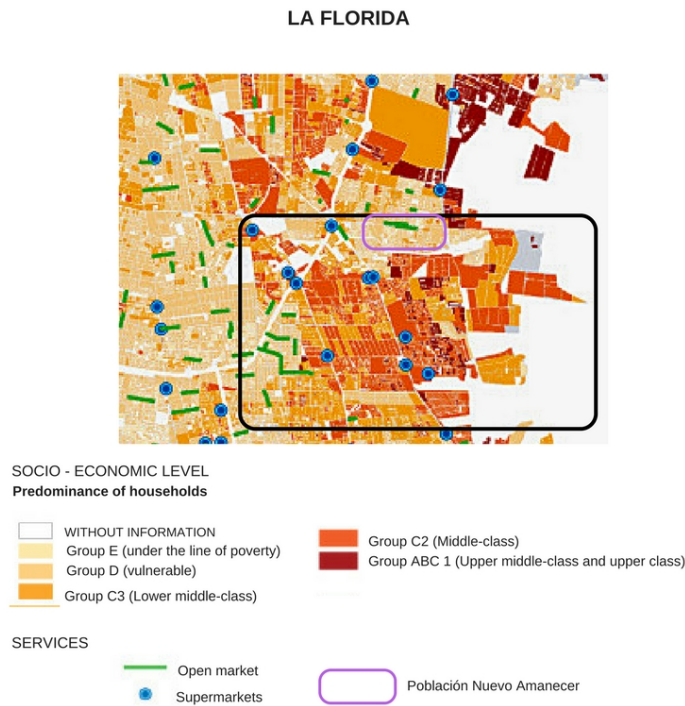
If struggles over the meanings of población and villa take place among those who live in these types of housing, those nuances disappear when we move from the local to the hegemonic symbolic systems that connect class and urban space in Santiago. As the territories in which popular classes live, poblaciones are stigmatised urban areas that have inherited negative values and are associated with violence, assaults and drug dealing. As such, their inhabitants are subject to discrimination, exclusion and stigma<sup>40</sup>, causing some to des-identify from their neighbours or forcing them to develop strategies such as changing their address to get a job (Álvarez & Cavieres, 2016; Araujo, 2011; Cornejo, 2012; Vidal, 2005). Of course, some poblaciones are more stigmatised than others, and living conditions in terms of access to urban services and/or safety vary widely<sup>41</sup>. What is central here is that, from the perspective of an outsider, a población is a priori believed to be ‘bad’ and ‘dangerous’ until the opposite is demonstrated. The first times I went to Nuevo Amanecer before starting my fieldwork, I did not pay much attention to the landscape, and was instead concerned about being in an unknown población during the night. I later realised that part of the población looked much like a lower middle-class neighbourhood, something that was also corroborated by a friend who grew up in a stigmatised población in Santiago. Indeed, the house where I lived during the time of fieldwork was located in the ‘new’ sector of the población, and had been built with high

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<sup>40</sup> This does not mean that, as Cornejo (2012) recognises, there is not an ‘objective basis’ to these associations. Indeed, poblaciones concentrate the highest levels of poverty and crime (FICED, 2008; Márquez, 2004). What is problematic is the application of categories that homogenise and a priori judge the morality of the inhabitants of poblaciones more generally.

<sup>41</sup> In 2012, CIPER, a magazine of investigative journalism counted 83 poblaciones in Santiago besieged by drug dealer gangs (Figueroa & Sullivan, 2009; Guerra & Figueroa, 2012)

standards, as demanded by the pobladores of Nueva Habana (see next chapter). While there are some localised issues, the población is quite a safe place. Yet, for the generation who grew up in a población, the word villa might condense their expectations of a better future.



*Image 8 Social diversity in La Florida*  
According to the map, Nuevo Amanecer is composed mainly by popular classes and some lower-middle classes (groups E, D, C3). Detail of map extracted from Greene et al. (2008).

Indeed, housing, together with education and labour, is an important subjective marker of social mobility (Méndez, 2002). In the borough of La Florida, in which Nuevo Amanecer is located, the symbolic difference between población and villa acquires special relevance. Nuevo Amanecer was part of the first cycle of expansion of this borough that took place between 1968 and 1973, when housing solutions for the popular classes were provided (Bozzo & Wolf, 2005). Being at the peripheries of the city, when its limits were freed by Decree 420 in 1979, La Florida underwent another cycle of expansion, with young lower middle- and middle-class families coming into new developments (Farías, 2009) called ‘villas’ – in implicit opposition to poblaciones – which promised a calm life in ‘bungalows’ at the feet of the Andes mountains. In one of those villas, and thanks to individual subsidies, I spent my adolescence. While the popular and lower middle classes want to remain close to the neighbourhoods where they spent their childhood (Stillerman, 2017), those who have

experienced a process of social mobility are confronted by the decision of moving to a better neighbourhood (Maria Luisa Méndez, 2008, p. 98). The aspiration of social mobility seems to be condensed in the idea of the villa.

The hegemonic negative values given to poblaciones and their inhabitants in present times are overtly related to drug dealing and its consequent violence. Such stigmatisation, however, inherits long-term historical legacies. The areas in which popular classes have lived, and their inhabitants, have been historically regarded as non-modern and immoral, and have had to struggle to achieve a respectable position. In this chapter I show how these notions were consolidated during the process of modernisation of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I excavate how the notion of home was envisioned in Chile as a means to transform the subjectivity of popular classes which were deemed by the elites, as embodying forms of gendered subjectivities inadequate for the modernising enterprise of capitalist production. I describe some of the most important features of the notion of home, intricately linked to the idea of property, and briefly note some of the efforts made by oligarchs first, and the elites of the national-popular period later, to encourage the nuclear organisation of the family based on the male breadwinner. Such organisation of the family was promoted among the popular classes as a means of assuring the adequate reproduction of the labour force in both biological and subjective terms. I also note how these notions of home and family were to some extent shared by proletarians, and how having a well-constituted home started to be symbolically associated with the respectable working class. In contrast, those unable to provide themselves with adequate housing were considered as the working-class 'other'.

I then turn to explore how the pobladores movement constituted its demands against the symbolic system of class that ascribed them negative values. I show that their expectations of home express the modern character of the movement and argue that, for pobladores, access to dignified housing was a route to proletarianisation – in other words, a route to becoming respectable. Having historically been positioned as the morally devalued 'other' of the respectable working class, pobladores engaged in symbolic struggles. I have already introduced how class is inscribed onto the urban space in present times, and I have given a flavour of how class is negotiated through the ways in which inhabitants categorise their neighbourhoods. I finish the chapter

with some examples of how the pobladores movement negotiated these negative ascriptions in the past.

### **Traditional subjectivity as obstacle for the modernising project in the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

The emergence of the 'modern' working class required a transformation of the subjectivities of the traditional peasant identities of popular classes of the colonial Chile that ended in the third decade of the 19<sup>th</sup>. It required converting unskilled, undisciplined and mobile peasants – or *peones*, the devalued category that named the rural seasonal surplus population – into modern proletarians. It was necessary to instil into them the 'spirit of capitalism' (Weber, 1991), or, as Echeverría (2007) writes, to produce subjectivities "centred around the capitalist organization of the production of social wealth, a special form of human behaviour; a special type of Humanity that is able to adapt to the demands of the better functioning of that Capitalist life" (no pagination, my translation). The capitalist modernisation did not only imply economic transformation; the making of subjects who were modern, productive (Macherey, 2005), adequate to the new forms of social production was also at stake among the people. In Chile, this implied effort to transform popular subjectivities.

After the disintegration of the rural colonial economy with the independence in 1823, peasants were forced to migrate. Numerous women settled permanently with their children in semi-rural plots called *ranchos*, where they produced their means of subsistence through growing food, selling handicrafts or providing spaces of popular amusement. From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, others increasingly found labour in industry or carried out jobs as washerwomen or seamstresses in semi-formal conditions (Brito, 1995; Hutchinson, 1995). Among the males, only the most qualified were able to find stable jobs in the recently expanded industries and ports. The great majority, the *peones*, remained circulating between seasonal jobs in agriculture, public works and mining (Brito, 1995, 2005; Salazar, 1985), within and beyond the boundaries of the nascent republic (Luco, 1961). Either because of their 'adventurous identity' (Salazar, 1985) or as a consequence of the labour market and high levels of unemployment in the cities (de Ramón, 2000), these men spent only some seasons in the cities, where they swelled the masses of the 'idle vagabonds' (*vagamundos malentretenidos*), as named by the elites.

In this context, the gendered subjectivities of the popular classes were not anchored in the family. As Brito (1995, 2005) notes, men and women engaged in more flexible relationships, marked by the autonomy of each partner. The patriarchal nuclear family, with the man as breadwinner model, was not a common living arrangement amongst the popular classes in the expanding cities. Most of the women engaged in income-generating activities and, studying the case of the ranchos, Brito (1995) argues they “valued themselves not as much as mothers but as owners of a self-built space that allowed them to value their trades even more” (p. 216). Children were raised with absent fathers and left the family home when they were still infants, while the practices of infanticide or abandonment were usual (Salazar, 2006). Brito (2005) also notes that even in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, masculine identity was not grounded in a man’s family role but instead among his peers, in the bar and playing games (p. 137).



*Image 9 Punished peones, 1862*

*Photograph by Emilio Chaigneau. Chilean National Library collection. Extracted from website: <http://www.memoriachilena.cl/602/w3-article-67901.html>*

The gender relations and forms of sociability and habitation of the popular classes were obstacles to the process of modernisation. On the one side, the city of the poor not only threatened with its ‘pestilence’ the perceived aesthetic and hygiene ideals of a ‘proper’ city but signalled symbolically its distance from the European ideal. The use of the phrase ‘African huts’ to name the ranchos (de Ramón, 2000, pp. 147-148) shows how racist discourses of the time intersected with class issues. Also, colonial fears of indigenous revolts and invasion had been inherited by republican elites now



translated into fear of the popular classes (de Ramón, 2000, pp. 147–148). Authorities sought to eradicate the ranchos under claims to end unhygienic conditions, worsened by the increasing migration (Brito, 1995; Ramón, 2000). They were also keen to eliminate what were considered immoral forms of popular amusement. On the other side, peasant culture and peones' mobility resulted in a lack of work discipline that threatened the profit expectations of capitalists. This was particularly intense in the mines, where high levels of labour absenteeism – especially on Mondays after hard-drinking weekends – desertion, escaping with salary advances or stealing minerals were common behaviours (Pinto, Lira, & Candina, 1999, pp. 107–8). Throughout the century, this was tackled by employing “(...) servile forms of subjugation [which] became the basis of the capitalist transition, as far as it was necessary for coercing the workforce”<sup>42</sup> (Illanes, 2003, p. 30).

In this context, workers mobility and poor health conditions among the popular classes raised concerns, initially among the elites, over the adequate reproduction of labour power and oligarch's social order in the so-called 'The Social Question'. This question emerged in a context of increasing levels of organisation and radicalisation amongst industrial, port and railway workers who embraced the doctrines of socialism and anarchism (Pinto et al., 1999, pp. 112–36). Initially, this debate suggested that the living conditions of the poor, the increasing emigration outside the country and the high levels of infant mortality<sup>43</sup> might threaten the future provision of labour power (see, for instance, Luco, 1961). During the 40 years that debate lasted (1880–1920), progressive and conservative voices were confronted by paying attention to the living conditions of the popular classes. Liberals and socialists argued for the relevance of structural inequality. From a conservative perspective, much of the debate was reduced to the question of the morality of popular classes, pointing to the “absence of familiar models to bear practices that can moralise and reproduce a certain social order” (Brito, 2005, p. 109). What is important is that the

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<sup>42</sup> In the mines of the Copiapo province, workers' mobility was restricted and they were forced to work for only one employer. Mining settlements were usually men-only; surveillance was imposed in sleeping facilities and, in some cases, popular entertainments such as cards or alcohol were forbidden. The coercive strategies of capitalists were facilitated by *ad hoc* policies and by the favourable disposition of police and local authorities to miners' interests (Salazar, 1985); these included whipping and jail punishment for workers who did not follow the rules (Illanes, 1990, 2003).

<sup>43</sup> Towards 1900, Chile had a negative population growth: more people died than those who were born (Illanes, 1999, p. 194).

conditions of reproduction of the popular classes were a matter of political concern, to the extent that social stability depended on them. Improving the living conditions of the poor, and their 'moralisation' through imposing new gender identities around the family, became, at the turn of the century, central dimensions to assure the appropriate reproduction of the labour force. Both expectations became condensed in the idea of home.

## **Home as technology of modernisation**

Evicted from the ranchos, many members of the urban popular classes and some of the middle classes were, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, living in *conventillos* (Castillo, 2016, p. 3). As described elsewhere (see, for instance, Castillo, 2016; Garcés, 2002b), they consisted of a group of poor-quality rooms, sometimes with no flooring, high humidity and mould, and no source of ventilation other than the entrance door. All rooms shared a common patio area in which everyday life activities, such as washing clothes or cooking, were carried out. A ditch crossed the patios – and in some cases even the rooms – for the disposal of used water and rubbish. With winter rains, ditches usually overflowed and drained into the rooms, with dramatic health consequences. Furthermore, families lived in overcrowded conditions, with several children sharing one bed, and even lodgers. Deprived and unhealthy conditions of habitation defined the everyday life of the great majority of inhabitants within the city.

During the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women from the elites arrived into the *conventillos* to teach their congener from the popular classes a new morality of motherhood, in line with the precepts of Christianity and modern science. Following medical research, they knew that infant mortality was to a great extent caused by mothers doing exhausting work until the day of the birth and/or by 'inadequate' childcare (Illanes, 1999). Social historians such Zárata (1999), Illanes (1999) and González (2014) describe how women from the popular classes, as subjects of charity, were trained in puericulture (the science of child rearing), hygiene and care for the sick. Women from the elite encouraged the women from the popular classes to quit paid labour and embrace a Catholic version of motherhood devoted to childcare. They also provided some basic goods of special relevance, to engage those women unwilling to receive instruction. In these visits "the lady-mother met the *pueblo-*

mother both to establish the difference between them and to reconnect broken ties” (Illanes, 1999, p. 205, my translation), as attempts to re-establish the oligarchs’ rule, increasingly questioned by politicised proletarian classes. Thus, oligarch’s restoration attempts took place in women’s bodies.

These proposed forms of motherhood resonated in a context in which a particular idea of home was emerging. Home was being envisioned as a technology for encouraging discipline, for producing subjects adapted to a capitalist mode of production, as Foucault<sup>44</sup> (2012) points out, without the mediation of the coercive measures employed in the Chilean 19<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, home appeared as a technology to encourage the popular classes to embody the ‘spirit of capitalism’ in a way that resembled the transition lived in Europe. Mackenzie and Rose (1983) showed how, in the birthplace of the industrial revolution, the state promoted the development of a separate sphere through the idea of home as a place where “a reasonable workforce could be reproduced with appropriate values and attitudes” (Wilson, 1977, pp. 11–15, quoted in Mackenzie & Rose 1983, p. 164). Popular women could give up their independence and become mothers (Brito, 2005), and adapt their hygiene and care practices to the requirements of a healthy population, but this would require a partner who could provide for her and her children. As Mackenzie and Rose note, in the UK, the idea of home was central to forming the subjectivity of working men:

The worker struggles to maintain the home as an independent site of non-capitalist production were ultimately unsuccessful for the majority of working people, who became fully proletarianized. Yet, State agencies were anxious to maintain the home as the separate sphere of reproduction: the private castle wherein the worker would be reproduced. Ideologically, this was of great importance in the battle to force male wage-earners to acquiesce to a working life of alienated labour and to the capitalist ‘work ethic’. This working life would seem to them worthwhile, or at least, tolerable, if the

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<sup>44</sup> Foucault focused on disciplinary institutions in the public sphere – such as workshops, armies or prisons (see, for instance, Foucault, 1977, 2012), leaving the family and the domestic sphere unattended. Donzelot (1997) followed his precepts to show how discipline was also produced within the family through the state’s ‘policing families’ over the labours of reproduction of labour power.

wages it paid could obtain another, separate life: a private haven for rest and recreation. (Mackenzie & Rose, 1983, p. 165)

The 'private' sphere of home, with its underlying model of gender and family formation, was also central in the Chilean process of industrialisation and the production of a 'modern' working class. Castillo (2016) argues that, although research on the area is limited, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, home became a symbol of social stability and a central dimension of the moral project of modernity. The notion of home is not reduced to the domestic space – the dwelling – but entails an idea of privacy, of a place where one can feel 'at home', where a particular sense of self can be developed (for a critical revision of the concept of home see Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Mallett, 2004; Mezei & Briganti, 2012). Rybczynski (1988) shows how the modern idea of home was historically constructed in the European context through notions of comfort, privacy, intimacy and domesticity. In the Chilean context of the beginning of the last century, as Castillo (2016, p. 2) states, these dimensions of the self were yet to be developed.

In encouraging home life, it was expected that men would occupy the breadwinning position within their families and, by extension, become responsible workers. A man with family responsibilities would go to work every day and avoid drinking and debauchery, while women, as proper mothers and dutiful housewives, would raise healthy and productive children for the reproduction of capitalism. How could discursive and material homes realise this civilising promise? I argue that this was developed in Chile in relation to three dimensions: property, the characteristics of the domestic space, and the modern industrial model of family and its gender roles.

The idea of home in Chile was linked to property (Espinoza, 1988; Murphy, 2015). Acquired in the market, housing implies a massive investment. Home ownership thus required a commitment to thrift, and, later, the payment of mortgages required discipline and foresight (Castillo, 2016, p. 10; Murphy, 2015, p. 53). At the same time, ownership of property, subject to valorisation and devaluation and able to be sold on the market or used as investment, would encourage workers' commitment to capitalist values (Mackenzie and Rose, 1983b, pp. 165–6). As, Murphy (2015) notes, the Chilean context seemed to be in line "to emerging transnational attitudes toward governance and homeownership" (p. 53). Saving for housing, paying mortgages and

developing an awareness of market prices were expected behaviours of the 'spirit of capitalism'. As a law dissertation submitted in 1900 stated:

There is no more effective means to develop in the people the spirit of consolation, to make it a supporter and a defence of order and social stability, than to make them owners. It has been proved that there is no more laborious, more assiduous and orderly worker than the owners; they have never been involved in disorders and revolts. (Aragón, 1900, p. 75 cit. in Álvarez & Cavieres, 2016, p. 156)

Furthermore, the material characteristics of the domestic space were conceived as a central feature of the moralising enterprise. The housing project of artisan cooperative "La Union", described by Castillo (2016) – built in 1926 thanks to a loan system established in housing laws of 1925 – is a good example of how these values materialised in housing projects. Houses were built in solid materials, with front and back gardens to promote healthy entertainment, and at least two rooms to assure the separation of the bodies of adults and children. Yet, there were no more than three rooms per house, to prevent families from accommodating lodgers or *allegados* – an increasing reality in urban popular households and perceived, by state agents and capitalists, as a factor of moral disorder<sup>45</sup> (p. 9). The featuring of a garden but especially also the differentiation of domestic space in rooms for adults and children were replicated in the following decades in different housing projects, in what came to be known as the 'single-family house' (Cofré, 2016).

Ultimately, and central for the arguments made in this thesis, these notions of home relied on a particular organisation of the family with differentiated gender roles: the modern industrial family. Housing alone could not make a house a home; if home was understood as a haven, as a retreat from work, this haven was expected to be produced by women's labour. The notion of 'home' as retreat was defined as such from the male position. It was believed that men would wish to come back home after a full day at work – and not divert to the bar – if they felt comfortable enough (see

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<sup>45</sup> Hosting relatives of friends and lodgers absorbed an important part of internal migration throughout the century. As Klubock (1998) shows, in the mining settlement of El Teniente, norms of occupancy forbade workers to live with extended families or to have lodgers (p. 62).

Brito, 2005; Figueroa Caravagno, 2009; Klubock, 1998). Men's discipline was also to be encouraged through domestic women's work.

The housewife's labour towards the production of home was effectively put in place in the mining settlements, from the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which, unlike in the previous century included the worker's family. Subject to stronger control, they had local regulations that restricted women's wage labour, and women's domestic role was encouraged through training and publicly recognised. Following Consuelo Figueroa's work, Brito (2005) notes how, in the coal mines of the southern city of Lota during the first three decades of the century, the administration organised competitions for the 'cleanest house'. Prizes consisted in goods for family use, in order to "strengthen the concept of home and the social benefit this idea represented" (p. 139). Similar contests, Klubock (1998) shows, were developed in the El Teniente mine, together with training in "domestic science and hygiene" (p. 55). He also shows how women's bodies themselves were conceived as a central element in the construction of 'home as haven': local newspapers encouraged housewives to please their husbands and to remain attractive and sexually desirable.

Emerging in a period ruled by oligarchs, this notion of home – that implicates property, adequate housing and the industrial modern model of the family – was maintained and reinforced in the following national-popular period and its project of modernisation fuelled by state-led industrialisation. In this process, home became a marker of social differentiation at the same time as it became a necessary need by the popular classes. It became an expanded aspiration for the thousands of families that did not have access to housing. Indeed, the housing shortage exponentially increased after the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in Santiago, which meant having a home was more an ideal than the actual reality of popular classes.

### **Home as marker of class difference and as a route to proletarianisation**

In this section, I draw on Murphy's (2015) argument that homeownership is, in Chile, a sign of social and moral status that materialises the symbolic link between property and propriety. Such notions have however a long history and can be traced back to colonial times when, he notes, urban property holding had great value and prestige

(p. 40). Through the work of Murphy and other social historians, I show how, through the decades, the notion of home symbolically linked the lack of appropriate housing to immorality, and thus, to the 'other' of the respectable working class. Skeggs (2004) argues that the connections between property and propriety "have long been central to the formation of the middle-class self" (p. 175). Here, instead, I argue that through the link between propriety and property, struggles for home represented, at least until 1973, a refusal to be categorised as the 'other'. I call it, the pursuing of home as a route to proletarianisation.

During the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, housing and living conditions were a central part of proletarian struggles. In 1906<sup>46</sup>, a cycle of protest took place in Santiago against the raising of rent, high food prices and meat shortages. According to Murphy (2015), protesters belonged to privileged sections of the popular classes, accustomed to better living conditions: artisans, transport and manufacturing workers, and *inquilinos* (stable sharecroppers who enjoyed better conditions and prestige than casual peones) who had recently migrated to Santiago (p. 51). In 1919 and 1925, there were organised rent strikes in which conventillo tenants refused to pay their rent until their dwellings were repaired (Castillo, 2016, p. 13; Garcés, 2002a, p. 31). In parallel, consumer associations, sport clubs, cooperatives and societies had emerged in popular neighbourhoods, in close relationship with trade unions, seeking to establish a baseline of living standards. Despite a diversity of political tendencies, these organisations positioned themselves as citizens' organisations and claimed "to represent dignified Chileans, whose propriety made them deserving of better treatment" (Murphy, 2015, p. 50).

Arguably, organisations and demonstrations were led by the already 'modern' proletarians. Since the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, increased numbers of men and women had been employed in proletarian jobs in industry and ports. They had inherited artisans' ideals of people's regeneration -that promoted the values of education, culture, temperance, sports and political engagement- and their organisations such as mutual societies, federations and trade unions (Grez, 2007; Pinto et al., 1999, pp. 112-3). The so-called 'Enlightened Proletarians' claimed to be

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<sup>46</sup> During 1906, a wave of protests also reached the potassium nitrate mines in the north of the country. Many protests ended in massacres, where the army killed workers and their families in the city of Iquique.

the truly 'modern subjects' through the values they had inherited from the artisans: disciplined, austere, hardworking, respectful of moral codes and embodying healthy habits such as temperance (Pinto et al, 1999, pp. 115–16). Through these values, they aimed to differentiate themselves from both the immoral oligarchy and the violent and undisciplined lumpen (see, also de Ramón, 2000, p. 193). Like the elites, the proletarians also aimed to transform popular culture into a 'modern' culture, but unlike them, they embraced a model of society other than capitalism. Modernity was, in their view, either socialist or anarchist, and by the early 1930s the Communist and Socialist parties had been created.

Hutchinson (1995) notes that while these proletarians envisioned a model for the country other than capitalism, struggled for women's rights and promoted a culture of respect between the sexes, they imagined a future in which women would go 'back to the home' to find fulfilment as mothers. Women, who had increasingly entered the tobacco and textile industries, indeed developed a feminist consciousness in the so-called 'proletarian feminism'. The historian provides evidence of how writers of the seamstress union's feminist publication, *'La Palanca'* (1906–1907), advocated for equal salary, abortion and childcare and envisioned, at the same time, a future in which they could devote themselves to the rewards of motherhood. Women's wage labour was interpreted as another demonstration of the evils of capitalism. Yet, unlike the middle-class ideal promoted by the elites, in the proletarian version, this position did not mean women's confinement to the home, but saw them integrated into the active community, into social and political life. Towards the end of the 1930s, however, proletarian parties abandoned revolutionary ideas, adapting themselves to the institutional 'rules of the game' (Moulian, 1992 cit. in Pinto, 2005, p. 10) by joining the Popular Front, which ruled between 1938 and 1949<sup>47</sup>. They expected economic development to bring an expansion of welfare, understood as a process of 'integration' into social citizenship (see introduction). According to Roseblatt (2000) "Popular Front leaders' gender ideals drew on models of work and family that had been prevalent in the worker's movement since at least the turn of the century and served to secure the adhesion of organised labourers" (p. 45).

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<sup>47</sup> I follow the periodization of Roseblatt (2000), who signals 1949 as the last year of rule of Popular Front, year in which the Communist Party was made illegal.



The making of a productive, disciplined and respectable working class was pursued by encouraging the constitution of 'well-constituted homes' (Roseblatt, 1995). As Roseblatt (2000) shows, for the case of the rule of Popular Front, policy makers gave centrality to women's position as mother/housewife as a means to escape poverty and to boost the 'regeneration of the race'<sup>48</sup>, through proper housekeeping. Policies were implemented that encouraged the withdrawal of women from the workforce, such as a family wage and family benefits that women could claim for themselves, and efforts made to encourage legal marriage. Conflating social and health problems such as alcoholism, prostitution or children's 'illegitimacy', and lacking the tools to effectively help beneficiaries, social workers would usually recommend strengthening gender roles: "proper housekeeping and thrift were their principal recommendations" (p. 171). They also 'policed' (Donzelot, 1997) practices of childcare and hygiene and would encourage women from the popular classes to quit their jobs or, alternatively, to undertake income-generating activities that did not interfere with childcare, such as working as a washerwoman. Decades of this type of policies had their effect. If in 1907, in the early stages of industrialisation, women comprised 28 percent of the total workforce, in 1960 this figure was at its lowest level in history, at 22.4 percent (Power, 2002, pp. 62-63).

These ideals of femininity, perceived as 'modern', in some cases were either impossible to achieve or encountered resistances among the popular classes and, by the 1960s and early 1970s, they had started to change. For instance, Roseblatt (2000) notes, some popular women complained or behaved aggressively towards young social workers who wanted to teach them how to care for children, and some refused periodic medical checks for sexually transmitted diseases. She also shows how men failed to provide for children they did not want to recognise at the same time that many single mothers had to work for a living. The most radical section of the

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<sup>48</sup> In Chile the 'degeneration of the race', signalled by 'unproductive' behaviours such as drinking or vagrancy, or those that threatened the 'civilised' political order, such as political organisation or strikes, mainly referred to class. While eugenics was a public discourse (Cárcamo, 2014; Castillo, 2016; Roseblatt, 2000), the Lamarckian approach that emphasised the influence of the environment in the expression of genes was mainstream (Roseblatt, 2000, p. 41). This perspective was also sustained by the spread of Nicolás Palacios' (1918) thesis that racial mixture made Chileans an homogenous 'race' (Walsh, 2015), which deflected attention from the biology of 'race' and instead concentrated on the material living conditions and moral characteristics of the popular classes.

women's movement during the later 1930s and 1940s, the Movement for the Emancipation of Chilean Women (MEMCH, by its name in Spanish) not only struggled for political rights, but also demanded better working conditions for women and, to some extent, questioned notions of the feminine anchored in the domestic sphere (Kirkwood, 1990). These orthodox ideals of women's domesticity started to be destabilised through women's involvement in mothers' centres (Valdés et al., 1989). Furthermore, alongside representations of women as mothers, popular and political magazines started to depict women in new positions, as militant comrades, professionals or politicians (McGee Deutsch, 1991, pp. 300–301; Vidal, 1972). As will be shown in depth in the next chapter, women were involved in community organisations of the pobladores.

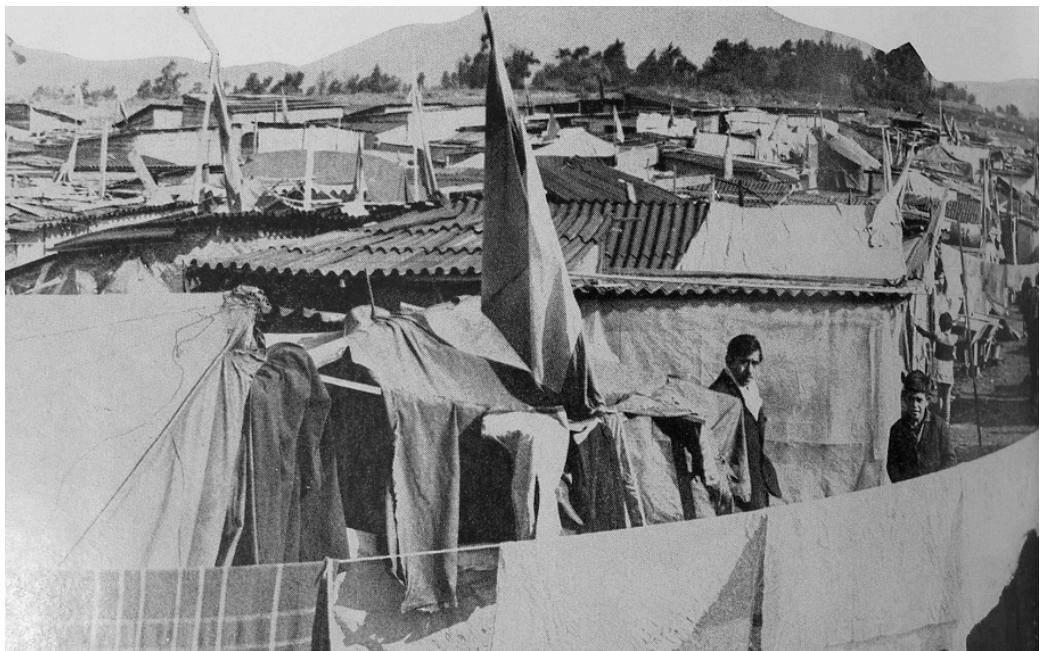
More than the specific historical events, it is important to emphasise how this notion of home became constructed as directly corresponding to the proletarians, understood as the 'respectable' working class. With stable employment, greater salaries and access to social welfare – including housing – this group was in a better position in material terms to embody the 'male breadwinner' model. Some others could only access unstable forms of employment, or employment in industries with low salaries and engaged in informal income generation activities, remaining excluded from social welfare (see Faletto and Cardoso, 2003). This differential access to resources, together with an understanding of modernisation as a moral project, resulted in the symbolic differentiation of class: on the one hand, the 'respectable working class' – 'productive', disciplined, clean, with 'well-constituted homes' – deserving of benefits, on the other, the 'other' poor – dirty, lazy, unruly – whose poverty tended to be explained by their immorality.

This conflation of material and symbolic dimensions of class became increasingly translated into the urban space as the housing shortage became more pressing. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, slums, locally known as callampas, became a temporary housing solution for thousands of the poorest families, who could not access other forms of habitation. Murphy (2015) has noted that, "[b]y the 1950s and 1960s, unionized, fully employed workers, especially in the copper mines, generally lived in legally established residences, if not always in homes of their own" (p. 61). This situation reinforced the notion that the inhabitants of informal settlements were not part of the working-class, did not have the appropriate types of families, and did

not share the values of modern society, instead having a passive, immoral and 'traditional', peasant subjectivity (Vekemans, 1966, see, also, Cofré, 2007, Garcés, 2002) that needed change and integration. For instance, through an analysis of a 1950s' social work dissertation, Garcés (2002) shows how callampa inhabitants were considered to be criminals, idle, "the social scrap, the unproductive part of society" (Ramírez cit. in Garcés, 2002a, p. 52); they were seen as embodying values that denied progress, the lumpen proletarians. This prejudice against and othering of pobladores or callampa inhabitants was also maintained by leftist parties who initially assumed them to be the lumpen, and only later started to see political potential and organise this group (Castells, 1973; Salman, 1997, p. 143). Callampas were, to the outside gaze, understood as the expression of the 'others' of the respectable working class inscribed onto urban space. The theory of marginality reviewed in the literature review was not new but inherited this historical legacy. "*Vale callampa*" (it is worth callampa) is an expression still used today to refer to something or someone with no value.

The reality of the majority of the callampas' inhabitants was, however, quite distant from these morality-laden representations. Social workers of the 1950s, who worked with real people, realised how erroneous these perceptions were, and that "the nature of callampa inhabitants was the same as that of the proletarians" (Garcés, 2002, p. 52). They indeed had expectations of adequate 'homes'. Historians and sociologists (Espinoza, 1988; Garcés, 2002b; Murphy, 2015) have shown the callampas' inhabitants struggled to improve their living conditions through local organisations that sought to provide urban services, such as electricity or drinking water fountains. Indeed, as Mann noted in 1972: "Chilean marginal populations are in great measure knowledgeable of urban life, desirous of integrating with predominant socio-economic structures [...]" (pp. 3-4). At the same time, numerous families held saving accounts, or were organised in committees which were usually formed to apply for definitive solid housing that they could call home. Appropriate homes, a symbol of modernisation, were an expectation of the great majority.

*Image 10 Proletarian neighbourhood built thanks to state's credit, 1912.*  
Unknown author. Chilean National Library collection. Extracted from website:  
<http://www.memoriachilena.cl/602/w3-article-74394.html>



*Image 11 Población Callampa, Santiago, 1961.*  
Unknown author. Camara Chilena de la Construcción Archive. Extracted from  
<http://biblioteca.cchc.cl/galeria/ficha.asp?id=38747>

The negative values associated with the urban space of callampas and their inhabitants, however, only became contested publicly through the politicisation of land occupations, or tomas. Through a newspaper search, Murphy (2015) notes how the term pobladores was used from the 1930s by squatters who claimed ownership of the lands they occupied on the basis of their 'good use' of them (see, also Espinoza, 1988, pp. 155–161). This concept had a more valued meaning:

Yet, the expression still referred, as it had since colonial times, to inhabitants who had legal residence and deserved to be part of the polity. (...). As a term, pobladores conveyed a sense of belonging. By living in homes of their own, pobladores presumably worked in the legal economy and *had the right kind of families*. They should therefore enjoy the full rights and privileges of citizenship. (Murphy, 2015, p. 58, italics added)

Like those earlier pobladores, the pobladores who seized land between the fifties and the early seventies gave legitimacy to illegal actions by claiming their 'propriety'. Unlike the callampas, which mushroomed from one day to another, politically shaped tomas usually had the support of professional and labour unions, the Church, university students and other civil society organisations (see Espinoza, 1988, pp. 239–269). In the newly established campamentos, pobladores attempted to demonstrate that not only did they comply with formal criteria for the allocation of state help – i.e. they had the requisite savings – but were also families who behaved appropriately. This was especially relevant during the periods in which leaders negotiated over seized plots of land. During such times, leaders called into question those who were drunk and causing trouble, and ensured the women kept their dwellings clean and children continued their schooling (Fiori, 1973; Murphy, 2015, pp. 96–97). Pobladores felt compelled to demonstrate they were not the immoral, dirty, and unwilling-to-progress subjects depicted by the hegemonic symbolic system of class (and gender). As Cortés (2014) notes:

It is not surprising that a great proportion of the discourses and practices of pobladores in La Victoria were directed to deconstructing the image of 'callampa inhabitants'. A good example of this exercise of symbolic cleansing is the building of the 'circular school', collectively built (...). Through the school the collective efforts orientated towards self-

improvement, formation and education, the true values of 'working people', were reflected. (p. 245, my translation)

Despite their organisation and politicisation, given the precarious conditions in which they initially lived, pobladores remained associated with the negative moral values that were historically ascribed to the inhabitants of callampas. Señora Carmela, one of the women featured in this research, told me that when she went to the hospital to give birth to one of her numerous children, nurses and doctors were surprised and almost scared because she lived in Nueva Habana. A similar situation was experienced by Señora Herminia when a relative who visited her was impressed by the 'poor' conditions she lived in. Carrying the marks symbolically associated with immorality – they '*stank of fonola*' – pobladores were constantly forced to demonstrate that they were respectable, 'appropriate', subjects.

The expectations of 'home' life and the ways in which pobladores framed their struggles demonstrate that popular men and women had, by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, incorporated to a great extent 'modern' values and gendered subjectivities. Mattelart and Mattelart's (1968) study on the image of women (discussed in detail in the following chapter) also supports this view. However, in the case of homeless families, conditions did not allow them to realise these expectations. Grounding their politics around dignified housing and well-constituted homes, many women undertook a key role in the organisations leading the struggle, although in different degrees (Murphy, 2015, p. 92; Valdés, 1988, pp. 82–83). As research into other types of movements has demonstrated (for participation in political opposition see Power, 2002; for peasant struggles see Tinsman, 2002), and as will be seen in the next chapter, women found it necessary to engage in this type of struggles if they wanted to appropriately embody the ideals of motherhood and care for their families<sup>49</sup>.

In this sense, by struggling for their expectations of a dignified home, pobladores claimed their respectability, thus unsettling the symbolic moral boundaries that separated the 'respectable' working class and the poor. In this light, I argue struggles for home were, at least until 1973, perceived by pobladores as a route to proletarianisation. If, by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, respectability was symbolically reserved

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<sup>49</sup> This does not mean, however, that some of the women who achieved high leadership positions were prevented from understanding their political activity in relation to a wider political process.

for the proletarian classes, pobladores' demands for adequate housing – as necessary to develop the type of life they expected and deserved – unsettled this distinction. They reconfigured the relationship between living conditions and a certain morality. Indeed, in a context in which social polarisation was increasing around the dichotomy between reform and revolution, not only leftist political parties (see, for instance, Garcés, 2005; Murphy, 2015; Salman, 1997, p. 145) but also social scientists were forced to consider these groups as part of the working class (Castells, 1973, Pastrana and Threlfall, 1974) at least, until the national-popular period was gone. As has been shown, in the past and in the present, pobladores have inhabited this category in unstable and precarious ways.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have explored the process of modernisation to set a wider context for understanding the ways in which pobladores have been symbolically positioned in class and gender categories, and how these have been inscribed onto the urban space. I have argued that past and present positioning should be understood in the light of a particular idea of home that served to produce and reinforce class differences within the popular classes throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Those who did not have appropriate homes were more easily classified as not belonging to what was understood as the 'respectable' working class.

I sustained this argument by showing how capitalist modernisation required a transformation of the traditional subjectivities of popular classes, which were perceived by the elites as inadequate for the modernising project given their supposed lack of labour discipline and inadequate reproduction of labour power. Modernisation thus encouraged the formation of gendered subjectivities around the model of the modern industrial family. In this model, men and women are expected to be committed to production and social reproduction, respectively. The notion of home as haven was increasingly perceived by authorities, capitalists and a section of the proletarians as the means to change popular forms of masculinity which, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were still more associated with the bar. This particular notion of home was underpinned by ideas of home ownership, adequate housing and the modern industrial organisation of the family. Pobladores, unable to provide themselves with appropriate housing and usually inhabiting dwellings with

inadequate and unhygienic conditions, were assumed to have an immoral organisation of the family, an idea reinforced by the presence of many working women. Pobladora women became the bodies onto which the negative values of the working-class 'other' were inscribed.

In this context, pobladores framed their struggles in ways that contested this moral categorisation of class and gender. During illegal land occupations and processes of negotiation with the state, they positioned themselves as modern subjects: struggling for housing in which to live with their families, hard-working, clean, tidy and organised, and eager to live a dignified life, for which they were deserving of state help. In this sense, I argued that, at least until 1973, access to adequate housing was, for pobladores, a route of proletarianisation, to the extent that they expected it could position them as respectable citizens. Through their struggles, pobladores unsettled and made more permeable the categories of the 'respectable' working class and its other. Yet, since many continued to live in precarious material conditions, they could only inhabit these moral categories of class in unstable ways.

In this sense, pobladores engaged not only in struggles for housing, but also in symbolic struggles against the negative values historically ascribed to them. In this chapter, I briefly showed how this contestation took place through public struggles for housing. I gave a flavour of how pobladores negotiate their class positioning through the categories they use to name the places they live in. In the following chapter, I explore in more detail the negotiation of class and gender position in the organisation of Campamento Nueva Habana, and further explore the type of subjects this organisation aimed to produce. Later, I turn to how this negotiation of class and gender positions takes place in the domestic space through everyday life practices of social reproduction such as cleaning and provisioning.



## Chapter five

# Community organisations and the (re)production of forms of classed and gendered subjects

Since pobladores, as a category defined by having waged struggles in the realm of social reproduction, an analysis of the settlers' generation pobladora women's subjectivities cannot avoid a reflection on the effects of this community's organisations<sup>50</sup> on the ways in which they recognise themselves as classed and gendered subjects. Indeed, at different historical moments, especially during the period of existence of Nueva Habana and later during the dictatorship, community organisations were central for assuring the reproduction of people's lives. In light of this, in this chapter I explore the ways in which particular forms of community organisations, and especially different modes of participating in them, produced particular forms of woman- and manhood. In the previous chapter I showed how having a 'well-constituted' home came to be signified as a marker of belonging to a 'respectable' working class. I also showed how adequate housing, linked to a specific idea of home, came to be understood as a need, and how the struggles of pobladores were framed in relation to these configurations of family and home and became socially legitimated. Here I examine the classed, gendered subjects, and in relation to sexuality that were produced – or aimed to be produced – through these organisations. I do this by navigating through the various ways in which organisations served the reproduction of different dimensions of people's lives and were articulated with the domestic sphere, emphasising how women experienced their participation in them.

There is an important body of literature focused on social and political participation in Latin America, which will be useful to sustain some of the arguments made here. Scholars have shown how women's participation in political, social and/or

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<sup>50</sup> By community organisations I refer to the social organisations that were formed at the local level of the campamentos, such as territorial, health or education organisations that were central for the production of the urban space and to provide urban services necessary for the social reproduction of the families.

community organisations has unsettled the discourses and the practice of women's domesticity. These tensions are also recognised and central in this piece of work. Through a focus on social reproduction, however, I aim to provide a more complete, and thus more nuanced perspective on the ways in which popular women's classed and gendered subjectivities were produced through this participation.

I start by proposing that, while popular women claimed to support the discourses of women's domesticity, they were rarely able to embody it. In particular, I show how the normative expectations of women's domesticity were constrained by a lack of adequate housing, motivating women to join land seizures as an action towards achieving the ideal of a 'proper' home, as historically conceived. Then, I show how, by shaping social reproduction in specific ways, organisations aimed to produce, or produced unintendedly, classed and gendered subjects in contrast to hegemonic discourses of womanhood. In the first period of Nueva Habana, 'functional' organisations aimed to produce a revolutionary subject through blurring the boundaries between the public and private sphere, shifting the ways in which class and gender were historically configured. I show how women experienced these transformations as subjects caught in the middle of different systems of value, which they had to negotiate in everyday life. I finally analyse women's participation in 'productive' organisations during the dictatorship period, to explore the new forms of womanhood they produced and their limits.

## **Gendered expectations of home**

As was shown in the previous chapter, by the time the women that participated in this research were arriving in Nueva Habana, men's and women's position within the industrial modern family were symbolically linked to classed notions of respectability. According to a study carried out in Chile by Mattelart and Mattelart (1968), lower- and middle-class women believed that the desirable behaviour for a married woman was to be 'of their homes' (*ser de su casa*). This was not perceived as such by upper-class women, for whom dynamism and enthusiasm were more relevant. In 1970, women represented approximately 23 percent of the workforce, and single women were almost twice as likely as married ones (or common-law married) to work outside the home (Power, 2002, p. 66). The Mattelarts' study showed that women assessed men on the basis of their breadwinning responsibilities. Importantly, this assessment was especially acute among the popular classes, who

tended to reduce notions of desirable masculinity to this dimension. This shows how in the local context, class positioning and material conditions shaped not only expectations, but also the capacity to embody specific forms of classed and gendered subjecthood. In this section, I focus on the distance between expectations and/or discursive figures about what a woman (and a man) ought to be, and the availability of these positions given actual material conditions. Especially relevant in setting these material conditions was the lack of what was deemed appropriate housing. Thus, I explore women's values and expectations around home life and the ways in which these shaped their motivation to take part in land occupations.

Given the hegemonic symbolic positioning of women as mothers and wives located within the domestic space, the experience of housing as a need seems to have been more pressing for women than it was for men. If, as has been shown, in the 1970s, men grounded an important part of their subjectivity in their breadwinning abilities, they also had recourse to wage work as a space in which to feel valued. For women, on the contrary, symbolically positioned in the domestic sphere, having a domestic space in which they could deploy their autonomy as adults was central to grounding their value. As Valdés (1988) also noted:

Through union, marriage or cohabitation, these women expected to become *dueñas de casa* [literally masters of the house, meaning homemakers], wives and mothers. To do that, they required a house, namely, a physical space to exercise their condition as housewife. The house reveals itself as the main realm of action and decision that this culture has reserved for women. (Valdés, 1988, p. 82, my translation)

For the women in this research, marriage or common law partnership was experienced as a step towards autonomy and adulthood, and therefore having a domestic space of their own became central. They expected to live independently from their parents' households, where they were burdened with domestic labour (see, also Jelin, 1980), had to comply with their rules and were policed in their sexuality. For instance, Hortensia got engaged to Roberto to escape an abusive father; Rebeca got engaged for similar reasons. For Señora Marta, who worked as a domestic worker and lived in her employer's home, starting cohabitation and becoming a mother was her chance to claim a life beyond her work. Isabel, a second-generation woman in her fifties, told me, "*you get married believing you're going to be free.... You*

*don't know that afterwards you have to obey your husband*". Other women were less moved by a desire for autonomy; rather, they felt forced to take these decisions. This is the case for Juana, a woman from another población<sup>51</sup> who got married because a neighbour asked her to be his fiancé and she felt she would lose her respectability in the neighbourhood if she declined the offer. In any case, starting a partnership or becoming a mother implies an increase in status from the position of *señorita* (Miss) to that of *señora* (Mrs). This was also perceived by research carried out in the 1980s, as shown in the literature review (Raczynski & Serrano, 1985; Valdés, 1988).

Historically developed notions of privacy and intimacy necessary for the nuclear family model were embedded in the idea of autonomous family life. 'Home' was, and is, perceived as the space where it is possible to express oneself in ways foreclosed in the public space or under someone else's roof. This is made clear in the narrative of Señora Carmela, one of the eldest participants, when she tells her children:

that it's important to save for a small roof, because it's so beautiful to have a roof, so beautiful because nobody has to give you approval [for] the time you arrive, you can bring anyone you want to your home, you don't have to be looking at anyone else's face, you see? You can laze around, you can even stay without clothes if you want, it's your house. Can you see? This is what happens, it's just beautiful (Translated excerpt, Señora Carmela interview, January 2016).

However, Señora Carmela very rarely goes out; she hardly ever meets anyone outside her kin or invites people to her house, not to mention that she lives with her two daughters' families as lodgers or *allegadas*, plus two of her several grown-up children. Her sense of privacy has less to do with having a space of her own as an individual than with having a space for the family that has been her life project, which includes her children and their new families. Yet, for her, having a place to live and 'do as she pleases' is central to her positive assessment of her life. I will show in the next chapter that 'what she pleases' usually involves sacrificing her own wellbeing for already grown-up sons and is not necessarily related to the notion of house as haven or as a space of leisure.

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<sup>51</sup> Carried out in a stage of pilot fieldwork in 2014. See methodology.

The centrality of having a domestic space where ‘nobody has to give you approval’ as a form of family autonomy can be further unravelled by analysing the negative experiences of many who lived as *allegada* before joining the land seizures. As *allegada*, a family live in the dwellings of friends or relatives; they share a single room within the house or build their own in the patio area. Usually, they do not pay rent, but have specific payment arrangements for bills and expenses such as electricity, water or gas (Bustamante & Sagredo, 2009). In these conditions, families usually share the toilet of the main house, have access to the kitchen (sometimes *allegados* have their own kitchenware, although not always access to water), where they cook separately, and might be more or less free to use other common areas, such as the dining or living room. The lack of differentiated spaces for parents and children – a long-standing housing expectation for the nuclear family (see chapter 4) – and the high level of density in the domestic space create multiple tensions. In short, the possibility of families living *allegada* to feel ‘at home’ in their domestic space is limited.

Living *allegadas* restricted women’s expectations of autonomy as young mothers. This was made explicit in interviews I carried out about their arrival to Campamento Nueva Habana, in which some women told me about their lives as *allegadas*. Limits and rules imposed by the host family undermined women’s autonomy as *dueña de casa*. This was, for instance, the case for Margarita. Before she arrived to the Ranquil land seizure, the predecessor of Nueva Habana in 1970 (see methodology), she lived in the flat of her parents-in-law. In an interview, she remembered how:

The problems with his [her husband’s] father and mother started to get worse [...]. So, [my mother-in-law said] I was not [good enough] for her son, that I did not take care of their granddaughter, a lot of things [...] that it seemed to me that she was making up. [...] So, we had a time, I remember very well, when we separated, because I no longer, I could not stand the pressure from my husband, resulting from his mother’s comments, and there came a moment when I decided to leave [his parents’ house].  
(Translated excerpt, Margarita interview, September 2014)

In Margarita’s narrative, her relationship with her nuclear family was deeply affected, since her mothering practices and her marriage were subject to constant criticism by her mother-in-law. Having to subordinate to another family’s rules, the

promise of autonomy over her own family life as a mother and partner vanished. This is the reason she was motivated to go to the land seizure, promising herself to never again live as *allegada* and, instead, to do whatever was necessary to obtain a place she could call home.

Women's desires to gain the autonomy to *make* their families as they wish, to have a place where they can do so without the mediation of anybody's 'approval' or 'permission', were contrasted with a context in which housing was experienced as an unsatisfied need. While the desirable behaviour for a woman was 'to be of her home', having no place they could call like that, many felt the impulse to take action. I met several women who decided to take part in the land seizures by themselves, usually without their husband's approval. For instance, Lorena took the decision to go to the *toma* by herself and later communicated it to her husband, who was reticent. She confronted him: *"If you want to stay here with your family, it's OK. I'm going [to the toma]. If you love me and my children, you'd better follow me. Otherwise, you can just fuck off"*. Such actions, and the refusal to accept their husbands' unwillingness, were not uncommon among the women that participated in this research, or among the women Valdés (1988) interviewed. Like Lorena, Margarita, Marta and María also preferred risking their marriages to giving up on the possibility of having a place of their own and for their children.

What does this tell us about the subjectivity of popular women? Attention to women's actions towards achieving a home helps us to nuance our perspective on how being a woman from the popular classes is experienced. It highlights the need to differentiate between symbolic notions of the desirable behaviour for a woman to be respectable – what is said – and the concrete context in which these discourses can or cannot be realised, or can also be partially realised. For example, in her study in a Nicaraguan village, Montoya (2002) noted how, at the symbolic level, categorisations of gender and sexuality appeared to be very rigid – women of the home and women of the street – yet that, in everyday life, women were able to negotiate between them. Peasant women deployed strategies to have affective and sexual relationships before marriage or to engage in second marriages, and were still able to achieve the position of 'woman of the house'. Attention to the women's actual experience and negotiation but also the different discourses about a woman's position are fundamental here. Beside the hegemonic discourses, the 'respectable' or 'decent' way to be a woman

was to be 'of her house', women's involvement in the community – through newly established mothers' centres – was in the process of social legitimisation.

Even if a woman wanted, in some cases it was not always possible to realise the value of being 'of her house', for instance, when they lacked housing. The ideal of women's domesticity emerged in industrialised countries as a means of social differentiation for middle-class households that were able to 'afford' leisured women (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 16; Parker, 2010, p. 11). While among popular classes 'being of her house' was valued, this value was held together with the notion that a married woman should contribute economically to the household when the material reproduction of family life was threatened (Mattelart & Mattelart, 1968; Valdés, 1988, pp. 140–145). It was often impossible for popular-class households to afford having 'leisured women' if they wanted to achieve or maintain certain living standards. With the exception of Señora Carmela, all the participants in my research had worked for a wage, or in informal occupations and income generation activities, during their childhood or as single young women supporting their families, or in cases in which the economic situation made it necessary. As shown in the literature review, in times of crisis, the entrance of women into wage work has been a fundamental strategy for the reproduction of families. While being a 'leisured woman' could be perceived as a desirable social location, its actualisation has been importantly linked with present or expected living conditions.

Indeed, throughout their lives, popular women have been confronted with circumstances in which the values of feminine domesticity – and passivity – lose their subjective potential, in this case due to material conditions in which those values cannot be realised. Securing a house, a place to start an autonomous family life and achieve certain living conditions, appears higher in the hierarchy of values than the hegemonic bourgeois construction of femininity. Such a hierarchy of values seems also to be shared by the women's husbands who, although feeling hurt in their masculinity, finally followed their partners to the land occupations. In going to the toma, the women demonstrated strength of character and an ability to grab the opportunities provided to them, both valued individual characteristics among the popular classes (Araujo & Martuccelli, 2015).

It is important to note that women of all classes in Chile and Latin America<sup>52</sup> have mobilised in the public sphere from their positions as mothers and partners, by going to the streets and organising in circumstances in which it seems necessary to do so to protect their families. Both elite women in the anti-Allende mobilisations (Baldez, 2002; Mattelart, 1980; Power, 2002) and peasant women supporting their partners' struggles for land reform between the 1960s and 1970s (Tinsman, 2002) acted following this rationale. As discussed in the following sections, in Nueva Habana women were encouraged to become involved in more stable ways in the community which demanded their subjective transformation, to become revolutionary. In these circumstances, women experienced their position in the domestic space in contradictory ways.

### **(Re)producing the New Man, disputing women**

In this section I show how in Nueva Habana, the hegemonic notion of home was in tension with the actual living conditions – which were far from what was expected as adequate housing – and an organisational framework that attempted to (re)produce a new classed subjectivity. I briefly describe the living conditions and map out the organisational field in Nueva Habana (for an in-depth picture of the organisational framework see Castelain, 1976; Cofré, 2007; Garcés, 2005), to explore the ways in which community organisations aimed not only to provide organised urban services necessary for social reproduction, but also to produce a specific

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<sup>52</sup> In Latin America, the emergence and visibility of women's participation in social movements to demand justice around human rights violations or to face the devastating effects of the structural adjustment during the 1980s, triggered a great debate that attempted to understand the character of women's participation in the public sphere which seemed to contradict their position in the domestic sphere. One of the main themes discussed was the different interests that motivated these movements. In a seminal article, and taking as example her work in El Salvador, Molyneux (1985) argued that some women mobilised motivated by 'practical gender interests' which were "usually a response to an immediate perceived needs" (Molyneux, 1985, p. 233). In this perspective, women's mobilisation was understood as emerging from their positions as mothers and wives and their inability "to effectively carry out these roles" (Safa, 1990, p. 355). Molyneux argued that, in contrast to practical gender interest, strategic interests are formed deductively from an analysis of gender oppression. Like Molyneux, many scholars differentiated 'feminist' from 'feminine' movements (see, for instance, Alvarez, 1990; Kirkwood, 1990; Safa, 1990), while others criticised these categories (see, for instance, Craske, 1999; Küppers, 1994; Richards, 2004; Stephen, 1997). Given the emphasis on the character of social participation and protest, I only discuss with the literature that more directly engages with processes of subjective transformation and negotiation.



classed subject and exclude others. I also explore how the influence of these organisations blurred the boundaries between public and private spheres and affected practices of social reproduction in the domestic space.

In the first years of Campamento Nueva Habana, the campamento had no sewerage system, ten latrines and six showers, and only one tap of potable water per block of 64 plots (CORVI cit in Cofré, 2007b, p. 107), and it was overcrowded, with a density of 1,000 people per acre (CELADE, 1971 cit in Arístides, 1972, p. 50). During the winter, unpaved streets left inhabitants *"with feet in the mud"*, as Olivia remembers. The quality of the dwellings was also a problem for many pobladores. In 1971, 72 percent of dwellings were built-on-site wooden shacks, 13 percent were pre-fabricated wood structures, 14 percent of inhabitants still lived in camping tents, and one percent of the dwellings were built with gypsum-like walls (CELADE, 1971 cit in Arístides, 1972, p. 50). The conditions in which pobladores lived were far from what was expected for adequate housing and a 'proper' neighbourhood, but this gap was narrowed by the action of community organisations.

Pobladora women remember the past differently and with ambivalence. For those who were more strongly involved in community organisations and developed political awareness in the process of these activities, the times of Nueva Habana are remembered with pride as an example of community organisation and politicisation. In contrast, for some others, the poverty and the appalling living conditions in which they lived threatened the dignity they were demanding. Marta does not like to remember the past because she *'suffered too much'*. Miriam's eyes filled with tears when she told me of the indignity she felt when having to defecate in a plastic bag or basket to be thrown away in the latrines in a moment of privacy. Most of the women, however, remember the past in a more positive light, in which they emphasise what gave them dignity despite the appalling conditions. For example, María interprets her life in the campamento as a *'cost of life'* she undertook for the sake of realising expected housing solutions. Yet, she highlights the positive characteristics of that time, the ways dignity was rescued under these conditions: how clean or organised Nueva Habana was despite being a campamento (see previous chapter on the meanings of campamento). These notions are common among male and female pobladores and serve to des-identify from the negative values ascribed by the hegemonic symbolic system of class to those living in precarious conditions.

The positive characteristics usually attributed to Nueva Habana, such as cleanliness or order, were produced through community organisations. According to Fiori (1973), Nueva Habana was articulated through territorial and sectorial organisations. Functional organisations were established around certain sectors of activity aiming to cover what were thought to be basic needs, to improve living conditions and reform undesirable habits. According to Cofré (2007a), the 'Fronts' of Health, Security (that changed name and attributions through time) and Culture were the first to be created, and all of them lasted until the end of the experience in 1973. Others, like the Mothers', Commerce (supply) and Green Areas, or the Workers' Front (first an unemployed bursary, later the organisation for the worker-builders who built the houses into which pobladores would later move), were active at specific periods during the three years of Nueva Habana. At the territorial level, the smallest unit was the block (*manzana*), which organised 63 dwellings with a delegate and a representative from each sectorial organisation. Each block had a community centre where weekly meetings were held to discuss local or more general issues of the campamento. The Headquarters (*Jefatura*) was composed of seven people elected through universal suffrage among those aged 18 or over, and it resolved those issues on which no agreement was reached at the block level. The next level up was the Board (*Directorio*). In its twice-weekly meetings, all 24 blocks' delegates, plus the Headquarters and the chiefs of all sectorial organisations participated. The Board meetings gathered together more than 200 people. The final and most important and deliberative level was the General Assembly, where the whole community occasionally gathered together to discuss "just the most relevant problems of the camp" (Cofré, 2007b, p. 115), given its extremely large composition. Meetings were held after 8pm, when pobladores were back from their work.

As previously mentioned, led by the MIR (Revolutionary Leftist Movement), the campamentos had a particular form of relating housing struggles to social transformations. Such a relation was established through the creation of autonomous organisations that would advance *poder popular* (people's power), a distinctive revolutionary strategy of the MIR. By 1972, this idea had permeated the Left and other popular movements, and was translated among community leaders into conceiving pobladores as a movement that expected to transit "from the seizure of land towards the seizure of power" (Neghme & Leiva, 2000). Miguel Enriquez, then general secretary of the MIR, describes the idea of *poder popular* as "(...) a

proletarian power which is organised autonomously and independently from below, in contradiction and struggle with the bourgeois state and its institutions of social and political domination” (Miguel Henriquez, 1973 quoted in Neghme & Leiva, 2000, p. no pagination my translation).

In Nueva Habana, *poder popular* was synthetised in a slogan that could be read painted on walls, or written on banners, or heard in assemblies or on local radio: “Our struggle is bigger than a house”<sup>53</sup>. Yet, the relationship between community organisation and the wider, ‘bigger’ social transformations were more often less related to the seizure of power – an idea usually absent among participants in this research – than to organising in order to have a more dignified life. Organisations in Nueva Habana aimed to create alternative power, for which they needed the production of ‘the New Man’ [sic] as the subject of the revolution. Since organisations affected both public and private dimensions of life, the notion of *poder popular* resulted in the politicisation and de-privatisation of the domestic space.

In this sense, the project of society envisioned in Nueva Habana established a form of community organisation with norms and duties that transcended ‘closed doors’. Decisions were taken through the blocks’ meetings that elevated issues to the Headquarters and vice versa. Every family had to accomplish compulsory daily cleaning (and allow their peers to check it), take shifts for cleaning of collective toilets, carry out periodic security rounds of the area in which houses were being constructed, participate in block meetings and assume responsibilities. Local organisations also acted as a ‘tribunal’ for conflicts within families and among neighbours: “*We did marriages and divorces,*” remembers Silvia a member of the Headquarters during the last three years of the experience. Through these organisational forms, the community gave itself the power to rule over spheres historically considered as a ‘private’ domain, impacting on the ways in which households assured their reproduction and on women’s practices, especially in terms of health and hygiene.

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<sup>53</sup> Today, the slogan is actualised in contemporary celebrations of the *campamento*’s anniversary but also in housing struggles in other parts of the city. The leader of Ukamau, a contemporary movement for housing rights, has used it to depict the characteristics of the movement she leads. Silvia Leiva, member of the Headquarters, also sees this group as inheritors of the Nueva Habana project (see, Ukamau, 2014).



*Image 12 Banner in Nueva Habana, circa 1971  
Main message reads "We struggle for more than a house".  
Nueva Habana Archive.*

Given the lack urban sanitation, the poor quality of housing and the perceived physical and mental consequences of poverty (Castelain, 1976), the adequate, healthy reproduction of pobladores was a central concern. The Health Front, - the grassroots organisation oriented to assure the hygienic cohabitation and to give solution to health problems - achieved the installation of a local health centre with a doctor, a nurse and a midwife, whose number of weekly appointments was gradually increased (Cofré, 2007, p. 193). At this centre, pregnant women and new-born children were periodically controlled. This initiative was facilitated by the context of Unidad Popular and its policies to improve workers' wellbeing (Illanes, 2005; McGee Deutsch, 1991). Professionals for the health centre were provided by the National Health Service, but decision-making remained with the Health Front, in coherence with the notion of poder popular. Volunteers - almost all of them women - were trained in hygiene, nutrition, undernourishment treatment and sample collection, thus becoming a support resource for health professionals. They also ran a centre for undernourished children. Provision of healthcare in the community was celebrated by all the women that participated in this research, and recalled as the benefits of

modernity. The words of a Health Front volunteer are telling in this regard: *“for us, who were [living] in the soil, it was incredible”*. Improving the wellbeing of pobladores was seen as key to the success of the revolutionary project by the MIR leadership and increasingly, the pobladores of Nueva Habana.

The emphasis on health and hygiene also had an impact on women’s everyday practices of cooking, cleaning and caring for children. Attention to these practices was considered relevant as a measure towards the prevention of the spreading of diseases. This was the spirit of the daily cleaning checks proposed by the Health Front. Food preparation was also a practice subject to transformations, since it was discovered that child undernutrition - one of the biggest health problems until 1990 (Pemjean, 2011, p. 104) - was not solely a consequence of lack of resources, but also of the lack of knowledge about food nutrients of many pobladora women (Castelain, 1976, p. 98). Trained Health Front volunteers mentored their peers in hygiene in cleaning and cooking, milk preparation or food nutrients. They used easy and memorable methodologies, for instance, the image of a big fly characterised as the enemy of health and thus, of revolution. This methodology had long-lasting effects; for example, many women defended norms of hygiene on the grounds of fly contamination. Similarly, volunteers and health professionals tracked inadequate practices of hygiene within the domestic space. If a woman arrived at the health centre several times with her child with diarrhoea, volunteers would check her dwelling for sources of infection. Women’s practices in the domestic sphere were thus required to be modernised, to become appropriate to assure the wellbeing of their families and the community too.

In Nueva Habana, the organisational framework was also an instrument for the transformation of subjectivities towards a revolutionary subject. Unlike in other poblaciones<sup>54</sup>, in Nueva Habana the domestic space was not constructed as a private sphere, but instead as a place in which the ‘New Man’ should be (re)produced. To this end, an organisation was created to assure compliance with community norms both in the community and behind ‘closed doors’: The Security Front or, as it was called in some periods, the Disciplinary Committee. This organisation evolved from

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<sup>54</sup> Indeed, Vicente Espinoza (1988) notes how in some of the campamentos, organisers were keen to maintain the boundaries between public and private. This was achieved, for instance, by avoiding establishing soup kitchens, so that *“each household continues to exist normally, that heads of households have the fundamental responsibility for their homes”* (p. 290).

the armed militias that were commonly established when a plot of land was seized. Illegally settled, this group watched over the compliance to strict norms of cohesion and discipline, so as to minimise any excuse for police intervention, and provided defence for the pobladores, if needed (Fiori, 1973; Quevedo & Sader, 1973). Although this organisation underwent several transformations (For indepth description of the Security Front see Cofré, 2007b; Fiori, 1973; Leiva, 2011), the tasks and responsibilities undertaken by this Front were shaped by a new definition of crime linked to the production of people's lives and the community. For this, crime was defined according to

(...) the degree of risk these [actions] entailed from the perspective of the survival of the group and the continuation of the struggle. This translated into categorising as crime not only those actions traditionally considered the object of Justice, but also actions that, without fitting into this category, weakened the group's cohesion under the specific political circumstances. Almost automatically, the concept of crime was broadened, and this was legitimated by the pobladores. (Fiori, 1973, p. 85 my translation)

In short, any behaviour that obstructed the reproduction of the community in the ways that were expected and/or prevented the production of the revolutionary subject was understood as crime. As such, 'crime' included small robbery, but also fights between neighbours, illegal bars, alcoholism, infraction of the rules of hygiene, non-cooperation with the community, a leader's irresponsibility, pobladores' failure to participate in compulsory meetings, family arguments and, especially remembered by the women, cases of domestic violence. The Security Front dealt with lack of compliance through moral reformation, attempting to prevent "the conditions of reproduction of these cases" of crime via raising awareness and public warnings (Ibid.). For instance, if a woman did not improve the hygiene of her dwelling and practices despite the intervention of the Health Front, the case was delegated to the Security Front. Those individuals and/or families who persisted in 'criminal' behaviour were removed from their plots and sent to a non-organised sector called 'The Siberia Yard', where they were expected to transform their habits; or, in the last instance, they were expelled from the población.



*Image 13 Campamento Nueva Habana, 1972  
Stage set up for 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary. The banner reads: "Revolution will be socialist or [will be] a caricature of revolution". Nueva Habana Archive.*

Behind attempts to organise, reform or exclude those who showed undesirable behaviours lay the expectations of producing the 'New Man', a "free, mature, fully conscious and self-determining individual subject" (Saldaña-Portillo, 2003, p. 7), in line with the modern revolutionary project of the Latin American Left. In this aim, the function of the Security Front, one of its members stated, was "the hard duty of chasing out the lumpen who managed to make a gateway [to Nueva Habana]. At the beginning, there were assaults, thefts, infinite problems" (Aristides, 1972, p. 77 my translation). The 'New Man' was constructed in opposition to the lumpen proletariat, the marginal, the callampas dweller, the symbolic 'other' from which a 'respectable' working class attempted to differentiate itself. Just as the lumpen 'other' was a symbolic construction existing during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to differentiate forms of protest (see chapter 4), between the 1960s and 1970s it was common currency (as it is still today) to disparage those whose indiscipline, violence, ignorance and dishonesty were seen as counterrevolutionary. Indeed, some of the values promoted by community organisations, such as temperance, had long existed among proletarians. Compliance with the organisations' norms and rules, or failure to comply, reinforced symbolic class categories and at the same time challenged historical notions of home and thus, it will be seen, of gender.

There was some defence of the domestic space as a private sphere. While in my fieldwork I could not find anybody who admitted to having personally resisted any of the rules -probably to the extent they confirm respectability-, some women's narratives testify that defiance indeed existed. Projects to build collective gardens in the houses that were under construction to be their definitive dwellings, or to set up a community laundry and kitchen, underwent long processes of acceptance from initial discussion to legitimation. Similarly, Castelain (1976) noted that some women resisted peer mentoring on hygiene because they perceived it as a threat and judgement to their mothering practices (p. 98). She also noted that this defiance was shown mainly among those families who suffered from mental health issues or alcoholism, and who found difficulties meeting the expected standards. She also suggests that this might have been coordinated by rightist opposition.

The women who participated in this research valued community rules positively: all of them remembered very well, and claimed to support, the elimination of illicit bars, the intervention in cases of domestic violence by the Security Front and the daily hygiene checks. They had experienced that the *"dirtiness of some affected us all"* and were willing to collaborate. Similarly, many of the rules helped their efforts as mothers and housewives in preventing common threats to family wellbeing: keeping alcohol, gambling and prostitution away from their partners and the sight of children. *"It was not like today, where [alcohol and drugs] are sold everywhere"*, Olivia told me in an interview, echoing the feelings of other women, making an explicit comparison with contemporary times in which she perceives crime as an increasing issue with no community organisation able to face it. Without necessarily understanding these rules in terms of wider social transformations<sup>55</sup>, pobladora women could perceive that they improved their quality of life. They were willing to give up part of their autonomy in the domestic space for the sake of producing, for their families and the community, the most dignified living conditions possible in the

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<sup>55</sup> With this, I refer to forms of women's narratives in which historical and political processes are hardly present, found especially among women who did not develop themselves in leadership positions. These are made evident in lack of clarity about politics or the partisan affiliations of the leadership (if any), or in narratives that are not structured around historical periods. It is also possible that, after more than 40 years, the political awareness women developed through the process (as developed in the next section) might have been lost in the repression and anti-Marxist propaganda of the military regime and the coming of the neoliberal state.



precarious context they inhabited. After all, these women had never had a 'private space' of their own.

## **Women's participation and the tensions between domestic and public spaces**

Organisations in Nueva Habana were set up to transform pobladores into men and women engaged with the community, actively participating in the production of the community itself. This entered into a contradiction with a still strongly held culture that linked women's domesticity to forms of class respectability. This section approaches the ways in which women experienced and negotiated the tension between these conflicting systems of value. If the revolutionary discourse expected women to participate more in the community and proposed the collectivisation of some of the domestic work in order to encourage this, this was limited by historically shaped ideas that connected respectability to women's domesticity, and by the concrete, everyday life burden of reproductive labour that was not redistributed.

The Left had traditionally promoted the notion of the industrial modern family even up to the 1960s and 1970s, the Unidad Popular period. For instance, the Communist Party conference in 1971 had defined women's main duty as being to support their menfolk in a drive for increased production, although there were differences between generations (McGee Deutsch, 1991, p. 298). In contrast, the MIR was the most progressive party in terms of women's equality, even though its hierarchy was still marked by gendered differences (Vidaurrázaga, 2007; Zalaquett, 2009). In a conference of the Movement of Revolutionary Pobladores, held at the beginning of 1972, one of the seven central themes discussed was women's militancy and their incorporation into the workforce. There was an awareness that women's burden of reproductive labour was the main obstacle to their participation. In light of this, in that conference was agreed the creation community facilities such as nurseries or local laundries in the new neighbourhood (Neghme & Leiva, 2000, p. 74). Collectivisation of reproductive labour - but not redistribution - was a central policy to increase women's militancy.

Interviewed in 1972, a member of the Headquarters, was emphatic in signalling the importance of alleviating women's domestic responsibilities in the domestic sphere.

Providing food despite the lack of shops, using cooking technologies that were slow, fetching water, handwashing and ironing were all time-consuming activities that prevented women from engaging in further participation (Silvia Leiva cit. in Arístides, 1972, pp. 68–69) . This was also understood by some of the women I interviewed, as evidenced by their creation of an informal nursery (that later became institutionalised) to care for children of working women or women who were more actively participating in community organisations. Community organisers and some literature (Fuentes, 2007; Townsend, 1993) have affirmed that in Nueva Habana, women’s participation stood out. Women were the protagonists of a wide variety of actions, especially because they ran the *campamento* during the daytime. For instance, as well as creating the nursery, they worked towards the elimination of illegal bars. Everyday life activities, such as fetching water, washing clothes in the patio areas, or taking children to school or to the health centre, led them to learn and talk about the problems they faced and their possible solutions. In these everyday life interactions, many women organised action. For example, when rubbish accumulated after the council cancelled its collection, which represented a threat to their children’s wellbeing, they raised their concerns with the *campamento*’s Headquarters and organised a protest in which they left the rubbish at the mayor’s office and house (see, also, Fuentes, 2007, pp. 58–59). Similarly, they organised a protest demanding quality houses after finding out their future houses would be built with low-quality bricks, or they took an active role in organising the distribution of food during the producer’s boycott during the *Unidad Popular*. Living conditions prevented women from actualising orthodox ideals of women’s domesticity and led many to act to provide solutions to specific problems. If an active stance towards problems was common among the women of the popular classes, this struggling subjectivity seems to have been particularly developed in Nueva Habana.

Participation in community organisations, however, tended to be vertically (territorial) and horizontally (fronts) segregated by gender. This is why Christine Castelain, a French sociologist who carried out her PhD research fieldwork in Nueva Habana in 1972, stated that only a minority of women participated in the community’s organisations – she counted no more than 30 (p. 91) out of a total of at least 1500 adult women. Vertically, the presence of women was significant at the lower and middle levels of territorial organisation. Women took part in weekly block meetings and tended to be the most committed volunteers in undertaking daily

hygiene checks – this was especially well remembered by research participants. They also became block delegates participating in the Board meetings. Yet, only one woman – Silvia Leiva, who at 22 years old already had a wide experience in social struggles for housing and community organisation – was elected to the Headquarters in the three years of Nueva Habana. In a horizontal perspective, women comprised almost the totality of the Health Front and the pre-school sub-front of the Education Front (Castelain, 1976, p. 191). As was the case in the contemporary formal politics (Chaney, 1979), here the centrality of ‘care’ framed health and pre-school education as feminine concerns.



*Image 14 Volunteers in Nueva Habana Health Centre, circa 1971  
Nueva Habana Archive.*

Some of those who engaged in more regular participation experienced a process of transformation of their subjectivities: it opened up the possibility to feel valued and able to develop themselves in positions other than those of mothers and housewives. For Pilar, who participated in the Health Front and whose dream as a child was to become a nurse, participation was like “a taking off”. As she told me in an interview:

(...) I voted for Tomic<sup>56</sup> because on the radio they were saying that if Allende won, children would be sent to Cuba; it was a fear they provoked in us! And I said, 'No! they cannot take my children away from me! I'm not voting for that man'. Look! What ignorance! In contrast, my husband did vote for Allende. (...) And then Allende was elected and everything changed. And after that, when he died we stepped back again. It was like one had been cut at the throat, at least for me; they cut my wings. Because I would have continued in the medical centre, I would have kept studying. We even went [for training] at the university!

The expression "*they cut my wings*" is telling of how some women experienced a process of self-development that marked their future life, since Pilar later pursued a technical diploma in Health and started a career in the area. Her narrative describes a process of growing in political awareness through getting involved in the organisations of the campamento. Nevertheless, she disentangled her participation from 'politics': when I asked her for an interview, she rushed to make clear that "*I was only related to health. I had no relation to politics*". Only a minority perceived local actions in Nueva Habana in relation to wider transformations, and terms such as revolution, capitalism, working class or poder popular were mostly absent from the narratives of most women. Regardless of the way in which they interpreted their participation - as political or not - what is relevant is that participation became an opportunity for women to produce themselves in different positions, which they valued for themselves, something that feminist researchers widely discussed in the 1980s (see next section).

While community organisations praised involvement of both men and women, for women, who were usually assessed based on their role in the domestic space, participation was given a different value. Castelain (1976, p. 190) observed that women who participated either did not have toddlers or could delegate childcare (see, also Townsend, 1993, p. 51), similarly to what Blondet (1990) discovered in Peruvian shantytowns. Señora Marta, a single mother of four, arrived home after a full day of work to do laundry, homework supervision and cooking for the next day, her main concern being the reproduction of her family on a daily basis. In her narratives, she does not praise women's domesticity and indeed believes in women's

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<sup>56</sup> Candidate from centrist Christian Democrats in the presidential election of 1970.

autonomy, so participation is not something she values negatively. She attended meetings, served coffee in night shifts or went to demonstrations in the city centre because she felt these were obligations. Not working for a wage and in charge of only one toddler, whom she brought to the Health Centre, Margarita was able to volunteer there a few days a week. At the beginning, when she had not yet earned in the domestic space the 'right' to participate, she hid her participation from her husband, undertaking the domestic duties in the morning and returning home around five p.m. to serve him his evening tea. Attention to material conditions brings Señora Marta and Margarita's experiences closer than expected: neither of them risked the 'adequate' reproduction of their households or the expectations they and other members of their families had for themselves, at least at the beginning. The life cycle of the family (number and age of the children), whether women worked for a wage and, importantly, negotiation with partners played a central role in realising the possibility of participation.

Beside concrete material conditions, women found difficulties in actively engaging in their community, since this was still not sufficiently legitimated. The surprised comment of Silvia, "*we did not speak of the New Woman*", is telling of this. The revolutionary discourse that aimed to fully integrate women into the community was, as shown in the previous chapter, in tension with historical formations of class, gender and sexuality articulated through the idea of 'home'. Men might have ideologically committed to the revolutionary discourses that undermined these constructions, yet when their own female partners took a more active role in the community, felt differently. This was the case at the beginning of Margarita's history, as described above. It was also the case for Señora Marta, accused of being a 'whore' by the father of her children because she received help from her neighbours or took part in night shifts. María, who participated at the level of her block, also received this type of accusation on a regular basis when her partner arrived from work in the evenings. As Castelain (1976) noted, many men prevented women "from participating in the fronts for reasons of 'moral security'" (p. 191). The public space was still seen as threatening - participation in it raising doubts over women's sexual behaviour and leading to "accusations of licentiousness generalised" (Ibid.). These types of conflicts were also noted by researchers of the community organisations of the following decade (Jaquette, 1994; Küppers, 1994; Pires do Rio Caldeira, 1990; Stephen, 1997; Valdés & Weinstein, 1993 among others). From the perspective of the

family, and especially in terms of the couple's relationship, the public sphere remained perceived as potentially dangerous for women's respectability, and so did participation.

Community participation brought conflict for the women in their domestic space but also meant they risked doubts or judgements over their sexuality or ability to adequately care for their children and family. In one conversation, a woman attempted to differentiate herself from another woman – with whom she has had some conflicts – by dismissing the woman's value as a mother: "*her children were raised by her mother*", referring to her involvement in community organisations. Similarly, Castelain (1976) points to the case of a toddler who drowned in a barrel of water when he was alone at home, which was used as an example of the negative consequences of women's participation. Nevertheless, women still had to show some level of participation to comply with the norms of the community. Women therefore had to negotiate between two systems of values and discourses that subjected them in different and contradictory ways and were also differently valued by themselves and others.

Silvia Leiva's experience illustrates how these contradictions were experienced at the level of everyday life. Despite her being politically active since the age of six and holding various leadership roles, her husband expected her to reduce her involvement after marriage. She did not comply with his expectations and endured his violence for at least a year. In contradiction with her position as director of the Health Front, her role as a health mentor, her membership of the MIR and her insistence on the need to eradicate domestic violence, she did not report him to community authorities. Her "*double life*", as she calls this moment of her life, lasted until a female doctor found out about her situation and encouraged her to take action. She 'divorced' by the law of the *campamento* and worked towards convincing herself and her family that this then-unexpected path<sup>57</sup> was the correct decision. Silvia's experience illustrates that women's participation was sometimes achieved at a really high cost. More important for the argument of this chapter, it shows how occupying a more active position was experienced with ambiguities and

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<sup>57</sup> Divorce in Chile was not legal until 2004.

contradictions by women, even women like Silvia, whose position as a politically involved woman and leader was forged over more than a decade.

Contextualised in a period of shifting and contradicting values, the fear of losing traditional sources of respectability might have played a fundamental role in women's decisions to finally participate. This is why, I believe, women were more visible in their collective actions to face specific problems than in the constant, more stable participation that Castelain claimed it was low in Nueva Habana. As mothers, wives and working women, the construction of womanhood among the working classes was not necessarily associated with being passive; instead, I have argued, what acquired value was women's strength to struggle to improve the lives of their families. Joining a toma, or protesting uncollected rubbish were actions in line with this construction of femininity. Yet, in Nueva Habana, the politicisation of forms of reproduction of life implied an increase in exceptions or circumstantial cases, but also, and importantly, an increasing valorisation of this dimension of popular womanhood. This is the reason many women's narratives were contradictory and ambiguous with respect to their participation in the community. During the memory work inspired activity (see methodology), two of the women at first denied participation: *"I was only here at home, I did not know anyone"*, *"Me neither!"* Yet afterwards they shared their experiences of participation and deployed their knowledge about people of the campamento. They were not very involved or distinctive leaders in the community, yet they did take part in compulsory meetings and duties, although they interpret these tasks as part of their positions as mothers.

### **From the reproduction of the household to the production of other forms of womanhood**

The organisational framework of Nueva Habana was dismantled with the coup d'état in September 1973. Many were persecuted and fled the población. Those who remained in the campamento saw an important part of their services for the reproduction of life deteriorate. As was shown in the introduction, the dictatorship not only committed human rights violations, but also engaged in a structural transformation of the economy towards a neoliberal model. The dictatorship praised and promoted the nuclear family and female domesticity (see, for instance, Caiozzi, 2013), yet the devastating consequences of economic restructuring among the

popular classes undermined the conditions that made this model possible. Poverty sharpened after the debt crisis, in which rising unemployment and deprivation levels created “an increasing divorce between ideological precepts and the reality of division of labour forced by the crisis” (Gonzalez de la Rocha et al., 1990, p. 355). Yet again, as in other circumstances in their lives, women had to take a more active position to sustain their and their families’ lives. Many women sought different strategies of survival outside the home to assure the reproduction of their families: some entered work for a wage, others joined local organisations where they could obtain basic goods or a little income. Of course, in the new repressive environment, the revolutionary version of womanhood that had been slowly consolidating during the previous period was truncated.

In this context, the basic reproduction of the household became the top priority. Productive organisations geared to generating income or goods to satisfy hunger – one of the most urgent needs – emerged from the second half of the 1970s. In many poblaciones, in 1975, the Catholic Church organised soup kitchens for the children. According to a survey carried out by Schkolnik and Teitelboim (1988), between 74 and 80 percent of families of popular classes were in basic nutritional deficit (p. 100). Some women took their children to be fed at the church and volunteered in cooking and organising. By the end of the 1970s, craft workshop was established by released political prisoners who were unable to find jobs, where they crafted medals using coins and copper embossing, a skill they had learnt in prison. They were later joined at the workshop by women who sewed *arpillera* – a type of quilt made from scraps of fabric – and did loom knitting (see, also chapter eight). Handicrafts were collected by the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*<sup>58</sup>, which established international networks of commercialisation. This institution also supported, community soup kitchen or *ollas comunes* (common pots) that popped up throughout the poblaciones. An olla común was created, in 1984, in the Campamento Nueva Habana by then called Nuevo Amanecer, although its reach was limited to the territorial confines of the previous campamento. A monograph (Alvarez & Bustos, n.d., p. 149) also describes an art school and needle knitting workshops that sold jumpers in Canada, supposedly with political motives. Unlike in the past, when the organisations aimed to produce the

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<sup>58</sup> This was an institution of the Catholic Church that denounced human rights violations and provided different forms of support for victims and their families.



'New Man', in this new period their scope of action was reduced, at least initially, to assuring the minimum conditions for the reproduction of the households.

Community organisations now focused not on social transformation, but on strategies of survival, a change that appealed to men and women differently. According to Salman (1997), men did not take part in these organisations, since they "associated their own participation with certain politically feasible benefits and individually feasible upward mobility" (p. 177). In other words, men were more interested in taking part in organisations at community or workplace levels, if such participation offered the prospect of a better future, in circumstances that organisations emerged as a collective strategy of survival or reproduction, at least initially. Many of them still demanded food on the table, even if they were not bringing any income to the household. In contrast, women used to take a more active stance when the circumstances required, for engaging in activities that enabled them to provide food on the table every day seemed an attractive prospect. Thus, in Santiago it was estimated that 80 percent of the members of these organisations were women (Hardy, cited in Baldez, 2002, p. 137), although men usually occupied positions more associated with leadership (Gallardo, 1987; Valdés, 1987b). In practice, this meant that many organisations, such as the knitting workshops, arpilleras or olla común (henceforth 'olla'), were women's spaces.

As women's spaces, more autonomous from the whole structure of the community than was, for example, the Health Front, participation in these organisations was experienced somewhat differently. Lorena and Fabiola, two of the organisers of the olla, remember it as a pleasurable experience, for which, from their position in the present, they feel a longing. As they told me in an interview:

Valentina: Ah, so, you really liked the olla, didn't you?

Fabiola: Yes, because, you know why? Because at home you get sick, you get locked in and [in the olla] you share with your neighbours, you talk! And at home, one is there, in the everyday life routine.

Lorena: No, but at the olla one sat and started to have tea with friends.

Fabiola: I really loved it. Look, I honestly tell you, I loved to come in the morning to have tea next to the fire, while carrots and onions were being fried (in the pot). And then, when more [people] arrived, we did not have any more, we had eaten everything! (laughs) [...] We really had fun at the

olla. One day we could open an olla again! (Translated excerpt from interview, September 2014).

They valued the olla because it provided a daily meal for their families, and in their narratives the olla also appears as a space in which they felt happy and comfortable. Above all, they valued the everyday life at the olla, filled with conversations, jokes and laughs, and the sharing of personal – but collectively felt – concerns and problems.



*Image 15 Arpillera. Police tumbling 'olla común'*  
Vicaría de la Solidaridad Workshop. Conflict Textiles Archive. Extracted from website:  
<http://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/>

The olla appears as a space in opposition to the domestic domain, increasingly in tension by the devastating effects of de-industrialisation and after the financial crisis in 1982. At home, pobladora women dealt with hungry children and depressed and unemployed partners (see, also Fisher, 1993; Hardy, 1986), increasingly jealous and suspicious over their 'outdoors activities'. A decade earlier, Lorena and Fabiola had taken part in hygiene checks and occasionally participated in the security rounds demanded by the organisational framework in Nueva Habana. Yet, the curfew imposed by the military government, added to persecution and constant raids, had disarticulated the organisational networks, restoring the domestic space as a private sphere in which, as Fabiola stated, women felt "locked in". Furthermore, women's participation in their blocks entailed a lower degree of commitment and

responsibility, and this contrasted with their new positions at the olla, in which they were involved every day. Holding a leadership position at the olla, Lorena organised meetings and coordinated and exchanged experiences with members of other ollas, and with the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, which provided them with basic foodstuffs. Through taking part in community organisations, pobladora women encountered new and different experiences.

The organisations that spread throughout the poblaciones were, during the 1980s, a matter of study for social scientists, who examined how they configured the landscape of what it was understood as new social movements<sup>59</sup>. Only feminist researchers explored the effects of the fact that the majority of the members of these organisations were women. Paraphrasing (1993, p. 180), the olla was also encountered by its participants as a 'warm place', as many of the women's organisations of the time. Researchers have argued that sharing experiences in the context of organisations facilitated a reflection on the social origin of what they had, until then, deemed personal problems (Adams, 2012; Fisher, 1993; Gallardo, 1987; Gaviola, Largo, & Palestro, 1994; Schild, 1990; Valdés & Weinstein, 1993 among others). This led to a politicised understanding not only of the wider dictatorial context, but also of their oppression as women. Research on Chilean poblaciones, in line with research on the participation of women in other Latin American social movements (see, for instance, Craske, 1999; Küppers, 1994; Pires do Rio Caldeira, 1990; Stephen, 1997) has highlighted the tensions that this brought into domestic space. With the exception of Montoya (2002), the focus has been, however, on how the domestic shapes women's involvement in social movements. Instead, I further explore the various ways in which women took part in the organisations, and how they related to their responsibilities for the reproduction of their families, especially since the cited literature has tended to focus on the experience of the most politicised leaders.

I argue that the gendered composition of these 'economic' organisations was not alone what produced the organisations as a 'warm place'. Indeed, the women who took part in the Health Front in the previous period, an organisation also mostly run

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<sup>59</sup> This is the perspective of some authors like Razeto (1990). Since the pobladores were also the protagonists of violent protests in the centre of the city and barricades at night in the poblaciones, others recycled the notion of the pobladores as lumpen (Tironi, 1986). For a detailed analysis of this debate, see Salman (1997)

by women, did not comment on this feature. I argue that it is precisely the productive character of these organisations – producing food or handicrafts to be sold – that creates time and space for ‘women’s talk’ (Pires do Rio Caldeira, 1990) to happen. Working together towards the *production* of something else, the conversation is not necessarily framed around specific points to discuss, as it was at the level of the blocks or the Board during the times of Nueva Habana, but is more free flowing. At the olla, this space for women’s talk was created during activities like chopping and frying onions and carrots, around which women gathered. At the arpilleras workshop, it was created through gathering together to sew. It is in the process of collective production that there is room for laughing and sharing intimate concerns.

Some women, like Lorena and Fabiola, whose experiences were described above, experienced new ways in which to value themselves through these organisations. They explored other subject positions in which they felt valued: they could organise with other women at local and wider levels, engage with institutions and NGOs, give and receive emotional support. To my knowledge, based on the testimonies<sup>60</sup>, no feminist organisations worked directly at grassroots level in Nuevo Amanecer. However, this did not preclude pobladora women from grounding new sources of value, as synthesized by Valdés and Weinstein (1993) in a phrase often seen in their research: “*I found out I have value*”. Participation produced other female subjects that were valued in the space of the organisations, and this had consequences for women’s subjectivity and their experiences beyond it, in particular in the domestic space. Lorena, for example, felt empowered to confront her cheating husband, and demanded her autonomy to go out. When he complained that she no longer gave him any attention, she would answer “*and you even want me to reward you...no, no!*” and go out to visit friends. The organisations became a place in which a different female subject was produced, whose value emerged differently to, though alongside, other historically constructed positions.

A few women conceived the organisations as tools for wider social transformations, and they occupied the position of leaders. Those in leadership positions took part in wider spaces of articulation with more political claims against the dictatorship, an aim that indeed generated conflicts with the grassroots (For the conflict in ollas comunes see Gallardo, 1987; Hardy, 1986). These women also came into contact with

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<sup>60</sup> Archival research would be needed to gather more evidence in this respect.

feminist organisations. This was the case for Margarita, who in the previous period had achieved, after negotiating with her partner, the right to actively participate in the Health Front. Her narrative denotes a wider understanding of the political underpinnings of poverty and reveals how she perceived grassroots organisations as a way to push for wider transformations in the political landscape, notions that were absent in the interviews with Lorena and Fabiola. As always, the subject position of organiser came with a cost that brought tension to the ways Margarita experienced motherhood, since she believed she had neglected, to some extent, her youngest daughter's childcare. This was a risk that only few women were willing, or even able, to take: for those with less understanding, or violent, partners, those with very young children or those who were highly dependent on the selling of their produce, this cost might have been further increased. In Margarita's case, for instance, the political struggle became more important than her own expectations of motherhood, which she felt forced to lower.

Other women experienced their participation in similar ways as they did when they went to join the toma or had previously organised to resume the waste collection service: from a construction of womanhood which becomes active when the circumstances make it necessary. They talked about their participation in the same terms as they did about other income-generating activities. In the several visits I made to María, she used to deny having taken part in any of the community economic organisations that flourished in the población during the dictatorship. Yet in one conversation about the different activities and jobs she undertook for the sake of an income, she told me about having taken part in a knitting workshop where she made jumpers to be sent to Canada, though she barely remembered who organised it. Her denial of participation was not necessarily conscious, or a form of distancing from the political profile of participation. For instance, she explained she did not join children's soup kitchen and arpilleras workshop because she was not creative enough, saying nothing about its political character. For Emilia, a single mother of three who took part in the arpillera workshop for a couple of years, the organisation was especially valued in terms of the income it provided. In her words:

I joined [the arpillera workshop] because of need. Not having money, being alone with my children, I didn't know how to buy things, food, and this is why I went to the soup kitchen, because of the food.... I stayed there around

two years, I think it was; and then one of my children had a teacher who knew about my story and offered me work at her house, and I said 'Yes', and I thought, 'Damn! I'm going to leave the children alone'. I thought a lot about it but, anyway, I went. (Translated excerpt from interview carried out in January 2017)

Being the sole breadwinner, Emilia was forced to prioritise a stable income that would enable her to reproduce her household in the most adequate ways possible, over the enjoyment she experienced in the organisations, and even over her concerns about leaving her children alone. Some researchers have celebrated women's participation on the basis that going out of the home into the organisations (Küppers, 1994; Stephen, 1997; Valdés & Weinstein, 1993) constituted a challenge to the normative cultural constructions of domesticity. Yet, the experiences of Emilia or María allow us to nuance this statement by arguing that for some women, participation did not necessarily produce a new gendered subject, but instead was another expression of the more active form of womanhood long present among the popular classes, as argued at the beginning of this chapter. The fact noted by Schild (1994) that the majority of women withdraw their participation in organisations after the economic situation of the household was stabilised, is telling of how for many women, prevailed this form of understanding the organisations.

Attention to these experiences provides a more nuanced perspective on the subjective effects of participation. Feminist literature on women's organisations (see, for instance, Schild, 1990; Valdés & Weinstein, 1993) has stated that through the organisations a new type of female subject, more autonomous and conscious of her oppression as a woman, was being produced. As has been shown, some women had new experiences and discovered themselves as having legitimate needs that were fulfilled in the organisation: entertainment, company, friendship, peer support, but also leadership, autonomy and organisational responsibility. While this was initially unintended, they were increasingly producing and envisioning other forms of popular womanhood and occupying new positions. Agreeing with such a statement, however, I underscore the experience of those women who were more interested in the organisations as a means of provisioning for their households –income or goods– than in the new experiences and self-development as women they were experiencing.

In this sense, the transformative capacity of participating in organisations seems to have been limited when confronted with other dimensions of women's everyday life, especially in terms of the social reproduction of their own families. If in the economic community organisations women produced themselves as having needs and desires, in the domestic space studies on reproductive strategies -carried out in the same period than those of women's participation- found that women usually subordinated them to the patriarchal structure of the household (see literature review). As de la Rocha et al. (1990) state, "the impoverishing of living conditions reinforces differences of gender, age and authority, and power takes form in the portions and the type of food consumed" (p. 360). This statement, relating to Mexico, resonates in Chile, where food portions from the olla were unequally distributed by the mother at home, favouring male members, both adults and children (Hardy, 1986, p. 184). The replacement of consumption with self-production and repair of existing goods intensified domestic labour, but with little redistribution of the women's load (de Barbieri, 1989; González de la Rocha et al., 1990; Raczynski & Serrano, 1985; Schkolnik & Teitelboim, 1988). Seen from the perspective of the reproduction of the family, this situation contrasts with the emphasis given by those studying women's participation to changes in women's subjectivities. Attention not only to their participation but also to how this affects the reproduction of the household provides a more nuanced perspective on the transformation of women's subjectivity.

In reflecting on classed and gendered subjectivities, it is important to ask how these socially involved forms of womanhood encountered its limits in the spaces in which they were valued: they were not - yet - socially legitimated beyond the organisational space. If Fabiola had to negotiate with her husband to participate in the olla, she also had to negotiate with herself and her own expected standards of cleanliness. Her husband 'helped' her with domestic labour, but he did so in ways that were "*not the same*" as when she did it. Most women joined community organisations as one of many strategies to assure the reproduction of their household, and found themselves producing themselves in different, unexpected and unknown ways. Yet, they still grounded an important part of their value in the reproductive labour performed in the domestic space, a dimension that set limits to this process of subjective transformations.

## Conclusion

In different ways, social reproduction has been central to both the historical construction of womanhood and community organisations. In light of this, in this chapter, I have provided a more complete, and thus nuanced perspective on the ways in which women's classed and gendered subjectivities have been produced, challenged, contradicted and transformed by participation in community organisations.

I started by arguing that, while at the level of the symbolic a respectable woman should be confined to the domestic space, in the experience of popular women this norm was often not realised. Women's material conditions forced them to engage in wage work, income generation activities or actions that would allow them to maintain or improve the living conditions of their families. Going to a *toma*, even against their partner's will, was, for a great majority of women, an expression of this form of popular subjectivity that not only valued a woman's struggle for the wellbeing of her family but, following Araujo and Martucelli (2015), her strength of character, ability to grasp opportunity and fairness. Analysing the different forms of involvement in community organisations throughout the two periods here discussed has demonstrated material conditions to be key to understanding the ways in which women positioned themselves in regard to both their participation in organisations and their position at the domestic space.

Supported by the favourable context of *Unidad Popular*, community organisations in Nueva Habana provided its inhabitants with urban services that, at that time, were considered central to a dignified life. The organisational network materialised ideas of *poder popular*, which both required and promoted subjects' commitment to the community and its revolutionary project. Echoing long-standing symbolic representations of class, the revolutionary working-class subject was opposed to the figure of the 'lumpen', who behaved in ways that complicated community life and who did not engage with progress. This separation was achieved by breaking with historical constructions of home as the sphere of the private, and by including family relations and reproductive practices within the domestic space as sites to be intervened in by the community. Thus, through the actions of different organisations, the *pobladores* of Nueva Habana worked towards their transformation into the 'New



Man' via moral reformation - hygiene training, disciplinary talks, education - or, eventually, exclusion.

While the 'other' of the New Man was in line with the historically constructed symbolic system of class, organisations destabilised and questioned the prevalent symbolic construction of gender, in particular the value given to women's domesticity. The sustainability of the organisational framework required women to become active members of the community. However, their participation was often prevented not only by their responsibility in the reproduction of their families, but also by the cultural association of women's respectability with their confinement in the domestic space. Nevertheless, women still had a significant participation in sorting out concrete problems of the community. They also participated in increasing numbers at the lower and middle levels of territorial organisations, and in fronts associated with 'feminine' dimensions, such as Health and Education. Pobladora women experienced the tensions between two systems of value, the historical role and the new positions in the community that the revolutionary discourse encouraged and demanded of women. Women, even the more active ones, were still assessed to a significant degree by others and by themselves, in terms of their positions as reproducers. And while most women underwent this negotiation - shall I get involved in the tasks of my block? - many did not identify themselves as participants, since they experienced participation in similar ways to when they had joined the tomas, as linked to the need to provide themselves and their families with an adequate domestic space. Yet, the increasing numbers of women who engaged in the organisational framework show that a process of legitimation of their position as community leaders was taking place.

It is possible to think that, in Nueva Habana, in many ways conditions were appropriate to advance a more equal society. Rita Segato (2016a, 2016b) argues that the oppression of women is sustained in modernity through the separation of the public and the domestic into separate spheres, in which the latter is conformed as the sphere of the private: a non-political space, in which the community cannot intercede. Nueva Habana blurred the boundaries between these spheres. This process not only took place through projects for the collectivisation of domestic labour, but was especially made possible by the de-privatisation and politicisation of the domestic space promoted by community organisations. Yet, it might be argued that it is precisely because of this notion of community - and its metonymic conception of the

political – that in Nueva Habana it was not discursively recognise the “New Woman”, which was, as in Nicaragua, gendered male (Montoya, 2012). This way of perceiving the community as a whole was erased during the dictatorship, and the domestic space came to be ideologically conceived of once again as a realm of the private.

Women took part in organisations, now not as a contribution to the production of the community, but instead as another strategy for the reproduction of their households, in the sense explained by scholars of strategies (see literature review). Nevertheless, the organisations provided women with other grounds to feel valued, not only for their ability to continue reproducing their households despite the critical situation, but also as women with responsibilities within organisations and engaging with institutional bodies. The minimal presence of men, together with the focus on a productive activity – of goods to be consumed or sold – promoted the emergence of a space in which women could share intimacies and problems. Thus, they experienced a sense of self that could not be expressed in the domestic space, especially when fraught with conflicts as effects of the crisis. In this sense, community organisations marked a division with the domestic space, enabling more women to position themselves as doing activities not merely as mothers, but as participants in, and in some cases leaders of these spaces. These positions were, however, not fully legitimated and were therefore experienced with ambivalence. If in the organisations women produced themselves as subjects with needs, through their practices for the reproduction of their households, women tended to reproduce their own subordinate positions.

Given the constant contradictions produced between women’s involvement in the organisations of the community and their position in their family, further exploration of these labours seems necessary to give an answer to the main question of this thesis, namely the ways in which women produce and position themselves as classed and gendered subjects through different practices towards social reproduction. In the following chapter, I turn to domestic work, especially cleaning, to further explore the construction of classed and gendered subjects during this period.

## Chapter 6

### Uncomfortable Stains. Discourse and cleaning practices of pobladora women

Instead of our looms, crochets and needles, we brought olives, tuna mayo, cream cheese, crackers and crisps for the end-of-year session of the knitting workshop I attended during fieldwork. The party took place before the start of the long summer break, when the teacher would give us a diploma of participation issued by La Florida Council. The previous week, we had agreed on what to bring to avoid duplication and/or missing out on favourite nibbles, and Sofía committed herself to making and bringing a cake. By the time I arrived, almost all of the women were already there. Carmen, Laura and Julia were bringing school tables from the room opposite and placing them together in two rows. At the back of the room, over a big wooden table, there were several plastic bags containing the nibbles. Rosa was standing next to the table setting the cream cheese and soya she had brought.

I left the yellow cheese I had brought on the table. Once the women had finished with the tables, they started to divide up the food into dishes. I took the white tablecloth that was folded next to the bags of food and Señora Herminia helped me to unfold it over the group of tables where we were going to eat. Some seemingly old, yellow stains became visible. We looked at each other knowingly, took the tablecloth and placed it again over the table, this time upside down. Stains remained visible. We made a few attempts until we realised no folding could conceal the stains, and we had no choice but to leave the tablecloth just as it was over the group of tables. The high visibility of the stains attracted María's attention, and she suggested turning the tablecloth upside down. Señora Herminia and I spent some time convincing her there was no way of hiding the marks.

Some of the women sat round the table while I continued helping Rosa with food distribution. The knitting teacher and María stood behind us, talking about a non-traditional reliever for the aches and pains of ageing: marihuana leaf tea. A bit surprised, Rosa and I initiated a conversation about how things have changed and she started telling me a related story, but another conversation taking place around

the table distracted my attention: the women were complaining about the stained tablecloth. “I could have brought a clean one” one of them said, while another started lecturing about the products and tricks she uses for keeping white clothing *albo* (shiny white), just as she likes. I could hear some of them – including the owner of the stained tablecloth – rushing to affirm they would only ever leave their tablecloths *albo*. By the time Rosa and I were sitting at the table, the conversation had already shifted to funding applications for the workshop’s knitting materials. I felt disappointed about missing the details of that important ‘ethnographic’ moment.

In the vignette above, a group of mature, Chilean working-class women experience the public acknowledgement of stains on a tablecloth as something uncomfortable, problematic. Stains, as Douglas (2002) would say, appear here as ‘matter out of place’, as a contravention of the symbolic order and the norm that a white tablecloth should remain spotless, *albo*. While the Real Academia Española defines *albo* simply as white<sup>61</sup>, in Chile the term refers to a condition of shiny- white clothing that is opposed to soiled-looking white clothing. The very existence of a word other than white to refer to white clothing shows that ‘*albo*’ is not a given, but requires labour – domestic labour – to be maintained over time. We used common strategies of concealment – the trick of folding or turning the tablecloth upside down – and judgement could have been avoided had those uncomfortable stains remained hidden from sight. It is only when those strategies failed, when stains became publicly acknowledged, that they were revealed as a moral statement from which the women felt compelled to defend themselves.

By publicly condemning the stains, giving proof of their knowledge about how to erase them or claiming to have appropriate tablecloths to bring to the meeting, the women aimed to demonstrate in front of their peers that they *do* accomplish the expected standards. Publicly acknowledged, the stains on the tablecloth appear as a threat to the women, who are all placed under suspicion, since the owner of the tablecloth had not been publicly recognised. If a tablecloth in similar condition appeared at a gathering with my middle-class friends in their mid-thirties, I cannot imagine any other reaction than laughter or pleading guilty to an inability to comply with this ‘old school’ norm. We might want to have an *albo* tablecloth, but unlike

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<sup>61</sup> The Real Academia Española also establishes two other meanings: dawn, and the white tunic used by priests.

mature and elderly pobladora women, I believe, stains would not be felt as a threat. Thus, in this chapter I will demonstrate that not only generation but also, importantly, class location and positioning by others are central to understanding the moral power of stains.

This chapter explores how the categories of clean/dirty are used by pobladora women to position themselves in classed and gendered terms. I examine the ways and context in which the women talk about and use these categories to position themselves and others, as well as the actual cleaning practices they carry out in their domestic spaces. Thus, I reflect on the ways in which discourses and practices produce subjectivity and create grounds on which pobladora women can claim self-worth. I argue that, given their symbolic positioning as 'dirty', cleanliness is a category through which pobladora women produce themselves as subjects of value, as dignified and respectable. While the categories of clean/dirty are spoken of as if producing rigid moral boundaries, in practice, women negotiate cleanliness and dirt in order to do other activities, or to realise other values they consider equally or more important.

The first part of the chapter shows how these categories work at the symbolic level. It briefly depicts how the discourse of hygiene and cleanliness paved the way for 20<sup>th</sup>-century modernisation and became enmeshed in the process of class formation that was taking place at the time. It also shows how class and gender are talked about through reference to the categories clean/dirty and how they have served women to represent themselves and others, in the past and in the present. In the second part of the chapter, I attend to actual cleaning practices. Given the endless nature of cleaning labour (see, for instance, de Beauvoir, 1956; Oakley, 1976) and the absence of paid domestic workers in pobladora women's households, a total accomplishment of cleaning standards is practically impossible. It is one thing to claim to always accomplish standards of cleanliness deemed respectable and 'decent', but quite another to actually achieve them. Indeed, in the vignette described above, all the women claimed to comply with these norms, yet a stained tablecloth was nevertheless presented to us. I examine how cleaning practices are negotiated in everyday life, in a context of multiple demands, limited resources and competing values. Through attention to what women prioritise in their everyday life in their

domestic space, I interrogate the extent to which cleaning as a practice allows them to position themselves as valued subjects.

## **Cleanliness, dirt and class formation in Chilean modernisation**

Cleanliness is a symbol of modernity. The dichotomy clean/dirty, McClintock (1995) argues, shaped the relation between the British Empire and its colonies, establishing boundaries between the white European (male) and racialised others. The colonial organisation of bodies along race, class, gender and sexuality lines established hierarchical differences and justified the exclusion of some from the liberal modern pact. Interestingly, McClintock shows how, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a cult of cleanliness emerged, in which soap came to occupy a central place. In her words,

Soap did not flourish when imperial ebullience was at its peak. It emerged commercially during an era of impending crisis and social calamity, serving to preserve, through fetish ritual, the uncertain boundaries of class, gender and race identity in a social order felt to be threatened by the fetid effluvia of the slums, the belching smoke of industry, social agitation, economic upheaval, imperial competition and anticolonial resistance. Soap offered *the promise of spiritual salvation and regeneration* through commodity consumption, a regime of domestic hygiene that could restore the threatened potency of the imperial body politic and the race. (McClintock, 1995, p. 211, italics added)

Cleanliness became a way to read and negotiate difference in the increasingly complex social landscape of the industrial revolution. Dirtiness, lack of hygiene, and contagiousness have been historically associated to the racialised, classed and sexualised bodies (see, for instance, Brown, 2009; Hoy, 1996; McClintock, 1995; Skeggs, 2004). Yet, quoting Echeverría (2007) again, if modernity was originally a privilege of Western white European males, it was disentangled from material bodies, thus becoming a moral, cultural form to which the non-white could claim access. Cleanliness has occupied a central place in the modernisation of subjects, or, in Echeverría's words, achieving *blanquitud* (whiteness), the cultural form in which the white ethic of modernity is expressed. Thus, it could redeem those raced and classed bodies by marking them with the signals of modernity.

In Chile, having deflected attention away from racial difference through the fiction of a homogenous 'Chilean race' during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see chapter 4), the dichotomy clean/dirty especially represented class difference. During colonial times and the first decades of the republic, after independence in 1833, the elites dismissed the lower classes as 'idle, vagabonds and bad-entertained', and their main concern was what this meant in terms of the stability of the labour force and the constant threat of robbery (de Ramón, 2000, p. 128). As in the British Empire, concerns with hygiene became increasingly relevant in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when slums expanded beyond the walls of the 'proper' city (Brito, 1995; de Ramón, 2000). The emphasis on hygiene was thus marked by increasing concerns over the reproduction and replacement of the labour force, articulated in the Social Question, a debate that lasted four decades between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see chapter 4). Improving the health of the population through the expansion of medical-biological knowledge was perceived by governors as central to 'the regeneration of the race' and a means to improve the 'human capital' of the nation (Cárcamo, 2014). If the 20<sup>th</sup> century was inaugurated with a negative population growth (Illanes, 1999, p. 194), the following decades did not see much improvement in infant mortality due to undernourishment and diarrhoea - which still killed hundreds in the early 1970s - and tuberculosis, syphilis and exanthematic typhus killed adults in great numbers<sup>62</sup>. This situation was expected to be remediated by the provision of public healthcare - until 1953 dependent on Christian charities (Zárate & Godoy., 2011) - and urban sanitation (Ibarra, 2016), but also by improving hygiene in the reproduction of households.

To a great extent, the modernising project of improving hygiene and health required the 'domestication' of women as housewives. As shown in chapter four, Christian charities and elite women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century - and, later, social workers and doctors - educated women in hygiene and puericulture, at the same time as they encouraged them to leave paid work and devote themselves to childcare and housekeeping (see, for instance, González, 2014; Illanes, 1999; Roseblatt, 2000; María Soledad Zárate, 1999; María Soledad Zárate & Godoy., 2011). During the 1940s 'the defence of the race' was not only expected to be achieved through access to adequate housing and culture, but also through "improved hygiene and

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<sup>62</sup> As one of the countries that suffered most under the Great Depression during the first years of the 1930s, Chile had world-record levels of exanthematic typhus (de Ramón, 2000, p. 214)

housekeeping” (Roseblatt, 2000, p. 41). As such, the modern emphasis on hygiene was also expected to be productive of gendered – and classed – subjects, working together with the notion of home, as developed at length in chapter four. By the 1960s and 1970s, French-Fuller (2006, p. 90) argues, washing machines and laundry powder adverts in Chile connected the state’s ideals of health and progress to the activity of washing and pressing clothes and to a proper, respectable and caring femininity. Women of all social classes, she argues, signified this activity as a way of participating in the modernising project of the developing state.

The pursuit of hygiene was also extended to sexual behaviour, thus promoting the modern industrial family model. Scientific medical knowledge attempted to replace moral religious (Catholic) views on sexuality. But if religion demonised sexuality outside marriage, the medical sciences also initially reinforced this perspective. After the end of the Second World War, syphilis became a matter of public concern (Rivas, 2008). Education of the population towards a responsible sexuality – its expression restricted to the context of the legitimate heterosexual couple – was thought to prevent not only sexually transmitted disease but also social problems, such as child illegitimacy and prostitution (Cárcamo, 2014; Rivas, 2008, pp. 25–30; Roseblatt, 2000, pp. 174–8). Sexual promiscuity was also blamed, even by doctors, as the cause of abortion, an idea that only started to be vanquished in the 1960s, with the first rigorous studies on the matter (Pieper-Mooney, 2008, p. 195). Only during Unidad Popular was there a less moralising approach to sexuality and sexual health and reproduction (Tinsman, 2002, p. 228), which was however reversed in the following period.

This idea of modernity through cleanliness and hygiene was also inscribed onto the city. By the end of the 1960s, doctors and public institutions, such as the National Health Service and universities, became aware of how little they could do if the living conditions of the poor were not improved (Zárate & Godoy., 2011, p. 148). Indeed, urban settlements with no sanitary infrastructure – the marker of the modern city (Terreni-Brown, forthcoming) – were in a critical state until the 1990s. Callampas and campamentos were represented as dirty and so were their inhabitants. As Murphy (2015) notes, a language that expressed notions of ‘sanitising’ or ‘healing’ these areas, or pointed out that dwellings were built with ‘trash’ materials, was used by different governments throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And, as has been shown, pobladores were



usually assigned plots and dwellings that did not necessarily have adequate, 'hygienic' urban facilities. This history, in which the dichotomy clean/dirty came to signify modern/retrograde, thus shaping concrete configurations of class, gender and sexuality (see chapter 4), is still symbolically relevant for the women in this research.

## **Resisting inscriptions of dirt**

Women of the popular classes, who inhabit poblaciones that developed from campamentos, are the bodies in which the negative sides of these dichotomies intersect. As Rosa put it, they "*stank of fonola*" (see chapter four), connecting this cheap building material with ideas of smelly poverty. This is not to say that hygiene was not an issue in the material conditions of the campamento. Indeed, with no sewerage system, reduced access to potable water and poor-quality housing, hygiene, a member of the Health Front affirmed, "*was vital, it was a question of life or death. Either we live or we let ourselves go and we rot in here*" (Salas, 1999, p. 8 cited in Cofré, 2007a, my translation). Nevertheless, what is central is how the women produced themselves as classed subjects through negotiating these dichotomies and how the symbolic dimensions compelled them to constantly demonstrate their clean morality.

While acknowledging their living conditions – a consequence of a conscious decision to struggle for a dignified life – pobladora women tend to share a positive assessment of the campamento that was usually invisible to outsiders. Castelain, the already cited French sociologist doing her research in 1972, emphasised poverty:

Furniture is practically absent, comprising some chairs, a table, some beds: stuff is piled up without order: clothes, food, a chamber pot...[There is a] lack of furniture. [...] Many children sleep in one bed; in the winter, in times of rain, they do not have enough clothes to put on their back. [...] Hygiene conditions are especially dramatic over the summer, when flies fly over dirty and stagnant water, a period during which the lack of application of hygiene rules is catastrophic for the children who die as a consequence of diarrhoea, lack of necessary care and dehydration. (Castelain, 1976, p. 96, my translation)

In contrast to the middle-class European sociologist quoted above, pobladora tended to focus in the positive. I usually heard that Nueva Habana was “*the cleanest campamento*” or that “*it did not look like a campamento because it was clean and tidy*”. They did remember that some members were ‘dirty’ or *cochinas*. Moreover, most of the women found in dirtiness the explanation to some families’ expulsion from Nueva Habana. While I could not find any family which had actually been expelled, this story is relevant for its performative power (Austin, 1971): it produces those who remained in the campamento as ‘clean’. It is significant that women underscore this more than men, who tend to stress ‘bad behaviour’. By pointing to cleanliness and tidiness women aim to symbolically differentiate themselves from others, to endow their impoverished living conditions with a sense of dignity.

As stressed by the member of the Health Front quoted above, considering the conditions in which they lived, it is of central importance that pobladores simply could not ‘let themselves go’, or ‘*dejarse estar*’. Castelain (1976) noted that those who refused daily hygiene checks were the poorest households (p. 97). When I told a member of the Health Front about what I had found in Castelain’s thesis, she replied “*it is not that they were poorer, it was more of a cultural difference... You see, there are people who let themselves go*”. ‘*Dejarse estar*’ refers to the lack of effort to maintain or improve certain conditions. In English, ‘to let oneself go’ is defined by Oxford Dictionaries (n.d) as “to become careless or untidy in one’s habits or appearance”. Unlike in English, where the verb ‘go’ implies a movement that could be interpreted as devaluation, in Spanish the verb ‘*estar*’ (‘stay’) stresses stagnation, a lack of action towards valorisation or towards an expected outcome, thus leaving time to have its effect on the being. A person could say ‘*me dejé estar*’ (I let myself go) to refer to a lack of care for ensuring an aesthetic or healthy body. In the language of the symbolic system of class and gender, letting oneself go is the refusal to progress, to clean, to become a modern person. In Nueva Habana, it established boundaries between the figure of lumpen and the revolutionary working class.

‘*Dejarse estar*’, as opposed to ‘*sacarse la mugre*’ (get rid of one’s dirt), is used to refer to work until exhaustion. The latter phrase operates as a form of legitimation for what one has, whether a good bought in the market, a position or recognition. Based on an empirical study in contemporary times, Mayol et al. (2013) interpreted the phrase ‘*sacarse la mugre*’ as the ‘the purification of economic sin’: the constant missing of

the opportunities offered by the country's fruitful natural land due to laziness and lack of responsibility, expressed in the contemporary as underdevelopment. One can 'sacarse la mugre' for buying a TV or paying the children's school fees or simply by living decently: "waking up every day, having shower and dressing decently, clean the house, demonstrate decency; in simple, [live according to] values" (p. 47). In other words, it involves the necessary effort to *surgir*, or rise up. This symbolic association reinforces the notion that those who are poor are lazy and dirty, and constructs poverty as an original stain that can be got rid of by complying with a productive, respectable life. For the women, whose relationship with wage work and/or production tended to be more unstable, it is not surprising that their subjectivity is also produced by 'being clean'.

The dichotomy clean/dirty has historically helped to establish moral boundaries between social classes, with more intensity among the generation which is the focus of this research. The already cited study by Mattelart and Mattelart (1968) shows that middle-class women used dirtiness to reinforce their difference from the lower classes, whom they perceived as dirty and lazy. Meanwhile the lower classes used cleanliness to differentiate themselves from some of their peers, whom they deemed stagnant. Cleanliness is also used to make sense of processes of upward social mobility which are often made visible by moving out of the poblaciones (see, also, Méndez, 2002). I heard from one woman the story of a relative who, after moving out of Población Nuevo Amanecer to a middle-class neighbourhood, started asking her guests to wash their hands with bleach after using the toilet. Regardless of whether this story is true or not, what is central is how class mobility is signified by cleanliness and by a dismissal of inhabitants of the población as 'dirty' visitors, who could potentially contaminate her new, middle-class house. The narrators of this story felt humiliated because they were treated "*as if we were dirty*", and stopped visiting her.

It is in this sense that cleanliness and its opposite, dirt, are so significant for the women of the popular classes. They are constantly talked about. I commonly heard phrases like "*poverty and dirtiness should not be confused*", "*if you want, wherever you are you will be clean*", "*poor but clean*", likely uttered in my presence, as a middle-class researcher of their lives and cleaning practices, more frequently than usual. Failure in presenting the home in the expected conditions of cleanliness and tidiness is constantly a matter for apologies such as "*you always arrive when I have a mess*" or "*let's*

*go to my place, but, I tell you, I haven't done anything [cleaning labour] yet".* Yet, their claims of being clean were not only related to our class difference; they also operate among the women themselves. The scene of the tablecloth is expressive of how they police each other. The category *dirty*, or *cochina*, is used in everyday life by the women to differentiate themselves from – concrete, hypothetical, present or past – other pobladora women. Both men and women can be *cochino*, a category that denotes an ‘inadequate’ form of sexuality. For instance, María remembers that when she was pregnant at the age of 43, another woman shouted ‘*cochina*’ at her while shopping in the market, presumably for being sexually active at her age. Nevertheless, since women bear responsibility for getting rid of dirt, they can also be categorised as *cochina* for the (lack of) cleanliness in their clothing – this will be revealed as being of central relevance later in the chapter – or their house. Yet, this differentiation is not a refusal of the gendered and classed system of values per se, but instead a refusal to be marked by such values, a process of des-identification from negative representations.

In the following section I move from the ways in which class and gender have been historically constructed and talked about through the categories clean/dirty, to explore the practices and negotiations that actually take place in that dichotomy. After a quick overview of other research on how class and gender are negotiated and (re)produced through domestic labour, I ethnographically analyse two different types of cleaning practices that take place in the domestic sphere, but which appear differently to the eyes of those beyond intimate networks.

## **Negotiation of classed and gendered subjects through cleaning practices**

Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition: the clean becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day. The housewife wears herself out marking time: she makes nothing, simply perpetuates the present (...). The battle against dust and dirt is never won. (de Beauvoir, 1956, p. 438)

Doing the work that deals with dirt has effects on the ways in which classed and gendered subjectivities are negotiated and produced. Scholarship on paid domestic

labour has argued that middle- and upper-class women can realise some values, such as domesticity and quality time, and thus embody valued forms of womanhood by sharing part of this feminine labour with an employee (Anderson, 2000; Fernández, Forthcoming; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2010; Lan, 2006; Roberts, 2000). While domestic labour is culturally associated with women through the positions of both mother and wife, not all domestic activities are equally valued or bestow the same value on those who produce them. Lan (2006) notes how employers create boundaries to differentiate themselves from their female domestic employees, by clearly delimiting and distributing menial and 'spiritual' housework. Echoing findings of previous research, she shows how Taiwanese employers reserve for themselves the "tasks that affirm their primary status and enhance their affective bond with children" (p. 115) and family more generally, such as playing with children or cooking. They delegate to domestic workers the tasks that directly deal with dirt and disorder, such as changing nappies or tidying rooms. By freeing themselves from dirty work, employers are able to achieve "domesticity and motherhood" (Lan, 2006, p. 107) or "quality time" with their families (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2010, p. 139), thus embodying the cultural norms of middle-class womanhood without renouncing wage work. Since paid domestic labour is organised through an "international division of reproductive labour" (Parrenas, 2000), these forms of womanhood are also classed and 'raced'. Thus, paid domestic labour is also a site in which gender, class and race are produced, reproduced by and also negotiated between employer and employee.

When unwaged, the distribution of 'dirty work' is (re)negotiated through the distribution of unpaid domestic labour between members of a couple and the family. In Chile, recent surveys on time use have shown how, in heterosexual couples, women do the cleaning to a much greater extent than men, who tend to carry out activities more related to the 'public' sphere or whose performance is not required on a daily basis, such as home repairs or school meetings (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas INE, 2015a; Silva, 2010; Soto Hernández, 2013). In the US, Carrington (1999) has shown how, despite claims of an equal share of domestic labour, a similar distribution of labour takes place in homosexual couples. The member of the couple who has a lower position in the labour market tends to concentrate on the most devalued tasks, producing a form of gendered division that is very similar to

heterosexual couples. The 'dirty' work is thus practical and symbolically associated to femininity.

In this section, however, I am concerned with how women position themselves in classed and gender terms *through* the devalued – feminised – activity of cleaning. Pink (2004) argues that cleaning is an activity in which agency is involved and gender is performed through the sensorial experience of the domestic space. She states this performance is produced through identification or detachment with the figure of the 'traditional housewife' and her 'obsession' with housework, to which both men and women refer when carrying out cleaning labour for themselves and their families. As such, she argues women and men perform singular forms of femininity and/or masculinity by producing themselves as closer or further from that image. I draw on this idea, but further explore how a concrete classed subject is also produced.

If the symbolic system of class represents popular classes in general, and women in particular, as dirty, then cleaning might allow them to endow themselves with value. There, I argue, relies the performative power of the phrase 'poor, but clean' that pobladora women from older generations tend to repeat. The conflict lies in the fact that cleaning is an endless activity and, thus, a spotless standard seems almost impossible to accomplish for anyone who does not rely on paid domestic workers. In the following section I show how both laundry and house cleaning are negotiated in everyday life, in a context of multiple demands, limited resources and competing values. At the beginning of this chapter, the tablecloth vignette showed the importance of public recognition of stains in order for them to become a moral statement. To some extent, laundry and house cleaning are two activities that relate to the public space in different ways: clothing can be assessed more publicly, while the domestic space is usually exposed only to more intimate networks.

### **Re-producing respectable clothes**

Personal appearance is one of the most important markers of social position. In Chile, a popular saying states "you will be treated according to how people see you" (*como te ven, te tratan*). Appearance is also considered by the popular classes as a focal source of evaluation by external gaze and potential discrimination (Araujo, 2011; Martínez and Palacios, 1996; Mayol et al., 2013). While quantity and quality of clothing have certainly made a difference between classes, the historical source of a respectable

appearance has been clean and pressed clothes<sup>63</sup>. In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, respectable dressing was a central marker of middle-class-ness. Candina (2009) notes how the middle class prioritised clothing over other dimensions of social reproduction, such as food.

Laundry used to be a tiresome and time-consuming activity, done by hand. Besides community leaders, no women knew about Nueva Habana's project of 'popular laundry' that, however, could not be completed. Back then, the great majority warmed water on their gas or petrol, sometimes wood stoves, and placed it in a wooden basin in the small patio areas. Dark, white and light-coloured clothing were separately left soaking in soapy water for a few hours, to make the stains softer. After that, women scrubbed the clothing piece by piece, especially the cuffs and collars, on which dirt gets stuck more easily. They rinsed and wrung each item, probably the activities requiring the most strength, before hanging the washing in the patio or roof area (see, also French-Fuller, 2006, p. 82). This is remembered as the most time-consuming activity, which for many implied working until very late. Indeed, house cleaning used to be a less intensive task than it is today, since, as María remembers, "*houses were smaller*" and "*cleaning was easier and faster because we did not mop*". As Di Barbieri (1989) noted in her study, families from popular classes do less domestic work than their upper-class counterparts "because there is no place to carry it out" (p. 241). As their living conditions improved, women experienced an increase in the amount of domestic work they had to carry out (see, also Carrington, 1999; de Barbieri, 1989).

Laundry used to be, and still is, a very feminised activity, the main burden falling especially on mothers. Some of them set aside 'washing days', while others did smaller quantities every day (see, also French-Fuller, 2006; Valdés, 1988a, p. 127). In some households, especially those in which the mother worked outside the house, young children collaborated with washing small clothing items – underpants or socks – or in some cases started washing their own clothes from the age of fourteen. While this certainly alleviated the burden, families having on average no less than four children, it did not fully free the women from this activity. Bedding, partners' and younger children's clothes usually remained the responsibility of the woman, or in

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<sup>63</sup> Today's consumer society is shifting the modes in which one's position and moral worth are assessed through clothing (see chapter 7).

some cases of her young daughters. Only one woman in my research claimed her partner did his own laundry, because she had an illness that prevented her from doing it.

The expectation of 'albo' clothing is not specific to the popular classes, but rather transversal to all social classes, at least among the older generation. Yet, these expectations were differently produced. Historically, women in the middle and upper classes delegated this burden to paid domestic service or took their clothes to be hand-washed in the houses of popular women (Brito, 1995; French-Fuller, 2006; Roseblatt, 2000, p. 172). This practice was so common – and the availability of this cheap labour so great – that even with the arrival of the washing machine, it continued in wealthy households for years (French-Fuller, 2006). Free from the physical dimension of this labour, upper-class women could value 'organisation', 'enthusiasm' and 'dynamism' as the characteristics of housewifery they were accountable for (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1968). In contrast, among popular-class households, keeping a tablecloth 'albo' depended on being able to put in the actual labour that produced this state: the tiresome activity of hand-washing, described above. Pobladora women might not have had money to buy clothes, but they were expected to dress herself and her family in "*old but clean clothing*" (Valdés, 1988, p. 102). While, by mid-century, laundering and ironing clothes became activities through which a respectable femininity and care for the family could be expressed (French-Fuller, 2006), the conditions of production in the respective social classes were quite different.

Judgement over clean clothing seemed to be especially important with regard to children. One woman often dressed her son in a suit and cuffs that she made for him (and could corroborate this with photographs), while another claimed her children were deemed by the neighbours to be 'posh' "*because they were always very clean*". Keeping the children clean was an even more difficult task, considering children were raised in a manner that privileged self-learning and exploration, in a way similar to what Lareau (2011) has called 'natural growing'. Isabel and Rosa, who arrived in Nueva Habana when they were children, spent their childhood playing with their peers in uncultivated lands, making holes or running around in unpaved streets. To my surprise, when I showed the women a picture of a group of children, none of them made a comment about their visibly dirty clothes; it seems that mothers



assumed their children would inevitably get dirty by the end of the day. When I asked about the difficulties of keeping clothes clean, one woman replied to me, making sure to leave no doubt about her laundry practices: *“only those who wanted kept their children dirty!”*. Neither the fact that washing clothes was a tiresome and time-consuming activity, nor living conditions in which soil, dust and mud were ever present, prevented clean clothes from being a mode of assessing a woman’s moral worth. Indeed, there pertained a rather sacrificial notion of how motherhood should be lived.

If, in the past, the realisation of the value of clean clothing implied a commitment to extensive hours of scrubbing, in the present, this is expressed through the ways in which women interact with contemporary technologies. Señora Carmela’s conception of motherhood as sacrifice is lived through the laundry process. She is the oldest of my participants – born in the 1930s –, the only one who has never worked for a wage and who seems fully subjected to the discourses of the housewife (she explicitly defends the industrial model of the family). She claims to *‘love washing’* and, even at her age, she still does the laundry and ironing for the two sons who live with her (65 and 32 years old). She claims to have inherited this *‘taste’* from her mother and grandmother, whose laundry and ironing were so careful that *“you could not tell trousers had been dragged in the soil”*. Her childhood in the countryside, then symbolically associated with backwardness<sup>64</sup>, might help to understand why washing and ironing clothes is such important activities for her. Through the exhausting process of washing clothes, the women of her family, and she herself, might have erased the perceived backwardness of constant contact with the soil.

In different conditions, Señora Carmela’s sacrifice for producing a respectable – clean and pressed – appearance has changed. For washing clothes other than bedding, she uses the semi-automatic washing machine that stands next to the fully automatic one. She told me she prefers this machine because it saves water, electricity and washing powder, by allowing her to re-use the soaped water in which white clothes have already been washed. In this machine, she can also engage in a process she did not tell me about: she is able to take out every piece to be manually scrubbed

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<sup>64</sup> During the fieldwork, I heard some phrases that associated countryside soil with poverty and backwardness. For instance, Señora Herminia remembers that when was 14-years old, relatives suggested her parents to send her to work as a maid in Santiago. In their perspective, she would better-off in the city: why would she get soiled in here? They asked.

individually, to make sure all the stains and dirt have been removed. After the process has been completed, she irons every piece, even underpants and sheets. The physical exhaustion and back pain she feels after this labour are for her the minimum sacrifice a mother should make for the respectable appearance of her family. While Señora Carmela seems to be an extreme case, for María high standards of respectable clothing become a mode of self-regulation that prevents further redistribution of domestic labour. She does not like her husband to do the laundry because he does not separate the clothing, which usually ends up stained and carelessly hung. By contrast, she separates clothing by colour, pours washing liquid onto cuffs and collars and scrubs them before putting them into the washing machine; she hangs them inside-out to avoid the colour being washed out by the sun (a very common practice which I incorporated in fieldwork). The careless way in which her husband does the process threatens both the respectable standards and the visible care of her family she expresses through the laundry process.

It is relevant that, although clothing is a materiality subject to public external judgement, the most publicly visible product of reproductive practices in the domestic space, women still negotiate the terms of its production. Many women, for instance, reject the process of ironing. Señora Marta is aware that *"good presentation can be seen in the face...people check clothing, hair and feet (shoes)..."* and knows that pressed clothing is important in this equation, yet she refuses to carry out such labour. If as a paid domestic worker, she was forced to iron her employees' clothing, in the process of her own reproduction she has decided to avoid this time-consuming, boring activity she dislikes. Yet, this does not mean she has given up following the norms of respectable appearance of wearing unwrinkled clothes. She carries out the laundry process in ways designed overall to avoid clothing getting wrinkled: careful hanging of each piece of clothing to avoid unnecessary creasing, and extremely careful folding for storage. When an item of clothing is deemed as requiring ironing, she asks one of her daughters to do this for her. The production of clothing that is as little wrinkled as possible is a way of concealing the lack of the process of ironing.

For some women, it is difficult to understand the increasing relaxation of these codes of respectability among young women: contemporary conditions have made their achievement much easier due to a lower number of children per woman, a wider availability of clothing, the use of disposable diapers and, crucially, the wide

availability of the washing machine. It was common to hear the women in this research say that things are easy today, that young women are lazy, that they are unwilling to sacrifice for their children: *"have you seen any young women knit for their children?"* Miriam asked me when comparing past and present. For Carmela, her grandson's soiled-looking shirt is the expression of his partner's lack of care. The dismissal of present forms of motherhood is telling of how strongly sacrifice and motherhood were linked for the older women.

The value of the albo condition of clothing is diminishing among the new generations. Younger pobladora women that were interviewed or their practices observed in the context of this research, separated the laundry by colour, but the labour of washing is completely done by the machine, without any extra scrubbing. Less care in clothing can be perceived by the older generations, and Carmela made sure to make clear to her grandson the lack of moral value as a woman she perceived in her granddaughter-in-law, giving her grandson soiled-looking shirts. Ironing is less and less relevant when synthetic fabrics are eliminating the need for it. María, who claims to iron everything, has opted for this material for her own clothing. Being clean is still important, but for the new generations not only the required standard and the forms of labour have changed, but also their priorities, expanding the possibilities for the women to (re)produce themselves beyond their positions of mothers and homemakers. It seems that, as Valdés, Gysling and Benavente (1999) have noted, sacrifice is disappearing as a necessary part of the experience of motherhood.

### **Beyond the clichés: house cleaning (and other) labours of everyday life**

There are perceptible differences in cleaning conditions between the houses of women who all constantly claim that poverty and dirtiness should not be confused. What does this mean in terms of their production as classed and gendered subjects? Here I turn to house cleaning as a less visible dimension of cleaning labour, and one less available for public muster. Through attention to the ways in which women negotiate material conditions and the multiple demands of everyday life, I explore the value that cleaning practices have in everyday life and the way in which women ground, or do not ground, their value and produce subjectivity through them.

María's house was by far the cleanest house I had seen in the neighbourhood (and beyond!). In none of the several visits I made to her did I find any dusty surfaces, signs of drippings on kitchen furniture or floors, toys or other objects spread across the house, visible mess in the patio area (despite the family's two dogs), or more than a couple of plates drying in the rack. The levels of cleanliness and tidiness she maintains are only comparable with domestic spaces with paid domestic service and, thus, very unusual in the neighbourhood. Certainly, the sensation of perfect tidiness and cleanliness that emanates from her domestic environment is intensified by the solidness of her house, the modern and relatively new furniture and the ceramic tiles that cover the floors and walls of the kitchen and toilet. This high standard is also facilitated by the low-intensity occupation of her house, since María's husband and her son and his partner, who all live with her, leave early in the morning and do not come back home until the evening. She very rarely has grandchildren to take care of and, thus, has plenty of time to leave her house as spotless as she likes.

If we think of cleanliness as a discourse of modernisation central in the formations of class and gender, María (72) has been strongly subjected by it. She was never an economically dependent housewife and, throughout her life, she undertook a great diversity of precarious jobs and other income-generating activities. Indeed, she is proud of having been able to provide for her family, especially since she went into her second marriage with children. While her position as a breadwinner gives her moral worth, as a productive subject, the labours she carries out at home also enable her to assert such a self-worth from her position as a woman. Those who know her are aware of her 'obsession' with house cleaning. When I approached her, I made explicit my interest in her obsession. "*I am terrible*", she replied with a touch of pride, and happily accepted my request for a participant observation session of domestic labour after my first visit, something that I negotiated with other women only after several months of visits. Unwilling to make explicit her housework priorities ("*everything is important*"), she usually emphasised cleanliness as a way to differentiate herself and her family from other neighbours. One afternoon during the summer, while she was sweeping the invisible dust off the tiled patio floor, I let her know I could see no dust. She laughed and replied, "*my daughter-in-law says the same*"; she continued after a pause, "*I do not know how there are mothers who leave their children abandoned*", symbolically connecting cleaning and mothering.

Through cleanliness María is able to endow with moral value both her classed and her gendered position in traditional ways. She claims she has always been “*as clean as today*”, despite having been “*very poor*”, producing herself as both dignified and respectable. In the present, she believes her cleanliness to be the main reason social workers classify her as middle-class, thus excluding her from the social benefits she believes she deserves. Even though in the past she delegated some housework to her children – they had to make their beds, or wash their own clothes from the age of fourteen – the standards she aimed to accomplish were achieved through personal cost. For instance, she dropped out of the adult evening school that would have allowed her to get a formal education, because she preferred to use this time to do housework and spend time with her children, so that they could “*be properly raised*”. While sometimes she regrets neglecting her own needs, she presents herself as proud of a past in which cleanliness distinguished her and her family – she claims her children were said to be ‘*cuicos*’ (‘posh’) – and of a present marked by their familiar and professional success.

This value of cleanliness can also be applied to sexuality. Like her house, María presents herself as being totally ‘clean’, making constant efforts to make her sexuality invisible. Sharing a cup of tea and talking about domestic concerns, she told me: “*my son says I’m an exemplary woman. I wonder why he says ‘woman’ and not ‘mother’?*” She would like to be recognised as a mother, a category that in Catholicism – the religion she professes – has a long tradition as pure and sexually clean (Illanes, 1999). This claim resonates with other personal narratives, such as her claims to never have worn makeup, to have waxed, or her dismissal of young women for what she considers an excessive concern with physical appearance. Thus, cleanliness – of her house, her clothes, and even of her sexuality – is a fundamental source of self-worth as a woman. This is why there is very little or no space in her life to negotiate this dimension, and her house is a clear expression of that.

Hortensia’s solid self-built three-bedroom house does not look as spotless as María’s. Tidiness is usually interrupted by traces of the multiple activities of her and her husband’s everyday life: some handicraft material or a newspaper on the table, some documents detailing the most important points of acupuncture, or a toy left by one of her grandchildren on the sofa. Pictures of family members and decorative objects fill the rooms and adorn the walls, together with a great amount of handicraft

material she stores on shelves or in wardrobes, or piles in different corners of the house to accumulate dust, giving the feeling of an organised mess. While moderate levels of dust or mess seem not to be a problem for Hortensia, she is extremely sensitive to dirt on her bedding and clothing. She declares she changes pillow cases every other day because she does not like the smell they acquire with usage, and clean and properly folded bedding can usually be seen on the single sofa in the living room. Similarly, she mops the tiled floor on a daily basis with a mix of water and bleach, *'just in case'*, to make sure it is clean and smells such. Pink (2004) has stressed how sensorial experience informs cleaning practices. For Hortensia, her sense of smell is central in her negotiation of cleaning practices, since it sets the limits to what cannot be left undone.

While Hortensia is responsible for carrying out domestic chores in the house she shares with her husband, attending courses or making handicrafts are, for her, activities more valued, more important than cleaning. *"I am not a fanatic. I do a little bit of cleaning and other tasks in the morning, and then have plenty of time to do my own stuff"*, she tells me confidently. Her sense of dignity is established by her involvement in social struggles and is unlikely to be undermined by a greater or lesser degree of house cleaning. Nobody could claim she is 'stagnant' or lacks a 'sense of improvement': ideas that, as seen earlier in this chapter, were associated with dirtiness. This does not mean cleanliness is not important as a means of grounding her self-worth as a woman. Her expectations usually set limits to the activities which she can carry out beyond the domestic space *"as long as I and my house are clean"*, as she claims. In the present, without grandchildren to look after, she is usually able to commit to both a 'non-fanatic' standard of cleanliness and the activities she values more. Still in some circumstances, as in the context of the dictatorship, she was forced to lower her expectations as a homemaker. Without a willingness to negotiate these standards, she could not have positioned herself as a social and community leader in the past and present.

Life can be seen in Señora Marta's house. Mattresses, toys or coloured pencils on the floor, sofas or dining table make visible the presence of her five-year-old grandson, for whom she has caring responsibilities. In the main house Señora Marta, a retired woman in her mid-70s, lives with her youngest daughter and Antonio, her grandson. A granddaughter and her family live in rooms built in the backyard, sharing the toilet

and partially the kitchen of the main house. During the summer, a big plastic swimming pool placed on the pavement gathers together Antonio's cousins and some neighbours. When I visited them, it was usual to find the furniture covered with decorative objects accumulating some dust, some clean folded clothing waiting to be stored, or some drippings on the kitchen floor.

Señora Marta is constantly doing cleaning and other types of domestic labour. On the several visits I made to her house during the nine months of fieldwork, only twice did I find her lying on the sofa watching TV. More often, I found her laundering, cleaning the patio, hanging or folding clothing, cooking and so on. Señora Marta bears the main responsibility for domestic labour, especially since her daughter is a working mother who has far less time to commit to domestic duties. It is important to note that, unlike María, Señora Marta has a responsibility of care for her son, increasing the amount of time she needs to devote to domestic labour (in the increase time in caring see Carrington, 1999; de Barbieri, 1989; Servicio Nacional de la Mujer SERNAM, Universidad Bolivariana, & Corporación Domos, 2008). Her house facilities are also more intensively used, making cleaning labour more time-consuming. Keeping her house as spotless as that of María would imply for Señora Marta and her daughter a sacrifice of sleep or giving up tea-time with family and/or neighbours and or participation in an elderly club, dimensions of their lives that seems also valuable. It does not matter whether she accomplishes with spotless standards or not: she feels entitled to claim that poverty and dirt should not be confused, because she is constantly working towards maintaining and enacting certain standards of cleaning which, however, she must negotiate.

Indeed, while Señora Marta might tolerate some dust on the furniture or her grandson's mess, contamination is carefully prevented in food preparation. When she invited me to help her to make a cake, she carefully examined the hygiene of the already clean kitchenware and ingredients to be used: she looked at and touched the interior of the plastic mixing bowl, smelled the grater and washed it, and did the same with a fork before squeezing a lemon. She smelled the opened cardboard milk-box she took from the fridge before pouring milk into the dough and changed the wooden spoon I had taken – which she identified as 'for cooking' – to one she deemed more appropriate. Her cooking practices take time and care to prevent contamination, not just to avoid food poisoning but also to avoid mixing of flavours.

Similarly, she would only buy *humitas* (a Chilean dish consisting in smashed corn cooked in corn leaves) when she knew they were prepared in a hygienic way. The laundry process and food preparation are practices in which she does not accept negotiation in cleanliness and hygiene.

Being affected by an illness that restricts her mobility, cleaning is experienced by Señora Herminia as problematic, and she admits that “*I find it very [physically] hard to do the cleaning*”. The production of foodstuff for selling also increases the amount of labour – sweeping up flour or cleaning all the tools used. She lives with her husband and, a few times a week, looks after a 12-year-old grandson. Her husband shares some of the domestic labour: he sweeps the floors, goes shopping, prepares the afternoon tea commonly known as ‘*once*’, but he is not committed to cleaning, cooking or caring in the ways Señora Herminia expects. For the harder tasks, like mopping or cleaning the toilets, she depends on her adult children, especially one of her daughters. The visibly deteriorated condition of some walls, ceilings and furniture furthers the sense that there is ‘matter out of place’. Unlike Señora Marta, who experiences domestic labour as something over which she has control, Señora Herminia usually experiences these practices in tension between her own expectations and the material conditions in which they are to be achieved. Yet, this does not necessarily undermine her sense of self-worth as a woman, since cleanliness seems to play a less central role in the production of herself as subject of value than it does for the other three women.

Food preparation seems for Señora Herminia to be the most important grounds on which she produces a form of valued womanhood. Unlike the other women described in this chapter, cliché phrases that disentangle poverty and dirtiness are not constantly repeated in Señora Herminia’s narratives. She still symbolically connects dirt and messiness with morally devalued people, for instance, through narratives like she told me about her son’s new ‘bad friend’, whose house was “*full of cachureos [useless stuff] and rubbish*” or felt uncomfortable in the presence of a stained tablecloth. Nevertheless, she prioritises and put most of her effort in food preparation ensuring that, as her daughter remembers, “*in my house, we always eat well*”, despite past and present economic difficulties.

While all the women value and care for the family through cooking (see, also De Vault, 1991; Lan, 2006), this activity is for Señora Herminia the most important means



to express love and perform responsibilities of care and childrearing. She is extremely careful in preparing fried eggs the way her grandson likes, is constantly worried because of her son's not eating properly, and is always offering food as treats. She is proud of having raised well-fed and not fussy or pampered children. Uncountable times I heard the story of how, when her closer grandson was interned in hospital, nurses and doctors were pleased that he ate everything. She also blames the mother of another grandson, five years old, for not being patient enough to motivate him to eat properly. In contrast with what she deems 'wrong' mothering practices, when her grandson is at her house, she carefully persuades him to eat all his meal and waits as long as is necessary for him to do so. Eating well is for Señora Herminia the central dimension of a proper life, which endows her role of mother with moral worth. It is this ability to provide appropriate food where she grounds most of her value as a mother and woman.

## **Conclusion**

The path to modernisation that symbolically linked modernity with cleanliness, and poverty with dirt, has shaped the way in which pobladora women of older generations experience cleaning practices. As women, and as inhabitants of what used to be a campamento, they feel compelled to des-identify, to refuse the moral ascriptions of their class position. The clichéd phrase "poor, but clean", and other strategies of des-identification are deployed whenever they believe they might be mis-recognised as embodying negative values. In front of those who are not part of their intimate networks, they feel compelled to be constantly and permanently demonstrating they do comply with expected cleaning standards. These claims are performative (Austin, 1971) in the sense that they are uttered by the women as ways of positioning themselves as respectable and/or dignified subjects, not in an alternative symbolic system, but placing themselves on the 'right' side of the clean/dirty dichotomy.

In this chapter I have shown how this refusal is not only discursive, but also physically and materially produced through hard domestic labour. Of course, the women also value hygiene and cleanliness by its use-value, especially relevant in the past conditions of the campamento. The need for clean clothes, the comfort of a clean house or a nice-smelling floor are valuable as they allow a 'state of mind', to borrow Hochschild's (2012) concept, which is not to be appropriated by others but is to be

enjoyed by themselves and their families. Señora Marta's moody expression when tiles were being put into her patio, making a big mess, or the complaints of Fabiola, cited at the beginning of this thesis, about the steps in her kitchen, are expressions of this. Yet, the contrast between laundry as an activity oriented to public scrutiny and house cleaning as exposed to an intimate network is telling of the relevance of the judgement of others in the process of negotiation.

The symbolic systems of class and gender do have effects in shaping the ways in which cleaning practices are negotiated. It has been shown how in the laundry process, women are less willing to negotiate expected standards. Clothing, as central to personal appearance, is a surface on which the dichotomy clean/dirty is easily available to others' eyes. To wear properly clean clothes, albo and unwrinkled clothes, is a way of, paraphrasing Skeggs (1997), 'becoming respectable' and to resist negative moral ascriptions throughout their lives. In the past, and unlike middle- and upper-class women, who had their clothes cleaned by washerwomen, for pobladora women the production of these standards was the result of their - usually sacrificial - labour. Aspiring for their families to have an appropriate appearance, through their laundry practices pobladora women expressed thus care and love for their families and judgemental attitude towards the failure to do so.

Among older generations, in contemporary times standards of cleanliness continue operating as a mode of self-regulation, a norm the women do not necessarily value for itself, but with which they feel force to comply to. If they fail to achieve the expected standards, whether explicitly (as in the scene with the tablecloth) or implicitly (gossip, dismissing), condemnation might be the result, undermining women's value. Thus, standards prevent further redistribution of domestic labour and limit the amount of time the women can devote to other activities. There is some room for negotiation, for example, through many women's refusal to do the ironing. Still, the women are aware of the value of ironed clothes as a synonym for respectable appearance, so they create strategies to conceal a lack of accomplishment of the standards.

Spotless standards of cleaning are, however, usually a utopian dream in domestic spaces in which paid domestic service is not available. In contrast to the public-facing laundry process, the women must negotiate the standards of cleaning in the intimacy of their domestic space, based on the multiple demands, limited resources and

competing values of everyday life. As has been shown, material conditions – the presence of children, help from other members of the household, physical capacity, conditions of the dwelling – set the limits in which standards are achieved. While María seems to admit no negotiation, and is apparently fully subjected by the discourse of cleanliness, the fact that her material conditions make cleanliness easier to achieve seem to support this statement. Unlike María, other women define priorities of cleaning and tolerate dirtiness in certain ways. To fully comply with the highest standards would risk neglecting other, equally or more valuable, dimensions of their working-class womanhood, such as the ability to provide for their families (through wage labour), to allow the children to make a mess, or to engage in social participation, as many of these women do.

Cleaning practices have been shown to be central to the ways in which the mature and elderly pobladora women who were part of this research have produced themselves as dignified classed subjects. For them, attention to house-cleaning and especially the laundry process, has been a way to affirm to themselves and to others that they do not let themselves go, they do not 'se dejan estar'. While cleanliness is valued across social classes, in their position as pobladoras, a location historically associated with dirt, it becomes crucial for the assessment of themselves and the way they present themselves to others. If we take into account the symbolic systems of class and gender formations, and the ways in which the women contest them, the production of valued forms of classed womanhood (and motherhood) through menial labour becomes visible. This marks a clear contrast with valued forms of womanhood among middle- and upper-class subjects studied in research on paid domestic labour mentioned above, even following similar norms of women's domesticity. Unlike pobladoras, middle- and upper-class women only carry out socially valued aspects of domestic labour related to direct attention to children, in order to produce themselves as women with individual projects or professional careers. Furthermore, while I agree with Pink (2004) that agency is central in the particular ways in which cleaning labour is carried out – for instance, defining when to dust the furniture or clean the floor – the symbolic system of class and gender and the concrete social locations set limits to it. Pobladora women are not equally free to distance themselves from the 'classic' housewife as the university professor or the young male student of Pink's analysis are.

Finally, while the discourses that tied gender and class respectability and dignity to cleanliness were central during the period in which the women of this research grew up, its subjecting power is different among the women. Hortensia is more flexible in her cleaning practices allowing her to spare time for other activities which produce her beyond her position of mother and wife. While she cleans, does her laundry or cleans her house to a standard she feels is enough to not be categorised as dirty, she also produces herself through the discourses and practices of social and political struggle. While Señora Herminia uses the dichotomy clean/dirty to judge other people's morality and is usually concerned with the cleanness of her house, her sense of value as a mother is much more grounded in food preparation and nurturing practices than in cleaning. Having grown up in a context in which those in higher positions dismissed the poor as starving or literally as 'dead by starvation' (*muerto de hambre*), having food to eat and eating properly could also mean a symbolic resistance and claiming a sense of dignity. The experiences of both Hortensia and Señora Herminia make visible other gendered labours of reproduction, beyond cleaning practices, by which the pobladora women produced themselves as worthy classed and gendered subjects. In the following chapter, I show how these subjects are also produced through provisioning practices.

## Chapter 7

# Provisioning practices and social differentiation in Nuevo Amanecer

### Going to the feria

To reach the closest supermarket in Nuevo Amanecer, it takes a walk of at least 30 minutes, or public transport is required. There are, however, plenty of small family grocery shops that help cover daily demands. Twice a week, the street market, known in Chile as the *feria*, is set up in the población, offering an incredibly wide range of goods and services. The feria spreads along two roads in an 'L' shape. Its shorter axis is set along *Punitaqui* Street, a wide street in the west end of Nuevo Amanecer going from south to north, and it offers mainly groceries: fruit, vegetables, non-perishable foods and fish, but also some toiletries and cleaning products. The bulk of the feria is set in a wide terrace, on the north side of the well-known *Departamental Avenue*, which cuts across Santiago from east to west. At this point, the avenue has two lanes for cars in each direction, and a wide bus lane in the centre. Here, slightly inclined up on the mountain, the feria offers almost everything: groceries, DIY items, bike accessories, plants, mobile phone accessories, haircuts, handicrafts, houseware (and, indeed, informal credit for buying it) and a wide variety of second-hand items, ranging from clothes through electronic items to carpets.

Every Thursday morning, the streets of the población become crowded mainly with women – a significant proportion of them of mature age – pushing shopping trolleys, making visible the gendered character of provisioning practices. Thursday mornings are devoted to the feria and it is practically impossible to make visits or arrange interviews. At the beginning of my fieldwork, then, going to the feria was a good excuse for me to meet people. On Sundays, the feria has a more festive feeling: it lasts longer – until 4pm, approximately – and customers are more diverse. Some families will have lunch out, choosing from options ranging from pizza or pastries to fried fish or soups, served on stalls or in nearby houses transformed into makeshift Sunday restaurants. The feria is bigger on Sunday, so more people take advantage of this economic space in order to make some cash, selling homemade pastries, beer, humitas, or clothing and other second-hand items.



*Image 16 Customers at the feria, Punitaqui Street  
Photograph by the author.*

Ferias are the main source of provisioning and informal work for the popular classes. A great number of people find a spot for selling at the edges of the market, without a licence to do so, expanding and blurring its boundaries. Commonly known as ‘coleros’ (from the Spanish *cola*, meaning tail: those who work at the tail of the market), this type of work is “one of the main strategies of self-provision or self-employment among people in a condition of poverty” (Marquez, 2004, p. 1, my translation). Through the coleros, the feria ‘absorbs’ unemployment, though generating conflicts with those who do hold a licence to sell. The feria is also a space for some illegal trade: stolen items, pirated music and movies, or expired medicines.

In my family, the feria was the main channel for provision of fruits and vegetables. Non-perishable goods, however, were mostly acquired at the supermarket. My mother, who worked as a seller of building materials, drove daily across Santiago and used to bring home food and clothes from different ferias. Second-hand clothing was always present during my life. As a child, this meant the shameful materialisation of my family’s lower social position in comparison to my classmates at the private school where I studied. The meaning changed in my teenage years, when I organised feria trips with friends to search for clothing bargains to satisfy our middle-class desire for style and exclusivity. Living in a villa in La Florida, on Saturdays I used to go to a feria on Departamental Avenue, quite close to the one at Nuevo Amanecer that would

become the main source of provision for my own maintenance during fieldwork.

The first time I went to the Nuevo Amanecer feria with Rosa and Carmen was on a Thursday at the end of October. Rosa and Isabel are relatives who arrived as children to Nueva Habana. Both are housewives in their fifties, with both adult and school-aged children, some of former still part of their households. The previous day we had explicitly agreed to meet at Rosa's at 10:30 a.m. but, when I arrived, they were in the kitchen shelling the broad beans they had already bought. I felt a bit disappointed. They told me, however, not to worry, because they were going to the feria again: since they had already brought the groceries Rosa's mother had insistently requested for that day's lunch, we could now go again and have plenty of time to '*cachurear*', or search for more or less valuable things among the great diversity of second-hand goods at the feria's flea market.

We arrived at the feria from Punitaqui Street. Carmen and Rosa tried to pass through that section quickly. They were keen to get to the Departamental Avenue side of the feria to *cachurear*, the activity they liked the most. I managed to stop to buy aubergine and milled linseed. Isabel impatiently waited for me a few metres ahead, while Rosa accompanied me and curiously asked what the linseed was for. I thought she wanted to know about its properties, something I knew little about, but the question was simpler, about how to consume it. We kept talking about linseed, while I kept checking the products available – I needed to buy my food, but they were advancing too fast! I felt I was lagging behind and decided to follow them, forgetting my shopping list. Luckily for me, they stopped at the end of Tupungato Street, at a stall that I had already recognised as offering the best deal on avocados. It offered quite a fair price for two of the best varieties of avocado – creamy and tasty, and much bigger than most of the cheaper ones sold on other stalls. Since avocados are expensive, they bought "*just a few, to spread a small portion onto bread. We are in charge of tea time for tomorrow's workshop*", Rosa pointed out. I also bought avocado for my own consumption for the whole week.

We crossed the four lanes and central bus lane of Departamental Avenue towards the northern side, heading for the flea market. Isabel said she was especially looking for a yellow t-shirt for her granddaughter's school presentation. Before we started walking up to the east, we met Laura, another member of the knitting workshop we all attended. While they talked, I took advantage to buy some potatoes and tomatoes. I finished my purchases and Rosa came close to me to share her knowledge: "*in Punitaqui Street, fruits*

*and vegetables are slightly cheaper*". In this moment, I started to appreciate the different strategies that Rosa and Isabel often deploy in order to provide for their families, to which knowledge and time are central.



*Image 17 Stalls in the feria, Departamental Street  
Photograph by the author.*

Continuing to look at the more 'traditional' activities carried out by women as mothers and housewives, in this chapter I turn to women's provisioning practices. In the previous chapter I showed how women negotiate the dichotomy clean/dirty, and the ways and extent to which cleaning practices – laundry and housecleaning – allow them to produce themselves as classed and gendered subjects and particular forms of sexuality. Like cleaning, provisioning is a central activity for the reproduction of a household. As seen in the literature review, specialised knowledge about provisioning of goods and services and the adaptation of consumption practices to family income were central strategies for the survival of households in the popular classes during the economic crisis (see, for instance, de Barbieri, 1989; González de la Rocha et al., 1990; Jelin, 1991b; Raczynski & Serrano, 1984). However, working in a context marked by extreme poverty that placed at risk the satisfaction of even the most basic physiological needs, prevented an analysis of the symbolic dimensions of these practices. I undertake a similar endeavour, but now in a different context, marked by the consolidation of



neoliberal policies (Schild, 2007) and the expansion of levels of consumption and credit to wider sectors of the population (see, for instance, Aguilar, 2009; Tironi, 1999; Venegas, 2011). I draw the contours of various practices through which women of different generations provide themselves and their families with the goods and services they need to (re)produce themselves in particular classed ways. Given the emphasis on class, I have preferred to work with provisioning, instead of the more widely used concept of consumption which has been quite usually understood as a form of self-expression (Miller, 1998; Narotsky, 2005; for a critique of this perspective on consumption see Warde, 2005). Defined by Susana Narotsky (2005), provisioning should be understood as

a complex process where production, distribution, appropriation and consumption relations have to be taken into account and where history defines particular available paths for goods and services. Provisioning is also a useful way to understand social differentiation, the construction of particular meanings and identities and the reproduction of the social and economic system as a whole. [...] In focusing on what takes place at the consumption end of the provisioning process, they [scholars on consumption] have often forgotten the economic and political forces that constrain people's consumption. (pp. 78-9)

Throughout the chapter, I explore how pobladora women navigate through two different modes of provisioning – intimate networks and the market<sup>65</sup> – the classed meanings given to goods and services, and the channels of distribution through which they are available: the feria, the supermarket and the mall. I ethnographically describe the provisioning practices of Carmen and Rosa (and other women) – the goods they obtain on a regular basis, where they obtain them and how and why they select them, attending to the material conditions in which they take place – I argue that the material and symbolic dimensions of class shape the practices and meanings given to the provisioning process and, thus, the ways in which women (re)produce themselves and their families. I conclude that, through investing time and labour, women provide their families with what they believe to be a dignified and better life.

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<sup>65</sup> The ways in which the community historically provided services was analysed in chapter five. How channels of provisioning are articulated with the state is a subject not developed here. On this topic see Schild (2007).

## Taking care of one's belongings. Thrift, time and kin

Every day around 18:00, bread comes out of the ovens of the few bakeries in Nuevo Amanecer and arrives from other places of the capital to the local shops. Outside almost every shop, and until around 19:30, there will be queues mainly composed of women of different ages aiming to get fresh bread. It is *once* time. In Chile, this meal consists of bread with butter, jam, cold cuts, avocado... – whatever they like and/or can afford, accompanied by tea, instant coffee, or milk for the children. Usually, once replaces dinner and often gathers family together after the workday. Rosa and Carmen would usually queue outside 'El Más Barato' ('The Cheapest'), a shop that, unlike the others, always has a queue outside, even at lunchtime, waiting to get some cold cuts for the once. They could get these at the bakery, but are willing to queue again because they "look after their money" (*cuidar la plata*). This shop – as its name indicates – was famous for being the cheapest in the neighbourhood. Even Señora Marta's daughter, who lives about a 15-minute walk away, was aware of its existence. Indeed, its fame was so extensive that another branch, 'The Cheapest II', had opened in another part of the población. In general, women would wait for about ten minutes to get "something for the bread", meat, or toiletries, at a better price than in other local shops

One evening in January, Daniela (Carmen's daughter) and I were waiting Carmen who was queuing with about six to eight other women of different ages outside 'El Más Barato' ('The Cheapest'). She is in her late twenties and, at that time, was a full-time mother to her two girls, three and five years old. While we were waiting, she suddenly complained, saying something I reconstructed in my fieldwork diary like this: "This queue is simply not possible. I don't understand why they [the women in the queue] do it; it's not even that much cheaper! I buy at the supermarket once a month and avoid this situation!". For Daniela, the little money she could save by shopping at 'The Cheapest' is not worth the time it requires. Time spent on other activities, such as housework, spending time with her daughters, watching soap operas or using social media, is more important to Daniela than the pennies she could save. She provisions herself using another channel, the supermarket, where she can find what she needs, usually at a better price than in most local shops<sup>66</sup>, even 'The Cheapest'. Yet, she can do so because she counts with a

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<sup>66</sup> While local shops are more expensive, they offer groceries in small quantities: half a litre of milk, half a kilo of rice, two eggs, a 200cl bottle of washing-up liquid affordable to small

more stable income than Carmen. In this context, waiting in the queue is inscribed in what I call an ethics of 'caring for one's belongings', which is shared among the older generation of pobladora women.

This ethics of care is highly informed by gendered and classed positions, but also, it will be revealed, by generation. One Thursday at the feria, Rosa saw me leaving a bag of strawberries at a stall to check out a dress I liked. Overwhelmed by my careless attitude, she took the bag, hung it on her trolley and told me off: "*this is why you lose your stuffs! You don't look after them... it does cost you to earn your money, doesn't it?*" This reprimand was totally deserved: they knew the previous week I had lost a shopping bag. My behaviour made visible our different positionings, both in terms of availability of resources and responsibility over loved ones' lives. This ethics of care is in operation even now that the '*times of hunger*'<sup>67</sup> that Rosa described to me the first time we had once together are long in the past, a past that members of younger generations – like Daniela – did not live through or cannot remember. Sometimes, the struggle to make ends meet or lack of money will prevent pobladora women from going to the feria or from celebrating adults' birthdays or New Year's Eves. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that daily feeding will be compromised, as it sometimes was in the past<sup>68</sup>. Despite unforeseen expenditures, fluctuations in the household's income – many women's partners are self-employed in the building sector – or adult children who cannot always contribute, women must and do make sure that there is food on the table, that children get properly dressed and that they are provided with the materials needed for school. Women are in charge of the administration of a budget for daily needs and have the final say on what goods and services the whole family has access to. Unlike for me, for them, acts of 'not taking care' are not inconsequential.

Through the expressions "*To look after the money*" or "*To take care of one's belongings*" (*cuidar lo que uno tiene*), I was not only discouraged by Carmen and Rosa from buying groceries at the bakery or something else at a random stall in the feria. Other women

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budgets. Yet, this system of buying in small amounts at the local shop becomes even more expensive; some have called this the 'poverty tax'. A very successful start-up is attempting to tackle this issue through system to sell small quantities without raising the price; see <https://www.algramo.com/nuestra-historia.html>

<sup>67</sup> Referring to the late 1970s and especially the time after the crisis in 1982, the context in which community soup kitchens emerged (see introduction and chapter 5).

<sup>68</sup> For an ethnography on economic precariousness in poblaciones see Han (2012).

used these phrases to proudly state that they took care of the stuff they have obtained with effort, as a result of 'sacarse la mugre' (see chapter six). Señora Marta pronounced the phrase when she complained about her granddaughter's lack of care for a blender she has lent her, and have had for more than 15 years, and María when talking about a fashionable set of white crockery. In the previous chapter, I showed how women deploy different practices to care for clothing, and in the same way they also 'care' for goods they have acquired. Señora Marta proudly told me that, because she takes care of clothing, people would be surprised at how old her outfits are – which look as good as new. Taking care of the goods they acquire is central to improving their and their families' wellbeing over time.



*Image 18 'Coleros' at the edges of the feria  
Photograph by the author.*

In one of our trips to the feria, when Carmen saw me negotiating the price of a shelf with a colero, she told me, "don't buy anything, Daniela has one she can lend you". Similarly, one afternoon when we were buying materials for handicrafts, Rosa and Carmen prevented me from buying white paint and brushes because I could borrow these from them; they 'allowed' me instead to buy other colours and materials they did not have. Examples abound. Intergenerational and horizontal networks of kin-related households are another important path of provision of particular goods or services such as childcare. This network is sometimes amplified beyond the intimate level, for

instance when someone's old iron -used for particular handicraft technique-, circulates among the members of a workshop, or information about where to buy the cheapest vegetables or medicines is shared among peers.

These networks of provisioning are also articulated in the ethics of care. This is to the extent that, as Han (2012) has shown, they allow members of intimate kin and friendship networks to 'endure' critical moments through material and emotional support. They are also embedded in the described ethics of caring for one's belongings and money through reducing the goods that are acquired through market paths. When provisioning for more durable, non-edible goods, Isabel and Rosa carefully calculate whether it is worth spending, and only do so when it is absolutely necessary. In that equation, they bring into account what intimate and friendship networks can provide, pooling what they have and can offer in order to avoid getting it through the market. For Rosa and Isabel, market and intimate networks are two different paths of provisioning that are part of a continuum.

The presence of this type of informal networks, which were central in the reproduction of the household, was studied during the 1970s and 1980s in Latin America. In a seminal work on México City, Larissa Lomnitz (1995) found that 'marginal' people were able to survive through different networks of exchange of goods and services between households and at the level of the neighbourhood (see, also Gutierrez, 2007; Ramos, 1981). She also argued for the importance of three-generation relations in the survival of the popular classes and 'dynastic growth' among the upper middle classes (Lomnitz & Perez-Lizaur, 1991). Similar findings were reported by Carol Stack (1995) in her now classic ethnographic work among black working-class families in the US. These studies have shown that the reproductive unit is not the nuclear family, but the larger kin-based network in which services and good are pooled. More recently, Han (2012) has ethnographically described how intimate networks also help to mitigate critical moments of economic distress through the sharing of intimacies. My research shows how these networks of exchange are still relevant in contemporary times, in more routinised practices of provisioning.

### **Choosing the best. Thrift and its limits**

Caring for families and 'caring' for money and belongings come together when Carmen and Rosa provision for their families in the market. This seems coherent with Miller's

(1998) understanding of shopping as a form of 'love-making', echoing the work of feminist scholars (see, for instance, De Vault, 1991). It is an activity usually directed to loved ones, a form of materialising and reproducing love, that includes ideas of obligation and responsibility. He also points out that thrift and its opposite, the treat, are part of the cosmology of almost all shoppers, across social classes and cultural backgrounds. Every shopper, he argues, has different strategies to save money regardless of the kind of goods they finally acquire: even if they buy the most expensive item, they feel they are somehow 'saving' in other ways, such as in terms of the quality or prospective lifespan of the good. Here I show how an ethics of care and responsibility in wider provisioning practices is articulated with thrift strategies that involve further labour.

While thrift might be part of the cosmology of every shopper, in the población thrift is acute and always implies further labour. As I have already shown, every week, Rosa and Carmen go to the feria to buy groceries. Almost every day, they buy bread at the local bakery and, like many of their counterparts, will probably queue at 'The Cheapest' to buy some cold cuts and other groceries for the once or for cooking for the next day. Yet, many of these strategies for thrift and to cope with unstable and little income seem not to be a practice particular to Rosa and Isabel, but rather to be extended across the neighbourhood. Not only the daily queues at 'The Cheapest' (and the opening of the 'The Cheapest II') but the system of '*fiado*' or informal sell-on credit that works in some local shops, in which a customer's purchases are recorded in a notebook and are paid by the end of the month (see, also Han, 2012). The following observation made to me by Natalia – who sells plastic items at the feria, cheaper than the competition – confirm this: "*People would come all the way back for 300–500 pesos [30–50p]*". These practices show how social position informs what thrift implies among Chilean popular classes.

In their weekly shopping at the feria, sometimes the women would buy processed foods and non-perishable items, such as tomato sauce, sugar or oil. On the occasions I saw them make these purchases, they bought lower-end brands (although, it will be seen, this varies according to income). They would mainly buy vegetables – such as potatoes, onions and beans – according to what they had decided to cook, with fruit purchases generally restricted to 'seasonal classics' – apples and pears in the winter or peaches in the summer. More expensive fruits, like cherries or strawberries, were only occasionally among their food purchases. Indeed, my avid consumption of the latter

was acknowledged as a difference: “*You like strawberries, don't you?*” They also paid careful attention to quantity and size, and to maximising the purchase – they bought food-stuffs that can be maximised. For example, cheaper corncoobs were available, but bigger, more expensive ones were bought because the amount of paste extracted from them for the preparation of humitas would be larger.



*Image 19 'cachureos' on sale at the feria  
Second-hand cookware. Photograph by the author.*

Rosa and Isabel master the activity of shopping for the sake of thrift and minimisation of expenditure: by investing time, attention and calculation into provisioning practices, they amplify the ways in which they reproduce themselves and their families. At the feria, they are attentive to prices and products, to where they can get ‘the best’ according to their budgets. They exchange information with neighbours about where to find the cheapest or best tomatoes. Despite the offer of fruit and vegetables being generally subject to change, they have identified some of the best-stocked stalls, recognise who is currently selling good items (like the above-described avocado stall) or remember ‘bad selling practices’. When shopping together, they refused to buy at a stall that had beautiful, big, red and juicy tomatoes on display, but whose owner does not allow customers to choose their own and would place crushed units in his clients’ plastic bags. Since women locally get what they need in recurrent ways, shopping becomes routinised to some extent. As reported in De Vault’s (1991) research on feeding

practices among US families during the 1980s, here shopping practices also involve routines that come “from the way that shopping fits with a parallel ‘routine’ in the household, the way that habitual purchases become the constituents of ‘standard’ family meals” (p. 62).

These ‘standard’ family meals respond to a negotiation of budget, eating practices and family’s taste, and also of what the women consider to be adequate food (Anigstein, 2017; see, also De Vault, 1991; Miller, 1998). Carmen is well aware that fruits are not her family’s favourite and knows that fruit consumption is subject to their evaluation of its condition. For her 10-year-old son to eat them, “*bananas shouldn’t have any brown stains*”, she told me once. Indeed, spending time with Rosa and Isabel’s families, I used to see the children nibbling on pieces of bread, yogurt, crisps or sweets, and only occasionally fruits. Attention to the family’s needs and tastes also includes a calculation of size, quantity and the sensation of satisfaction. For a hot-dog party, they preferred regular to hot-dog bread. Regular bread was much cheaper and also much more filling: with just one piece, the children feel “satisfied”.

It is only through their ability to be thrifty that women can treat and care for themselves and their families. What they manage to ‘save’ by deploying their specialised knowledge, investing their time and accessing intimate networks of provision, allows them to access wider levels of consumption. Savings are later spent on children’s sweets or ice cream treats on the way back from school, or on second-hand toys at the feria. It can also be spent on items they find through the activity of ‘cachurear’ at the flea market and on buying their own handicraft material. For Rosa, who does not have a special allocation of money for those items, providing herself with handicraft materials is grounded in her ability to look after the money. Only through very acute thrift strategies can Rosa and Carmen treat their families and themselves (see chapter 8 on the handicraft workshop as self-care), expanding the ways in which they (re)produce themselves.

While the maximisation of thrift informs the provisioning practices deployed by Carmen and Rosa, thrift encounters its limits in terms of what is desirable, expectable and respectable. The features already mentioned – the relation price/quality, size, family’s taste – are always present in shopping practices. Yet, freshness is usually what marks the lower limit of the worthiness of a cheap purchase. Industrialised foods can be of the cheapest brands, because they do not expire, or do so only over long periods



of time. This is not so with fruit and veg. One day, when we come across cheaper vegetables in the Departamental area of the feria (contrary to our common knowledge of feria prices), Carmen insisted we had made the correct purchase, by cuttingly stating that 'those' beans were dry. One Sunday, shopping on my own, I had just bought some fish when I met Rosa, who disapprovingly told me, "*I don't buy fish, because it's too hot*", pointing out the lack of adequate conditions on the fish stalls for the 36 degrees of that sunny day. Due to the high risk of them getting spoiled, Rosa and Carmen do not buy large quantities of perishables, or of very ripe fruits, no matter how cheap they might be. This acknowledgement shows the permeable boundary between thrift and wasting money: the latter is totally opposed to an ethics of 'caring for one's belongings' that informs provisioning practices to adequately care for the family.

While freshness, size and other qualities might be valued by most people when provisioning food, some circumstances force them to overlook these dimensions. For Helena, such criteria are indeed valuable, but do not define, in the last instance, what she buys and what she does not. She lives on a very tight budget, and a chronic illness makes it difficult for her to walk to the feria. Since she cannot entirely count on her intimate network to do her shopping, to provide for her household she relies on what the 'casero' brings round a few times per week. 'Casero' is a word that refers to a frequent and routinized relationship between a shopper and a seller, both caseros to one another. Helena's casero is a young man who makes money out of helping at feria stalls and is given produce that stallholders would otherwise discard. He will bring her a sack of half-spoiled oranges, some very soft melons, a bag of dull carrots or a sack of half-dry corn cobs. She might complain about the quality of some of the goods, for instance that the corn is dry, but she will still buy what the casero brought her, at most negotiating the price. Helena just cannot afford to be as concerned with the quality of the products she gets as Carmen and Rosa. Her calculation involves thinking about how the products she is offered can be transformed and consumed in ways in which their close-to-waste condition remains unnoticed: too-ripe fruit can be made into juice, tomatoes can be used after cutting away spoiled parts, carrots will last longer if stored in the fridge. Thus, through higher levels of labour, Helena is able to provide what she deems 'proper' food to her family.

## Concealing the previous life of goods

While Carmen and Rosa do not need to deploy concealment strategies in their food preparation, a similar operation of 'concealment' of 'waste' condition takes place when buying second-hand clothing. Clothes that have been previously 'used' and discarded by another person and, like the carrots, enter another cycle of valorisation. Yet, the women will only buy items whose past history is not too evident. They will choose clothes that look 'like new' or are in a very good condition. A small stain, marks of usage or a zip that is not working provides enough reason to avoid buying them. This process of selection is the same whether buying for their family or for themselves. It does not make a difference that the clothes they wear usually end up covered in handicraft paint. In this context, my argument "*I want it for wearing at home*", wielded to justify my wish to buy a worn-out green dress, did not convince them. Here, time and labour are invested not in the transformation of purchased goods – as Helena does – but in the proper selection of clothes and other second-hand items. This form of buying second-hand clothing as if it were new, it will be argued, is strongly shaped by the class position of pobladora women.

A quick look at the political economy of this trade is helpful to further explore on the meanings and values that surround second-hand clothes. Its arrival in Chile was the result of policies of economic liberalisation launched by the dictatorial government. Importation of second-hand clothes from the United States and, to a lesser degree, Europe, was promoted in 1975 by the relaxing of sanitary and customs regulations (Montiel, 2014, p. 39). Such laws differentiate Chile from neighbouring Peru, Paraguay or Bolivia<sup>69</sup>, which have sanitary and protectionist laws regarding their textile industries that prevent this trade (Ibid.). According to Montalvo (2015, p. 270), in 1976, the first second-hand clothes shop opened in Santiago in a neighbourhood called Patronato, characterised by its textile industry, with the explicit aim of allowing low-income people to get 'new' clothing at accessible prices. In the following decades, however, the consumption of second-hand clothing seems to have grown. According to figures provided by the National Service of Consumption (SERNAC, 2005) during the first years of the 1990s, second-hand clothing was imported in greater tonnage than

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<sup>69</sup> In 2015, Bolivia and Chile made an agreement to reinforce border controls in order to prevent an increasing illegal trade in second-hand clothing between Chile and Bolivia (Pagina Siete, 2015).

new clothes. This process was however reversed in the following years, as a consequence both of the increase in Chileans' purchasing power (and, I would add, debt) and the importation of cheap new clothing from China. Nevertheless, this market is still expanding and, according to the United Nations, after Canada, Chile is the second-most important destination for US second-hand clothing imports, with more than 500 containers (Flores Leiva, 2009) worth over USD 61 million being distributed annually (Rodgers, 2015).

The global flow of second-hand clothing discarded from powerful central economies is expressive of the relative positioning of countries under globalisation (Brooks, 2015). This is clear, for example, in the case of Italy, where Pipyrrou (2014, p. 534) notes that the appearance of a second-hand clothes market signalled the fall of the Mediterranean economies following the crisis in 2009. The phenomenon of seeing both use-value and exchange-value in others' waste, cultural critic Nelly Richard (1998) argues, makes visible the reality of a second-class modernity. As she states, "the periphery finally meets itself: it coincides with its concealed truth, making clear the simulacrum of novelty consumed here has been always outdated" (p. 113, my translation). The appearance of clothing into commodity form for a second time, event that marks its 'social life' (Appadurai, 2012), emerges from the different positioning in the global market of seller and buyer countries. Similarly, the social life of clothing is differently appropriated, and thus, has different use-value according to class position.

As a commodity originally orientated to consumption by those who live in poverty, second-hand clothing has, in the last three decades, been re-appropriated by the middle and upper classes. Richard (1998) suggests that, purchased in a context in which items are detached from their original display next to identical items (its first 'life'), second-hand clothing's 'used' and 'wasted' origins serve to materialise alternative values and to promote creative combinations, thus becoming a surface for individuals' own style. As such, the clothing's second life is re-signified and "the pragmatics of cheapness gives way to a new aesthetics of distinction that disguises the low-cost rationale under a renewed class privilege" (Richards, 1998, p. 175, my translation). Indeed, as Ivanovich (2014, p. 117) has shown, exclusivity, against the mass-produced clothing offered at the shopping mall, usually motivates some members of the middle and upper-middle classes to shop second-hand. This is a

movement that, as Jara and Delpiano (2007) signal, can be traced through the replacement of the term '*ropa usada*' (literally, 'worn' or 'used' clothing) with the more fashionable – and English, thus embodying a 'first-world' spirit – word 'vintage'<sup>70</sup>. Since its appearance on the market, second-hand clothing has been slowly loaded not only with anew use-value available for those whom, in the language of Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) could be identified as embodying symbolic capital (for discussion, see introduction). As a consequence, it has also acquired economic value, as signalled by the opening of vintage shops in wealthier areas of Santiago.



*Image 20 Selecting second-hand clothing at the feria.  
Photograph by the author.*

In my trips to the feria with Carmen and Rosa, however, I could not perceive this middle-class appropriation of second-hand clothing. The women buy such clothing mainly because of its accessible economic value. They do enjoy the sensorial experience of finding, among the piles of clothing, treasures (Richard, 1998) that suit their or other

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<sup>70</sup> Recently, a video posted on Youtube called '*Alexis, chao con vol*' that exemplifies this shift of meaning became viral on Chilean social media. In the video, a young woman complains about 'posh' women's 'invasion' of spaces of bargain shopping hitherto belonging to the popular classes – including a very well-known street in Santiago that sells second-hand clothing – and taking handsome football players!

family members' taste. 'Cachurear' is said to be 'therapeutic', like a treasure hunt carried out in the public space. Their findings, however, are measured less in terms of exclusivity and even less in a discourse against mass production. Unlike the southern Italian middle classes, forced after the 2009 crisis to turn to second-hand clothing in order to maintain a branded 'beautiful appearance' (Pipyrou, 2014), Carmen and Rosa do not seem ashamed about, or conceal the fact that they buy clothing at the flea market. Nevertheless, the extreme care taken in assessing the 'newness' of the clothes can be also seen as an act of concealment, not of the channel of provision – the feria and its piles of second-hand clothing – but of the previous 'life' of the items themselves. Through the centrality of appearance to the evaluation and eventual selection of clothing (see, also chapter six), class position is revealed as critical in this form of provisioning for clothing.

I only found the valuing of second-hand items as a means of resistance to consumerism – close to the spirit of vintage – in the ways in which Hortensia sourced her house furniture. Second-hand items refurbished by herself and her husband were described to me in a tour she gave me around her home. Most of the furniture had been brought home by her husband who, as a welder, is often given furniture discarded by some of the middle- and upper-class households where he works. For instance, their king-size bed had been discarded for being noisy, but he fixed it and she added a part to their previous mattress. In the dining room, they have an old marble table they had received with a missing a leg. Through this process of fixing and reusing goods, Hortensia explicitly rejects mass consumption. Unlike her middle-class *compañeros* (comrades) of struggle who, she believes, are nowadays “*dedicated to earning money and have forgotten the New Man*<sup>71</sup>”, this form of provisioning allows her to enact those values. For her, it is a form of political differentiation, producing herself as truly embodying the idea of the new man in a contemporary context.

Like Carmen and Rosa, I was also able to perceive that the green dress they prevented me from buying was quite worn out. However, the fact that I was much less concerned about its state made visible our different positionings and the ways we are assessed through them. For pobladora women, I argue, wearing a worn-out outfit entails the risk of being mis-recognised as not respectable. Pipyrou's (2014) observation is helpful to sustain this argument. She noted how an upper-class couple

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<sup>71</sup> For the meanings of the New Man and its political implications, see chapter 5.

easily admitted to having acquired some second-hand items of clothing, something that was ashamedly hidden by the middle classes who were forced to provision there. This is because the upper-class couple's status, she argues, "is already consolidated through family name and social class, so their second-hand clothes do not endanger their *bella figura*" (p. 539). In my research, for the women of the popular classes, who buy second-hand mainly because they cannot afford to do otherwise, the previous life of objects does not 'add' symbolic value, indeed quite the opposite is true. This previous life is to some extent concealed.

If the value of second-hand clothing lies in its use-value, symbolic value seems to be added to new and/or branded clothing. One talk I had with Natalia, can illustrate this. It took place on a Thursday, after a weekend in which her 12-year-old son had performed some Latin American dances at his school – an activity I had been invited to attend by another woman. She told me she had not been able to take part in the parents' activities – the children's parents were selling food – and had seen only her son's performance because she had had to get back to her stall. Weekends are the best days for selling and she cannot miss them. She also complained that costumes were expensive: "*we buy the whole costume for just five minutes of dance*". I told her that it is not necessary to spend a lot of money and described to her my own experience at school, when we used to 'recycle' costumes: a skirt used for a Mexican dance would be sewed a ribbon and used for a Venezuelan dance. "*Yes, that's OK*" she replied, "*but I like to buy them [her children] everything new, the costume for dancing, these types of things... I do not like to buy them second-hand stuff*". A few customers arrived and the conversation could not develop further. However, I could get a sense of how, for Natalia, provisioning her son with a new costume is not only a move towards social differentiation, but also, it will be argued, a form of caring that purchasing at the flea-market or obtaining through informal networks would not satisfy. In provisioning her son with clothing, she prefers, if possible, not only new items, but branded ones. One day, while her son was playing with friends, I could see the elastic of his underwear peeking out from his school trousers. They were embroidered with the word 'TOP', a men's underwear brand whose images of sexy half-naked men were, at the time, advertised throughout the city.

## Enabling another lifestyle

For Natalia, provision her son with new and branded goods seems to represent the expression of her achievement as an independent woman and mother. The day I met her, she rapidly introduced herself as a feria worker and told me – with a tone that revealed some pride – *“I like my job because it gives me [enough to make a living]. I make between 30 and 60 thousand Chilean pesos [30–60 pounds] in a day. It’s the best job I’ve ever had; I earn more and have more time and flexibility”*. While selling at the feria might not be a prestigious job, she values it in terms of what it brings to her life: it has allowed her to *‘tirar pa’ arriba’* (pull upwards). As a divorced mother of three adult children currently rearing a fourth younger son with scarce help from his father, the money she can earn working at the feria allows her to access goods that, for Carmen and Rosa, are more difficult to obtain. In my follow-up period of fieldwork, she informed me of everything she had *‘achieved’* during the nine months I had been away. Branded goods could be read as the materialisation of her achievements of a better life.

The goods that operate as markers of social differentiation, those whose provision is lived as a proud achievement for Natalia, are more widely available at the mall than at the feria. The first mall inspired by US architectural models arrived in Chile in 1982, attracted by the liberalisation of urban land in what would later become the wealthy areas of the Chilean capital (Marín, 2014). Initially an exclusive channel of provisioning for the upper classes, the mall gradually expanded its reach to middle-income sectors, especially those in which the *‘emergent’* classes were concentrated: those who, thanks to education and access to credit, could *“move out of poverty”* and access a wider range of consumer goods (see, for instance, Ivanovic, 2014; Tironi, 1999). It is no surprise, then, that the first of this type of mall in a non-upper-class borough, called Plaza Vespucio, was located in La Florida (Farías, 2009), one of the *‘emergent’* barrios par excellence (see chapter four).

At the feria, branded goods can be found, although usually in the form of imitations or adulterated products<sup>72</sup>. As an urban space, the feria is also visually marked by its untidiness, its corners with stall waste, its mixture of smells, and marked also by the

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<sup>72</sup> In her research on the relation between the local textile industry, the decentralised forms of production of big sports clothing brands and the local market in La Salada in Argentina, Verónica Gago (2015) shows that the *‘real’* branded item and the imitation are in some cases the same. I am not able to confirm if this is the situation in Chile.

way it exceeds its regulated borders into spaces for informal and illegal trade, symbolically associated with the popular classes (see Salazar, 2003). In contrast, the spaciousness, cleanliness and hygiene of the mall excludes the 'other', 'dirty' Chile (Tomic, Trumper, & Dattwyler, 2006). As in Latin America more widely, the mall not only appears as a channel of provision for the middle classes, but is also symbolically associated with them (Dávila, 2016). As Dávila (2016) also points out, the fact that it is called by its English name, 'el mall', stresses this urban space's classed and modern meanings.

Two of the three more important malls in La Florida are located within 15 and 20 minutes by public transport from Nuevo Amanecer. If you live in Nuevo Amanecer, the malls are very likely to be part of your everyday life, not only because they are the starting point of public transport routes, but also because they concentrate commerce and services you would otherwise not find. Indeed, the mall Plaza Vespucio, Farias (2009, p. 17) notes, was originally conceived as a town centre, and has become the city centre of the Borough of La Florida. Besides retail shops, the mall concentrates social services, private health, an educational institution, pharmacies, restaurants and bars, as well as other services (such as car repair) generally absent not only from the población, but from all residential developments in the borough. While the mall is an important urban node for Nuevo Amanecer, this channel of provision appears as a marker of social differentiation in the población.



*Image 21 Cleanliness and neatness in Mall Plaza Vespucio*  
Photograph by juandekl. Extracted from website [www.panoramio.com](http://www.panoramio.com)



*Image 22 Rubbish at the edges of the feria.*  
Photograph by the author.

A few days before the beginning of the school term, Carmen and her daughter Daniela picked me up to go shopping for bread. On our way to 'The Cheapest', Carmen told me she had just seen the message I had sent her, because during the afternoon she had had no internet: they had been at the mall buying her six-year-old granddaughter's school uniform. *"You know"*, she told me in a tone used to denote poshness, *"she buys her uniform at the mall"*, and told me her granddaughter had bought an expensive pair of trousers and a backpack of the same brand. Daniela added that her daughter's father allows her to choose whatever she wants, and remarked on the contrast to her own childhood: *"It's not like us when we were children. The pink trousers for one, the purple for another and that was all"*. This difference in the use-values given to branded items by new generations is also expressed by María, for whom they serve to signify the broken relationship with her oldest son. She narrated to me how, although she was not invited to her granddaughter's birthday, she went to see the party over the fence and gave her a pair of jeans as a present. However, since the pair of jeans were not 'branded', her son and his wife *"never made her [the granddaughter] wear them. I can't give her branded stuff, so I stopped giving her presents, and stopped going to birthdays I was not invited to"*. While María provisions her household with branded industrialised food-stuffs and cleaning products, yet she does not see further value in branded clothing.

While low-income women of older generations refuse to recognise branded goods as having a specific use-value, for women like Camila – in her late twenties with a middle-income admin job and living in her mother's household – the mall is one of the main channels of provision. She might spend her income and/or get into debt in order to provision herself with clothing and other goods, meals and entertainment at the mall. According to Ivanovic (2014), these types of provisioning practices are more common among the Chilean middle classes and allow them to perform 'middle class-ness'. Eating out is an activity that is valued as an 'achievement' associated with enjoyment of free time. Among the less well-off middle classes, provisioning for meals usually takes place in fast-food restaurants, in contrast to those visited by the more established middle classes. Despite this difference, eating out, Ivanovic continues, marks subjective differences between identifying oneself as being 'poor' or middle-class. Meeting friends at the mall for food or to have a drink are provisioning practices that allow Camila to produce herself as a classed and gendered subject.

For Camila, these practices are productive of herself in very different ways to the

provisioning practices of her mother. Sometimes, Camila's mother accepts her daughter's invitation to eat out, but she does so with unease, thinking about what she could cook at home with the money her daughter spends on one meal. For her, this particular channel for provisioning meals is not worth the expenditure. As she told me in confidence, "*it's not nice to work until get rid of one's dirt [sacarse la mugre], to spend [money] just like that*". Carmen, through her sarcasm about her granddaughter's trousers, and María, through perplexity about branded clothing, show glimpses of the same feeling. For women of older generations, who invest time in and producing knowledge about different strategies to expand their families' range of consumption, provisioning practices such as Camila's are expressive of different values. From the perspective of an ethics of caring for one's belongings, the use-value of a meal at the mall when it could be made at home, or of expensive trousers that could otherwise be found at the feria or through informal networks, is not clearly distinguished. For Camila, however, these practices produce her in particular ways, allowing her to inhabit valued forms of classed womanhood.

The possibility to decide over the ways in which she provides herself with goods and services permits Camila to appropriate them in ways that allow her to express her identity. She explores, and to some extent can access, the clothes she likes to wear, the food she likes most, the places to which she wants to travel. This does not mean she is free from any constriction in her provisioning practices<sup>73</sup>, but rather that she experiences them as an expression of her individuality. As she put it when telling me about a planned trip: "*It is like the song, 'I am single, I do what I want'*". This possibility is much less available to Daniela who, despite being of the same generation and almost the same age as Camila, reserves this mode of provisioning for her daughters, who judging by their taste in branded trousers described above, already seem to have started developing similar attitudes to that of Camila towards provisioning and consumption. These examples are telling of how, as shown in Miller's (1998) study, and against a conceptualisation of consumption as a form of self-expression<sup>74</sup>, the production of an individual's identity through the appropriation of goods and services

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<sup>73</sup> As Bourdieu (2013) has consistently argued, taste is determined by class position. An analysis of how class of origin and actual position informs Camila's taste is not within the scope of this research; neither is a materialist analysis of what she might desire and is not in her reach.

<sup>74</sup> During the 1990s this seemed to be the hegemonic trend in literature, following the ideas of individualisation (see, for instance, Lash & Urry, 1994).

takes place among some of the youth of the popular classes – I would add, among those whose income allows them to have a wider availability of options. While I have been arguing how class, both in terms of access to resources and its symbolic dimensions, are central in shaping, and are shaped by, provisioning practices, I want to draw attention through these examples to the shifting values around channels of provision and modes of appropriation of goods and services expressed among younger generations. Different individuals are, nevertheless, differently positioned to realise those values, as shown in the cases of Daniela and Camila.

At this point, it is worth remembering how provisioning is a practice usually oriented to loved ones. For women like Camila, who can appropriate goods as a form of self-expression, this dimension is by no means erased from her practices. When she has to give a present, she treats members of her family, especially her youngest brother, to goods or services that would be otherwise far out of their reach, such as tech items, or inviting them to eat out or to children's playgrounds. This can be set against a moralist scholarship that has conceived the increase in consumption as an expression of an individualist society, diverted from important values, blinded by the pleasure of consumption (see Moulian, 1997). As Han (2012) has shown, indebtedness is usually a result of aiming to be responsive and caring to others. In light of what has been shown in this chapter, it is more useful to think about the ways in which these new channels of provisioning and access to credit allow, like the ethics of caring for one's belongings, an expansion of the possibilities of (re)production.

Also, it is important to note different modes of provisioning are not opposed, but are part of a continuum of options contextually available. Carmen and Rosa access the mall and credit as channels to access valuable goods, such as televisions or white goods. The described 'ethics of caring for one's belongings' is contextual to the resources available at a specific moment. When, after nine months, I came back to Nuevo Amanecer, Carmen's husband, a builder, had got a good job to build a house. The increase in her household income had materialised in the types of foods that were then available at Carmen's table. During this period, onces included avocado on a daily basis, sometimes hot-dogs or pulled pork sandwiches. The mayonnaise, ketchup and mustard at the table were no longer the cheapest brands – as I had seen before – but very well-known ones. Contextually actualised, the ethics of 'taking care of one's belongings' shows how thrift among the popular classes is not praised for

the sake of thrift or an austere life, as is the case among traditional Chilean upper (Contardo, 2009) or traditional middle classes (Ivanovich, 2104). María suddenly burst into laughter when a stingy character in the soap opera we were watching said that *“money is not for spending”*. For women whose lives have been marked by struggles to make ends meet and who have a very limited capacity for saving, this phrase might definitely sound like a joke. The ethics of caring for one’s belongings that shapes the provisioning practices of older women is not necessarily in contradiction with the value of enjoying oneself when there is the opportunity to do so. As Señora Marta’s daughter told me: *“If I see something I like and I can afford, I buy it, because I don’t know if I’ll have the money later”*. This value has been traced among the popular classes (Araujo & Martuccelli, 2015) and among the lower middle classes as an ‘ethics of lacking’(Ivanovich, 2014), where consumption acquires especial centrality. My research shows how these somehow contradictory ethics – enjoyment and thrift – are indeed oriented towards amplifying and improving the conditions of social reproduction of pobladora women’s families.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have ethnographically explored the values that inform the provisioning practices of pobladora women differently positioned in terms of the resources they have, the generation they belong to and their family responsibilities. Instead of the more widely used concept of consumption, I have chosen the conceptual tool of provisioning, as developed by Susana Narotsky (2005), where the meanings of consumption are understood as inseparable from the processes of production and distribution. This has been especially useful to avoid a moralising middle-class gaze perceiving consumption as a form of individual expression. In particular, I have explored how pobladora women navigate through two different modes of provisioning – intimate networks and the market – and different channels of distribution endowed with different classed meanings – the feria, the supermarket and the mall. The concept of provisioning has also allowed me to underscore the structural conditions that make possible, or prevent, the selection of different modes and channels of provisioning, and how they inform the meanings of the goods and services provided.

An important part of this chapter was devoted to ethnographically describing the provisioning practices of Carmen and Rosa. I have argued that their provisioning practices are informed by an ethics of caring for one's belongings. Through this ethics, intimate networks acquire relevance in the provisioning of goods and services by eliminating the need to acquire them in the market. The scope and extent of these practices, however, remain to be seen. In this ethics, time is the resource that, as housewives, the women are most able to invest: time waiting in a queue, time walking far for the best relation price/quantity, time to select an appropriate item of second-hand clothing. Thus, my research shows how informal networks and the investment of women's labour, thrift strategies, time and knowledge inform provisioning practices in present times. As such, I have advanced the field by showing how strategies studied by scholars of social reproduction (see, for instance, de Barbieri, 1989; González de la Rocha et al., 1990; Jelin, 1991b; Raczynski & Serrano, 1984) are enacted in contemporary times marked by the consolidation of neoliberal transformations. Echoing previous work (De Vault, 1991; Miller, 1998; Oakley, 1976), I have also shown how care and love for one's family materialise through provisioning practices, which are extended to intimate networks. This form of caring for one's belongings allows women to expand the ways in which their loved ones produce themselves, through widening the actual range of what can be consumed.

While the ethics of caring for one's belongings is expressive of class position in material ways, an examination of the process of provisioning for second-hand clothing illuminated its symbolic dimensions. I gave a brief account of the political-economic contours of the arrival of this type of goods in Chile, the shift in market orientation, and how middle-class forms of appropriation came to be signalled by the emergence of a specific channel of distribution: the vintage shop. In exploring the classed meanings that surrounded Carmen and Rosa's practices of provisioning for second-hand clothes, Appadurai's (2012) conceptual tool of the 'social life of objects', and the meanings given to things in relation to their circulation, was particularly useful. I showed how pobladora women deal with the 'previous' life of clothing in very different ways than do the middle classes, as they do not perceive use-value in its second-hand-ness. By bringing in the work of Ivanovich (2014), I contrasted such practices with that of the middle classes who re-appropriate the previous life of goods as they are able to see use-value interpreted as exclusivity and/or resistance to mass consumer culture. Here, Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital seems to be useful to

explain such a difference: the middle classes can wear shabby clothing without risking their respectability, something that *pobladora* women cannot afford. This seems to be precisely because, for the judgemental eye, this might confirm negative moral values. Indeed, it is not surprising that Hortensia, who might be said to have accumulated some form of symbolic capital in terms of her political experience, can see use-value in the second-hand-ness of furniture, which she interprets in political terms. In contrast, Rosa and Carmen invest time and energy in selecting pieces of clothing, for themselves and for their families, that are in the best condition possible, meaning clothing that 'looks like new'. The refusal of the inhabitants of informal settlements or *cantegriles* in Uruguay of a project to build their houses with mud bricks because they found it insulting (Corboz, 2013, p. 52), might be interpreted in a similar way. I argue that, through this operation, the women dis-identify with a symbolic system of class.

Attention to practices of provisioning of second-hand clothing in the *feria* leads to two important reflections. Firstly, it shows how, the value of a thing is not in the object itself as determined by its 'social life' but is shaped by who sees its value and appropriates it. Following Strathern's (1992) model of exchange, Skeggs (2004) notes how "it is the relationship between people that becomes the crucial factor rather than the object, commodity item that is being exchanged" (p. 11). In this sense, *pobladora* women cannot appropriate the symbolic value of second-hand clothing as the middle classes do. Secondly, and in relation to the previous point, the act of concealment should be understood, as Han (2012) argues, as a form of enacting a dignified life. Here, the concealment of the previous life of second-hand items allows the women to maintain – for themselves and for their families – an adequate, respectable appearance, which, I have been arguing, is a central marker for assessment by oneself and others. Thus, the process of provisioning of second-hand clothing resembles the careful process of laundry seen in the previous chapter.

In this chapter, I also showed how modes and channels of provisioning, together with the types of goods and services they provide, are differently accessible to and signified by differently positioned women. The more salient differences appeared to be related to generation, family responsibilities and availability of resources. I showed how branded items and services are signifiers of social differentiation, and how this translates into the channels of provision in which they are

acquired/consumed: the feria is symbolically linked with popular classes, and the mall to middle-class arenas. I argued that while women of older generations acknowledge there is a symbolic potential in provisioning for goods and services in the mall, they are less able to see the use-value that justifies high prices. For them, forced throughout their lives to deploy strategies for the provisioning of their families in ways that allow them to expand their consumption, satisfying hunger through meals in a restaurant or the need for clothing through branded trousers is not worth the extra money required. The value of these types of item is only realised among those who provide for themselves as a form of self-expression, as in middle-class arenas (Dávila, 2016; Ivanovic, 2014) or among younger generations (Miller, 1998). Here, the case of Camila illustrates how this type of appropriation takes place among younger generations who can provide themselves with the goods and services that are markers of class differentiation.

I have shown how pobladora women navigate through different paths and channels of provisioning in different contexts and how the ethics of caring for one's belongings contextually informs their practices. Women's provisioning expectations to satisfy their needs are differently negotiated according to the resources they have, for instance, by improving the quantity and quality of the food consumed when the economic situation improves. I have argued that the ethics of caring for one's belongings coexists with an ethics of enjoyment and finding opportunities that Araujo and Martucelli (2015) have found among popular classes. It also shows resemblances to the 'moral of scarcity' (Ivanovich, 2014) among 'emergent' middle classes. I have suggested these two ethics are not in contradiction when they inform practices of provisioning, since they are both oriented to the same aim: to expand the range of goods consumed and the forms in which the women produce themselves, enacting what they believe be a better and dignified life.

To conclude, I have demonstrated how a focus on provisioning makes class more visible and removes the value judgements embedded in a framework of consumption. It has been shown how these practices are both informed by class and productive of class positions. At the material level, this lens brings attention to the modes and channels of provision which are available for the women of the popular classes and how they navigate through them. It also permits an exploration of the symbolic systems of class, through the meanings given to the various modes and



channels of provision and the goods and services that pobladora women can provide for themselves and their families. At this level, practices of provisioning for clothing show how some dimensions of the historically constructed symbolic systems of class are being unsettled by the wider availability of consumer goods via credit in a consolidated neoliberal context. Appearance and dress remain as key symbols of respectability and dignity. However, if being dignified and 'respectable' was previously signalled by presenting oneself in 'clean' clothes, now this increasingly means 'new' and 'branded', especially among the younger generations.

## Chapter eight

### Pobladora women crafting time, space and value for themselves

To visit Margarita, one has to pay attention to the door and window of her house to know whether she is available. When the front door and the yellow curtains are drawn, she is either not at home or does not want to be annoyed. When they are open, after calling out, one can pass the unlocked gate of the fence that separates the house from the street and cross the mosaic-tiled patio towards the living room. "*People here know*", she said, as she explained to me these signals, which she uses as a language. Even though at the time of writing she does not hold an official representative position in the community, Margarita is a well-known historical leader. People from many backgrounds visit her on a daily basis to ask her for information and advice on community projects, activities and workshops, to receive emotional support, or treat a baby suffering from the evil eye. The signals, the design of her house and also the way she inhabits it – usually in the front living room – somehow synthesize the different temporalities and dimensions of her life experience as a community leader and social organiser.

I usually found Margarita sitting on an office chair that she moved between the old computer desk and the small square dining table set in the entrance hall, which she uses as a living room. Sometimes she was at the computer, writing a letter to the council, taking stock of new furniture for the cultural centre or looking for information about handicraft materials. More often, she was painting a wooden box or a piece of glass, wiping CDs, wrapping up a bottle or selecting napkins as patterns for decoupage<sup>75</sup>. The massive plasma TV dominating one corner of the living room was normally on, though sometimes muted. She lives only with her husband. All her children are grown up and no longer live with her, and, not having grandchildren to care for, as many other women do, she spends a great deal of her time with

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<sup>75</sup> As described by the Encyclopaedia Britannica (n.d.) "the art of cutting and pasting cut-outs to simulate painting on a wood, metal, or glass surface" The use of this technique is widespread in the población, as there are many workshops that teach it.

handicrafts. In fact, the first time I visited, she proudly showed me her latest creations.

Although she now spends long hours doing different types of handicraft, this is a relatively recent hobby in her life. Previously, she was more involved in working with community and social organisations. As this was very time-consuming, she did not have enough time to provide what she considers to be proper care for her family. Margarita came from a family that participated in the struggles for housing in the famous *Población La Victoria*. When she arrived in the 1970s to *Campamento Ranquil*, she decided to put an end to her life as *allegada* (see chapter 4) in her parents-in-law's house. She started volunteering in Ranquil, and then in Campamento Nueva Habana she joined the Health Front. Her work with the Health Front ended on the day of the coup d'état, 11 September 1973, on which day, despite being heavily pregnant, she climbed up to the roof of the medical centre to paint a massive red cross: helicopters had been flying over Nueva Habana and a rumour was spreading that the neighbourhood would be bombed.

As described earlier in this thesis, dictatorial repression in Nueva Habana was fierce, with the main community leaders having to flee, while the community itself had to retreat to the private space. After a few years, Margarita started volunteering with human rights organisations associated with the Catholic organisation *Vicaría de la Solidaridad* (see introduction), in particular, organisations working with political prisoners and helped in the processes of coping with bereavement and grief. She also helped to organise a handicraft workshop for released political prisoners living in the ex-población Nueva Habana, or as it was now called, *Nuevo Amanecer* and joined *arpillera* (a type of quilt tapestry made with scraps of fabric) workshops (see, also chapter 5). In the mid-80s, she became one of the organisers of the community soup kitchens or *olla común* in *Nuevo Amanecer* becoming a representative of these organisations of South-East of Santiago and participated in wider networks of social organisation against the dictatorship.

Margarita's path through community organising expresses her gendered and class locations. Her activism took place first in the Health Front and then in spaces that feminist literature has identified as 'spaces of women', given the high visibility of women within them (see, for instance, Chant & Craske, 2002; Craske, 1999; Gaviola, Largo, & Palestro, 1994; Luna, 2003; Montecinos, 1996; Ríos Tobar, Godoy, &

Guerrero, 2003). She did not want to join a political party because, as she said, she does not like following orders. Yet, her husband joined the MIR, which was made illegal during the dictatorship. As he became involved in wider politics, he was rarely at home and did not contribute to household maintenance. In this context, Margarita could not fail to provide for her family. She was able to capitalise on her background as a community leader, working in various low-paid jobs throughout the mid-80s. For example, she worked for an NGO that helped to create facilities for setting up ollas comunes. By the end of the 80s, almost at the end of the dictatorship, she participated in the re-foundation of the neighbourhood committee and went on to be its main leader for about 10 years. Nowadays, her commitment to improving the living conditions of the community has taken another direction. At the end of the 1990s, cancer forced her to take a break from her activism. This experience, however, made her notice the unattended needs of mature and elderly women, especially those suffering from severe illness. Thus, she set up a space to work towards the improvement of women's physical and emotional wellbeing. She used handicraft as a therapeutic tool, a reason for women to gather together to combat loneliness and support each other. Yet, she has also continued contributing to other ongoing projects in the población and her experience is fully recognised. For instance, at the neighbourhood celebration for International Women's Day in 2016, organised by a cultural youth organisation called La Casita, she was invited to give a speech.

Because of her life experience, Margarita is much more politicised than many of the women of her generation. We spent many mornings and afternoons making political analyses of the past, or discussing present contingency, while she kept her hands busy with her creations. Political conversations got more intense in the presence of her husband, who has a broad knowledge of history and world politics that, to Margarita, seems to be much deeper and politicised than hers. This feeling was not only expressed by her silences when we all talked together but was made explicit when I brought along a Greek friend in one of my visits. Observing how, despite language difficulties, her husband tried to talk about Syriza in Greece, she told me, admiringly, *"he can talk about anything [tiene tema pa' todo]...he reads a lot"*. Her expression became serious as she continued, *"I don't. I cannot, it is difficult for me"*, highlighting the difference she saw between her relation to politics and that of her husband. I felt that, in pointing to her difficulties with reading, she was acknowledging her few years of formal education. *"But you have your art"*, I told her,

attempting to give recognition to her life experience as a whole. She looked at me, smiled and her eyes sparkled. “Yes, you are right. I am busy with my own stuff”, she replied.

Margarita’s experience as a social and community leader transcends the boundaries between community, social, political, women’s movement, pobladores or human rights activism, all these dimensions instead appearing as a “unity of experience” (Stephen, 1997). Current scholarship on the pobladores has privileged the study of party grassroots or health groups – with a clearer political profile (see Paley, 2001), or contemporary housing struggles (Angelcos, 2012; Angelcos & Pérez, 2017). Given the lack of explicit political context, to position handicraft workshops in this history feels uncomfortable. This ambivalence is also expressed by Margarita herself when she defines her handicraft and the workshop as “my own stuff”. While she perceives her current organisational experience as the contemporary expression of her social and political involvement, the possessive adjective *own* points to the more personal, gendered dimension of her current activities: the domestic and local profile of her current activism, in sharp contrast to the worldwide political sphere that her husband so authoritatively speaks about and that was once part of her activism. It is ‘own stuff’ with a political value which is relative to the specific context in which it is carried out or talked about: her concerns are coded as less relevant only when set against a more legitimated field of the ‘political’. As Franceschet (2005) argues in respect of the Chilean women’s movement, “understandings of what constitutes political activities are discursively constructed” and “shift over time” (p. 7). And today, the conditions that allowed the politicisation of productive organisations during the dictatorship are no longer in place.

In this chapter, I unravel what pobladora women’s participation in handicraft workshops, the making of handicrafts as a process and artefact *do* in their lives, and the needs to which they respond. Margarita’s experience as a community leader is illuminating in this sense. Not only does it give us a flavour of the role of handicrafts in women’s everyday life, but it allows us to stress how in contemporary times they provide solutions to the needs she perceives among pobladora women of older generations. It will be argued that contemporary workshops reproduce similar dynamics and are similarly assessed to the community organisations that emerged in the poblaciones during the 1980s, in a very different context. Yet the contemporary

understanding of the workshop as non-political is here considered an advantage to further explore the effects of the different dimensions of handicrafts in the production of women's subjectivities. The fact that, unlike in the past, pobladora women keep their produce, allows us to further explore this dimension. Thus, I start by giving a brief account of the symbolic construction of handicraft as a 'feminine' and 'domestic' activity, a means of Catholic moral reformation and state efforts to integrate women from the popular classes into political projects through mothers' centres. In the rest of the chapter, I draw on ethnographic descriptions that unravel the value that participants attach to the workshop space, but also to handicraft as a skill and handicraft as artefacts, with an emphasis on the context in which such artefacts become valuable.

Given that the experiences here analysed are not directly related to the material reproduction of women's households, this chapter might seem ill-fitting in this thesis. Nevertheless, during fieldwork, I witnessed the high valorisation that women give to workshops and handicraft. The inclusion of this dimension of women's lives in this work is thus an attempt to ensure a faithful examination of the varied spaces and practices that are relevant to the formation of pobladora women's classed and gendered subjectivities. To sustain this claim, it seems necessary to restate here that, in this thesis, social reproduction is understood in broad terms to include the full range of activities that produce human beings in their biological, but also social and cultural dimensions. In this light, I argue that participation in both workshops and craft-making allows women to produce themselves in ways that transcend their position as responsible for the reproductive labour in their household. The women value their own organisational and craft skills, as well as the materialisation of their labour, as crafted artefacts. Through this activity, and in contrast to the endless and invisible nature of housework (de Beauvoir, 1956), pobladora women also endow themselves with self-worth.

## **Workshop goers**

From March to December, almost every afternoon during the week, clubs for the elderly and handicraft workshops fill the few rooms of few social centres in Nuevo Amanecer. Most participants are mature and elderly women. Young men and women

can be seen in the late afternoon and evenings, attending zumba<sup>76</sup> classes or playing basketball or football. On Monday and Friday afternoons, and Wednesday mornings, Carmen goes to different workshops where she learns various techniques such as decoupage, printing tiles with a sublimation technique, painting and knitting.



*Image 23 Community centre in Nuevo Amanecer  
Photograph by the author.*

I met Carmen at a knitting workshop in August 2015 and, since then, we have steadily built a closer relationship. I went to Carmen's house for the first time when she invited me to have afternoon tea, or once, at her place. At that time, we did not know each other very well. While we were waiting for the kettle to boil, she started to introduce me to her family through the official pictures and diplomas of graduation from kindergarten, primary and secondary school of her three children, and pictures

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<sup>76</sup> As defined by the Oxford dictionary (n.d.), an aerobic fitness program featuring movements inspired by various styles of Latin American dance and performed primarily to Latin American dance music.

of her youngest at school activities, all hanging on the light-green dining-room wall made of compressed wood. Among these photographs, there was a picture of her husband when he was young. Two other pictures, of her parents, were placed on the opposite wall. There was no picture of her. Instead, she was present in the wall through the gypsum plates with flower motifs, which she had painted herself. *"Do you like it?"*, she asked me, pointing to a gypsum elephant painted with metallic colours, standing on the short wall separating the dining room and kitchen. *"I painted it myself"*, she told me.

After the kettle boiled, Carmen served the tea and we sat at the table. Her youngest did not want to stay with us; instead he had some yogurt with cereal and went to his room to play with his cousins and watch TV. While having tea and bread with cold cuts, butter and cheese, we had a long conversation. Among the many things we talked about, she started telling me about the craft workshops she goes to every week. *"I've been going to the workshops for more than 15 years now. Previously, I was only here, at the house"*, she told me, adding that she can take part in different craft workshops because Ricardo, her husband, *"has no problem with me going to the workshops"*. Her freedom to participate in workshops is partially due to the fact that her husband does not demand that she be home to serve him. *"If he arrives hungry and nobody's home"*, she said, *"he'll warm some old bread and eat it, no problem"*. Carmen also insisted that her husband does not get annoyed by the fact that she has the house full of 'cachureos', as she called the materials and unfinished craftwork she collects.

Before I left, she showed me the handicraft materials that filled three drawers and two shelves installed in the roofed entrance patio area. She showed me balls of wool, a set of paints of different colours, pieces of fabric and a couple of white painted wooden trays on which she was still working. I realised that a good amount of money invested in craft materials had now become, in her own words, 'cachureos'. *"How could she have that much material?"*, I asked myself. In my initial perspective, in those drawers a lot of resources were somehow being wasted. I asked her if she sells what she produces. *"Very rarely"*, she replied, leaving me even more surprised. From this meeting onwards, I started to reflect on the value, or the importance that pobladora women's give to participating in workshops and the effects of such participation on their everyday life and subjectivities.



The value of workshops is not measured in terms of economic retribution. I did not meet any woman who makes enough profit from her handicrafts to recover the monetary investment. Eventually, women sell some of their produce to friends or family; however, this is informally done and the process itself is not connected to wider networks of commercialisation. While women like Carmen expect, or abstractly 'hope', to sell their products, the majority of them do not take an active stance towards selling them. This is exemplified by a sale that Hortensia and Laura organised for the Tuesday just before Christmas. All year round, some houses in the neighbourhood have banners announcing different products for sale, from food – such as beans, honey, bread or ice cream – to cleaning products. During the Christmas period, even more families put up banners and sell wrapping paper, tape, ribbons and gifts. Like other neighbours, Hortensia and Laura had agreed to meet around seven p.m. outside Hortensia's house, to display for sale their wooden boxes decorated with decoupage and sublimation tiles. However, when I arrived at Hortensia's close to eight p.m, she was smoking a cigarette alone on the pavement, just like any other day. She greeted me. A bit disappointed, I asked her *"What happened?"* She replied, with no particular emotion, *"I don't know; she didn't come"*. The sale was cancelled and they did not even talk about it.

Given that there is little economic return on the handicraft made at the workshops, women have to find other ways to provide themselves with the necessary resources to make it. Some of them, like Carmen, get a special allowance from their husband towards the expenditure; others have their own wages or pensions from which they spare a little towards craft materials. This, however, is not the case for every woman. Sometimes, it becomes difficult to afford the materials required. This is the case for Rosa, who has different strategies to provide herself with the resources to obtain handicraft materials and to cover the small weekly fee for attending the workshops. Since she is in charge of her family budget, she attempts to save some money on the provision she makes for her family (see previous chapter). Sometimes, however, her saving strategies are not enough. At one point during my fieldwork, she simply could not afford the materials for the three workshops she attends every week. Instead of giving any of them up, she decided to make small samples of the pieces learnt at the knitting workshop, using wool she already had. Some of these samples she later unmade, to reuse the wool to knit the following piece. For Rosa, keeping up her participation in the workshops entails a high economic cost in relation to her family

income; however, she always finds a way to attend them. Her case illuminates the value that women attach to the workshops, beyond economic considerations.

Economic return does seem to be prevalent for at least one of the women. Indeed, a few times she let me know that she attends the workshops just to learn and that, unlike her peers, she does not like to spend her time there just talking. In fact, Señora Herminia is always doing something she considers 'productive', even when she is watching TV: unmaking or knitting a crochet piece, organising her children's clothes, untangling a ball of wool or cutting meat for filling pastries. Making a living out of the foodstuffs and sometimes jumpers she produces and sells, she is more interested in acquiring skills she could later convert into occasional income, than in the self-fulfilling dimensions of the workshops that are most valued by other women. And she would miss the workshops' end-of-year parties and other sharing activities, choosing instead to do other, unavoidable activities for the ensuring the reproduction of her household.

### **Crafting gendered popular subjects**

Crafts have long been part of the making of feminine domestic subjects in the modern world. In her book *The Subversive Stitch. Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, Rozsika Parker (2010) beautifully shows how economic, social and political transformations from the Middle Ages to 20<sup>th</sup>-century England came to relate embroidery and women. Through its silent, delicate and time-consuming needlework, embroidery "has promoted submission to the norms of feminine obedience" (p. XIX), producing a form of feminine subject, the leisured woman, expressive of middle- and upper-class-ness. At the same time, Parker argues, embroidery also offered women "psychological and practical means to independence" (p. XIX), as a means for self-expression. Like embroidery, other manual techniques such as knitting, sewing, quilting or pottery have also been codified as 'women's skills' and served both to reinforce and challenge feminine domesticity (see, for instance, Elinor, Richardson, Scott, Angharad, & Kate, 1987; González Stephan, 2002; Parker, 2010).

The gendered codification of craft creates a differentiation between arts and crafts, which differently construct the producing subject. González Stephan (2002) argues that this dichotomy is constructed upon "a sexual distribution of materials,

techniques, skills, places where specific knowledges are acquired, in tandem with the separation of private and public spaces” (p. 97). Each category is given different symbolic and economic value, and there exists a great “contrast between unpaid work for love and the highly priced professional artefact” (Elinor et al., 1987, p. 8). Craft-makers are usually housewives and mothers who have the capacity of “turning the work of subsistence into the art of survival” (Ibid.), in which the functional aspect of the craft is central. In contrast, fine arts are deemed to be the materialisation of internal worlds, the expression of ideas (Elinor et al., 1987; González Stephan, 2002; Lippard, 2010; Parker, 2010) and thus of an individual self.

The boundaries between arts and crafts are blurred, and a matter of debate. In this division, there are also subdivisions between low and high arts and crafts. For feminist authors, this expresses the gendered location of craft production: “but when a man makes [...] it tends to raise the sphere rather than lower the man, he is likely to be written up in the local newspaper” (Lippard, 2010, p. 488). While this debate expands beyond the scope of this chapter, highlighting it here serves to show the historical construction of craft as a female’s (and feminine<sup>77</sup>) production, and to illuminate the context of this production and the determinants of its market value. For the sake of clarity, however, I provide a working definition of what I understand by ‘handicraft’ that establishes a difference not from art, but from industrially manufactured products. In this definition, crafts are material objects that “must be made substantially by hand”, usually involving “traditional craft materials, use of traditional craft techniques and addressing a traditional craft context” (Metcalf, 1997, p. 70). As Metcalf (1997) points out, these characteristics are flexible, yet the more artefacts respond to them, the more ‘craft’ they are.

One of the most traditional modes of women’s craft-making is knitting. While in Latin America this was, and still represents, part of a rich tradition of indigenous craft going back to colonial times, an indigenous workforce was used to produce semi-industrial knitting in the Western tradition. Spanish women brought crochet knitting to Latin America, which was inherited by mestizo women (Ramón, 2007 cit. in Maturana, 2014, p. 177). Since then, knitting has been traditionally cultivated by

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<sup>77</sup> Here, I make the distinction between something made by women and something ‘feminine’, the latter, a hegemonic bourgeois cultural construction of womanhood, marked by delicacy, submission, passivity.

women to produce clothing and bedding for the household and for sale. Women from the popular classes, who, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had settled in semi-rural ranchos beyond the walls of the city of Santiago (see chapter four), produced an important number of the knitted items on offer at the time (Brito, 1995). Middle and upper-class women's education also included sewing, knitting and embroidery, while the working classes relied on the familiar inheritance of knowledges through extended kin (Maturana, 2014). Most of the participants in this research remember an auntie, a mother or a grandmother who taught them, or refused to do so.

From the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the commodity potential of handicrafts and their symbolic association with women converted them into an adequate means for transforming the subjectivities of women from the popular classes, to promote different moral and political projects through mothers' centres. According to Valdés et al. (1989), the 'Roof Mothers' Centres' (*Centros de Madres Techo*) created at the end of the 1940s by the Catholic Church, were pioneers in the use of sewing as a means to transform women's lives. The organisations provided not only sewing machines, but also the sewing materials, subject to compliance with behavioural indicators of Catholic faith. Yet, the interests of women of the popular classes and the upper-class women who mentored them were quite different. As Aguayo notes:

For the 'godmother', the key part was the discourse [about God, women's virtue and marriage], for the poor woman, the ball of wool. Every woman who wanted to receive her quota had to go to church service on Sundays, where she would receive a ticket that could be exchanged for wool or fabric the following Monday. (Lechner and Levy, 1984 cit. in Valdez, 1989, p. 11, my translation)

Similar organisations under the name of 'mothers' centres' were developed in the following decades as part of a secular institutional politics. Mothers' centres were set up during the Christian Democrats' presidential campaign for Eduardo Frei Montalva, who came into office in 1964. While they maintained the mentoring role of 'godmothers' from the upper and middle-class, this time the emphasis was not on Catholic moral reformation, but instead on the integration of women into social and political life (Tinsman, 2002, p. 230). Gathering women around handicraft and homemaking knowledges seemed an appropriate way to produce women as mothers and homemakers in a more participative version, and which did not risk their

respectability. This was thanks to the symbolic production of craft as 'feminine' activity.

With the advent of Unidad Popular, the activities of the mothers' centres continued, but were adapted to the new political goals of encouraging "a collective, female militancy"<sup>78</sup> and class consciousness becoming spaces for women's political education (Tinsman, 2002, p. 230). Accordingly, mothers' centres turned into cooperative-like organisations (McGee Deutsch, 1991, p. 296). The emphasis given to the productive cooperative format implied women were conceived as producers, and not merely as reproducers, unsettling traditional notions of women's respectability around handicraft production. Furthermore, as seen in the introduction, mothers' centres actively helped with policy implementation and set up collaboration with other grassroots organisations, becoming increasingly politicised in the polarised scenario of the Unidad Popular. This is why the dictatorship attempted to restore the gender order threatened by this understanding of mothers' centres. It was claimed that "Mothers' centres members would never again be – as they had been in the past – simple objects of political control" (CEMA, 1980, p. 6 cit. in Valdes, 1989, p. 33, my translation), while the military government encouraged women to 'go back' to their position in the domestic sphere as mothers and housewives. Mothers' centres were transferred to a private foundation, CEMA-Chile, their funds were cut, the system of godmothers was revitalised, and the centres became central to establishing and maintaining political allegiances among women from the popular classes (Caiozzi, 2013). Today, mothers' centres are no longer relevant organisations among the popular classes and at the time of writing CEMA-Chile was in the process of being shut down amidst corruption scandals (Diario Uchile, 2017).

Aside from the specific ways in which mothers' centres operated in each period<sup>79</sup>, the kind of handicraft they produced was more or less similar, mostly items of clothing or houseware in crochet, loom or needle knitting usually embedded with a functional profile. This contrasts with another type of craft popularised during the dictatorship, known as *arpilleras* (see image 13, chapter 5). According to Agosin (2008) *arpilleras*,

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<sup>78</sup> During the UP years the popularity of mothers' centres increased. While in 1970 there were 9,000 mothers' centres with 450,000 members, by 1973 there were more than 20,000 with around a million participants of different political orientations (Valdes, 1989, pp. 22–28).

<sup>79</sup> For a complete review of this transformation, see Valdes et al. (1989).

tapestries made from scraps of cloth, emerged in 1976 at the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, where they were first created by a group of 14 women, relatives of 'disappeared' detainees by the dictatorship. As they received pieces of fabric, the women spontaneously began to patch them together. Inspired by a traditional form of Chilean art, they sewed their personal stories of grief, using sewing as a therapeutic exercise. Later, their motifs expanded to show the context of repression and hunger which characterised everyday life during the dictatorship. Different groups making arpilleras emerged across Santiago, allowing women to obtain some income in a context of high poverty caused by a prolonged and continuous economic crisis. At the same time, arpilleras were sold abroad by the Vicaría. This helped to communicate a political message: the everyday suffering in Chile under the dictatorship. In contrast to the more 'classic' production of mothers' centres associated with traditional forms of womanhood, arpilleras became 'disobedient objects'<sup>80</sup>.

Nowadays, training in craft-making is oriented towards improving employability and is provided and funded by national and local institutions, through state agencies such as SENCE (*Servicio Nacional de Capacitación y Empleo* [National Service of Training and Employment]), dependent on the Ministry of Labour, and PRODEMU (*Fundación Promoción y Desarrollo de la Mujer* [Foundation for Promotion and Development of Women]). In line with neoliberal trends, the programmes of the latter institution emphasise training and personal development with an emphasis "on the cultivation in women of an individual, entrepreneurial self" (Schild, 2007, p. 199). Hairdressing, pastry-making and handicrafts such as loom, sewing, knitting or oil painting are some of the workshops on offer. Given the popularity of craft-making among women in the población, a fully equipped shop selling materials has been set up.

Many of the workshops and clubs in Nuevo Amanecer are supported by La Florida Municipality. These organisations, usually legally constituted, are provided with teachers and other material support. Handicraft workshops receive the support of La Florida Council's Women's Department (n.d.) which provides free 'training and

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<sup>80</sup> Some arpilleras were exhibited in London in 2015 at the Victoria and Albert Museum as part of an exhibition titled 'Disobedient objects'.

employability workshops' targeted to "those who look for an entertaining workshop and those wishing to craft a quality product that allows its commercialisation". This direct relationship with local governments sometimes generates clientelism, with some workshops seemingly trapped in relationships with specific politicians. The first time I went to Población Nuevo Amanecer was in 2014, in the context of pre-fieldwork research. I arrived at a community centre a few days before a national holiday, not knowing anyone. A middle-aged man and a woman wearing hoodies with the name of a right-wing Member of Parliament were running a barbecue for an elderly people's club, and I found nobody willing to talk to me. At the beginning of the main stage of fieldwork, I attended different workshops. At one of them, the teacher used a bag emblazoned with the name of the Right-wing President Sebastian Piñera who, at the time of writing, was undergoing his second period in office. The MP whose name was written on the hoodies is currently the 'godfather' of this and other workshops, as well as of the elderly people's clubs, which he often provides with handicraft materials, cakes or other resources for special celebrations. The workshops are conceived as apolitical, yet, a few years ago, the 'invitation' to be photographed with the MP caused gossip and some conflicts among members.



*Image 24 Community centre in Nuevo Amanecer  
Photograph by the author.*

## Legitimated space and time for sharing with peers

During fieldwork, I regularly attended one of the workshops that take place in Nuevo Amanecer which, once a week, gathers between six and 12 women to knit together. I chose this workshop not only because I was explicitly welcomed but also because it seemed more closely associated with Nueva Habana. Indeed, most of the workshop members belong to the first and second generation of settlers in Nueva Habana. A couple of members were not part of this settlement, but they currently live in the area of the población known as the 'campamento' while only one woman has neither a territorial nor a historical connection with what used to be Nueva Habana. Perhaps this is the source of the "*different feel*" which both Rosa and I perceive at the workshop.

Workshop members are diverse in terms of their family composition, labour experience and age, that range between mid-forties and early seventies. At the workshop, there are housewives still caring for young children, elderly housewives who have never had paid work and others who occasionally did, women who have retired after a life of paid work, grandmothers caring for young grandchildren, mothers of adult children who no longer live at home, women who had been very active in community organisations and others with almost no experience of them, besides the workshop. What brings them together? I argue that the meaning and the value the women give to the workshops emerge in comparison to the domestic space. This is what Carmen stressed when she told me – as described above – that before the workshops her life developed 'only at the house'. As I later understood, in the domestic space her attention is to a great extent focused on the routines of daily reproduction of the family, and on her children, grandchildren and husband. While women perform these activities for members of their families as part of their efforts to give them 'the best', as I have been arguing, they also get tired of constantly dealing with their own children and those of extended family, of serving their husbands, or they simply feel lazy about doing the housework. "*They bore me*", Carmen tells me, as we listen to the shouting and fighting of the children of her extended kin.

In contrast to the domestic space, at the workshops, women do what they want. A woman might bring her crochet project to the loom workshop, or the costume she is making for her granddaughter's presentation to the painting course. Another woman might arrive with no materials and spend the duration of the workshop talking with



her peers or helping others finish their crafts. Napkins for decoupage were usually shown at the loom workshop and were a frequent matter of conversation, despite the teacher's complaints. During the summer, when the workshops take a break, a group of women occasionally meet at different community centres to work together on the handicrafts they had been separately making at their houses. Together, the processes of knitting a jumper, decorating a box with decoupage or painting gypsum figures seem much more entertaining and interesting.

I often heard that *"sharing is the most important feature of the workshop"*. The word 'sharing' embraces two different meanings: on the one hand, the willingness to work towards the making of a collective 'shared' space, and, on the other, spending time with others in a pleasurable way. The first of these meanings was revealed on one of the last meetings of the year, when we were discussing next year's workshop. In previous conversations, it had been made clear that the majority wanted to do decoupage and this had been provisionally agreed. Supporters of this idea believed the products made through this technique were easier to sell than knitted items. However, that morning, one respected member of the group said that another woman was saying she did not want to do decoupage. By then, I had been attending the workshop for more than three months, yet I had no idea who they were talking about. *"What she says is not important"*, Rosa claimed, while Laura agreed: *"she has no right to complain because she comes only a few times to learn and then she works on her own"*. But the woman that had raised the issue was still hesitant. Through an example, Julia showed what was relevant about the workshop and, therefore, whose opinions should be counted for taking collective decisions: *"I think that decoupage on Monday, Friday and, now, on Wednesday is too much. But I'll still come and I might bring my knitting [...]"*. Rosa remarked: *"The important thing here is to share with one another"*.

While the woman in question might be good at transforming her skills into economic profit, what workshop members were assessing and valuing in that conversation was that woman's contributions to the organisation. Sharing is here understood as the capacity to be dedicated to the maintenance of the group, to its production and reproduction as a collective space. Such a contribution could be understood in broad terms, manifesting as physical presence at the workshops, labour dedicated to it, or skills or resources shared with others. It could imply preparing the paperwork to ask the municipality for a teacher, serving tea, doing the dishes, setting the tables, being

in charge of the money, buying food and/or cooking for a lunch party, bringing some cakes for tea time, or taking part in discussions and decision making. In short, it implies being sensitive to the needs of the collective and contributing to their satisfaction. While some women contributed more than others, there was almost no gossip or keeping track in respect of who did what. Only once did I witness a woman refusing to serve tea to another, although she attempted to remain unnoticed. Her reason, she secretly confessed to me, was the other woman's unwillingness to contribute to the collective: *"she always waits to be served and doesn't even wash her cup"*. What counts, more than what is done, is the willingness to collaborate through the differential means and resources available to each of them.



*Image 25 Women sharing knowledge about knitting at a workshop  
Photograph by the author.*

The expectation that workshop members should 'care for' the group could be understood as similar to the attitude they are required to show to the social reproduction of their households and caring for its members. As Vega Solís (2009) argues, caring labour implies attention and responsiveness. Yet, the lack of specific responsibilities – outside of organisational positions, such as president, treasurer, secretary – liberates them from the obligations they do have at domestic space. Unlike there, the workshop promotes a horizontal relationship. While some women have more 'progressive' family relationships than others, in general their households

follow quite a traditional organisation. Few times I witnessed arguments over men asking their wives to serve them once at times when the women were expecting to do something else. Arguably, the lack of an unequal power structure might widely influence the value that women endow the workshop with. This allows us to make a link with the other meaning of sharing.

'Sharing' also refers to the experience of participating with others in the workshop. This was made explicit by Laura in a conversation that took place at another woman's house. When she was told that a workshop member was depressed due to personal problems, Laura lamented her situation and explained why she thought that woman had got into it: *"What happens is that she doesn't share her problems at the workshop. I share everything there and I realise that sometimes I drown in a glass of water"*<sup>81</sup>. *The important thing about the workshop is to share, to remember that we all have problems"*. Whether or not other women's perspectives are deemed helpful to find appropriate solutions, the sharing itself is a means of relief, of speaking out and finding consolation in others' painful experiences.

At every workshop session in which I took part, I could witness what Laura had described. While knitting (or painting or crafting something else) the women talked about the illnesses they suffer as a consequence of ageing, about remedies and medical services. They shared information about the best places to buy certain goods, a recipe for a cake or the best colour combinations and crafts, and the women who knew more taught the others. They discussed the organisation and funding for prospective workshop projects, and invitations to other meetings were shared. They joked – usually with a sexual undertone – and laughed. They told stories about their marriages, births or miscarriages, their adult children's, their own and other family members' problems, or complained about their families' behaviours. Thus, the female composition of the workshop enables the emergence of an intimacy that would probably not be possible if men were part of this space. I particularly remember how, at an unofficial workshop session during the summer, one woman told us how she had married a 33-year-old man when she was sixteen, about her refusal to have sexual intercourse in the first months of marriage and her ignorance about how she would give birth to her first child. She also remembered her deceased husband as "a

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<sup>81</sup> In Spanish, this expression is used to refer when an unnecessary amount of suffering is added on to a problematic situation.

*good one*", despite sometimes receiving *"a kick or a punch when he was drunk"*. Departing from their everyday lives, women's conversation travelled from the most quotidian to their deepest concerns. Compared to the silent needle- or knitting-work of a woman in isolation (González Stephan, 2002; Maturana, 2014; Parker, 2010), craft-making in women's groups produces a very different form of womanhood.

I have been arguing that craft workshops are valued spaces in which women purposely take – and claim – some time for themselves and for sharing equally with other women. Knitting workshops in contemporary times are also perceived by their participants as 'warm' spaces (Valdés & Weinstein, 1993, p. 180) where 'women's talk' (Pires do Rio Caldeira, 1990) takes place. This sharing includes attentiveness and care towards the space of the workshop and, more importantly, spending a pleasurable time together, enjoying a specific type of conviviality in ways that cannot be experienced in the domestic space and intimate relations. Researching mainly among pobladora women leaders, feminist scholars have argued that the sharing of intimacies within pobladoras' organisations during the dictatorship allowed for the recognition of the collective and shared nature of women's 'private' experiences of gender and dictatorial oppression (see, for instance, Gaviola et al., 1994b; Ríos Tobar et al., 2003; Fisher, 1993; Adams, 2012). Nowadays, there is no politicisation in the sense of this recognition of oppressions, or at least not particularly explicitly. Nevertheless, and following Schild (1994), the political dimension of these workshops emerges from their being sites in which struggles for subjectivity take place. As Carmen recognises, she has developed her personality, and is no longer a shy and passive woman.

Participation in handicraft workshops provides women with experiences beyond the domestic space, allowing them to set other grounds for their subjectivities. Having their own interests and responsibilities, and spending time and resources on their own concerns, become practices legitimised not only by women themselves, but also by their families and the neighbourhood. It is important to note that the stage of life they are experiencing (most of the women have adult children and/or are retired) gives them time that was usually not available in their younger years ( see, also, Blondet, 1990; Jelin & Feijoó, 1980). While some younger women do take part in these workshops, most of them prefer other activities, such as zumba. Yet, even for women like Rosa and Carmen, who still have school-aged children, the workshops are not

the last priority. In present times, women have a freer rein to negotiate between their own, and their family members', expectations of a good mother/housewife and their desires to spend their time sharing with peers and/or making handicraft. They go to the workshop even if cleaning is not finished or beds have not been made.

This contrasts with the earlier reality of many women, for whom, as young mothers 40 years ago, the proper accomplishment of domestic duties was a pre-requisite for participation, as seen in chapter five. Señora Carmela's constant rejection of her daughter's assiduous participation in workshops, on the grounds that she is 'too much outside' or not attending her husband as she should, sound to her own family like a very old-fashioned way of perceiving women's position. These days, being a mother and housewife from the popular classes is no longer equated with being confined to the home. Thus, craft-making becomes a site in which they produce themselves differently, as deserving time and space for themselves, thus widening their experience as women. In the next section I explore the significance of the crafts themselves and their implication in women's perception of their own value.

### **Crafts as 'love' artefacts in everyday life**

While women's groups around craft have a long history in different versions, the specific contemporary context in which they are produced transforms the value attached to craft-making, or the importance they have in their lives. In the first place, the conditions presented by the critical economic situation that marked most of the dictatorship years, and the human rights crisis that motivated *arpilleras*, have changed. While the lives of *pobladora* families are still marked by precariousness<sup>82</sup> – and sometimes there is no money to go to the market – the making of craft has lost its centrality as a means for assuring families' livelihoods. This implies that artefacts remain with the women, or circulate among their kin and loved ones. So, what do crafts as artefacts *do* in women's lives?

In this section, I explore the local use-value of handicraft artefacts and its relation to economic circuits of value. Here, crafts are seen as the product of a specific labour and, thus, as part of the material culture that informs our mode of living in the world.

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<sup>82</sup> An interesting analysis of contemporary modes in which precariousness is fleshed out in everyday life can be found in Clara Han's (2012) *Life in Debt*.

Following Hegel's dialectic and Marx's early materialist writings, Miller (2013) focuses attention on objects as the product of our labour and, thus, extensions of ourselves. As such, crafts operate as mirrors that to some extent enable us to perceive "who we are" (p. 58). By using/utilising/consuming the use-value of objects, we are transformed: we fully or partially satisfy our need for that thing in that specific shape. As Bolivar Echeverría (1998) states:

Producing is objectifying, is to inscribe in the product's shape a *transformative intention* directed to the subject herself as consumer, an intention that is made subjective or effective in the moment in which it is appropriately used (enjoyed or utilised) as good...[T]hat is to say, in taking advantage of that thing, [the subject] absorbs the form of [the good] and lets herself be transformed by it". (p. 171, my translation)

While the process of craft-making is more valued than the produced craft itself, it also entails a concrete use-value. Interestingly here, the producers are themselves the consumers, and have a direct influence in shaping the object's form to their own expectations. Different crafts have different local use-values according to their materiality and functionality, but they all share a common intention: to make everyday life more visually beautiful through the adornment of homes or bodies.

Crafts such as decoupage, tile sublimation or painting gypsum figures are means of homemaking. Hanging decorative objects made of wiped-out CDs painted with floral motifs decorate Margarita's patio, small gypsum elephants sit on the side table in María's living room, and by her front door, a wooden frame with a bird motif is used for hanging keys. As described above, gypsum flowers and African women<sup>83</sup> decorate Carmen's walls and a colourful wooden basket-like container for teabags decorates her table at once time. Pobladora women tend to share similar notions about what is beautiful, according to certain rules regarding the best colour combinations or motifs, depending on the functionality of the artefact. Kitchenware privileges specific motifs: cups of tea and kettles, cakes. Handicraft, especially decoupage, tends to be created as artefacts directed to a female and likely feminine

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<sup>83</sup> There is obviously a trend to make stereotypical representations of African women as design patterns in decoupage napkins or gypsum figures, but it is outside the scope of this research to go more deeply into this particular issue.

audience in both their functionality – kitchenware, boxes for jewellery – and the colour palette: pastel tones or pink-like colours. Colours are expected to be delicate: many women advised me to lighten what they judged too dark a shade of violet for painting a box. Objects and designs are admired as *'hermosos'* (gorgeous).



*Image 26 crochet knitting at a workshop  
Photograph by the author.*

Knitting production is less visible and the rules about what is beautiful are much less generalised. Women expect to produce something that can have use-value, although this is not always the case, because the training provided by the teachers does not always fit with personal taste. Therefore, knitted items, are regarded as more difficult to sell. After knitting for a couple of months, a woman complained that none of her daughters could wear the jumper she had made, because it was too big and fitted wrongly. Teresa, a housewife in her mid-forties and one of the youngest members of the workshop, often wore her knitted summer shirts, objects of admiration among the women, especially because Teresa was pretty fast at making them. The shirts, made using anchored thread forming big holes, were made to be worn over sleeveless t-shirts, for mature women of the workshop (and beyond) to avoid looking undressed. Jokes about using the shirts without a bra, and comments about the unpleasantness of shirts that do not cover the shoulders, stress the relation between knitted clothing and certain codes of respectability in relation to age. In one of the

informal summer meetings, we talked around a knitting magazine brought by one of the members: which dress would fit better, which ones were adequate for their age, what colours or length they would prefer, or which would only suit me, as the youngest of the group. In wearing some things, and not others, the women embody specific ideas of gender, age and sexuality. As such, they expect to knit something beautiful, but also useful, in relation to their own ideas of appropriateness.

Most of these women's productions are in use. Yet, some finished or half-made craft artefacts end up gathering dust in drawers or forgotten in corners, as in Carmen's house described above. These are the results of the continuous making of crafts, which means specific circumstances occasionally prevent the women from finishing them: for example, a lack of time or required materials, or the fact that they did not like the specific piece of work or were keen to do something else. Incomplete objects remain there, waiting for a new opportunity. During the summer we spent together, Carmen finally finished a couple of small trays she had stored as *cachureos*. In other cases, the items accumulate not as *cachureos* but as collection. Margarita showed me her numerous knitted skirts and blouses, most of them too elegant for everyday life and occupying space in her wardrobe. She made them to suit her, so they are not to be given away: they can still be proudly worn – or shown to those interested, like myself – whenever the occasion arises, even though there are very few of them. Sometimes, at the workshops, women have learnt how to make a knitted item of clothing that suits neither their body shape or taste, nor their relatives'; then, they do nothing with them, although items can be converted back into thread.

While cleaning the toilets or making efforts to buy the right second-hand t-shirt remain unnoticed (Carmen's nine-year-old son told me that his mum, was always 'on holiday'), crafted artefacts are a visible and abiding mode of the materialisation of love. Indeed, a handicraft 'surplus' is often prevented by the circulation of craft artefacts among women's kin. Rosa's daughter decided to buy the jewellery box her mum was crafting as a present to take to her friend's birthday. More typically, handicraft artefacts become gifts for loved ones. Feminists have long commented on the invisibility of domestic labour (see, for instance, Anderson, 2000; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2010; Oakley, 1976). A few images can illustrate this better.





*Image 27 knitted shoes*

*Made by Graciela for her new-born great-grandson. Photograph by the author.*

In the last days of the 2016 knitting workshop, Graciela devoted herself to knitting a pair of shoes, socks and a jumper in a mix of light green and blue colours for her soon-to-be-born new baby grandson. Carmen knitted a light orange skirt for a granddaughter. At another workshop, which I occasionally attended when invited by friends, I asked Señora Rosaura about the destiny of the bottle she was decorating in Christmas style. Last year, she told me, one of her daughters had taken possession of a similar one she had made. The other daughter said, *“the next one will be for me”*, and so Señora Rosaura smiled as she told me she knew where the decorated bottle would *“end up”*. During the previous summer, María was making a small drawer for jewellery for a granddaughter whom, though she was already nine years old, she had only recently met. This granddaughter had seen María making a similar drawer and told her she really loved it, reason for which María *“had to make one for her[‘new’ granddaughter]”*. Through the jewellery drawer, she attempted to incorporate the girl as a granddaughter, which previous distance had prevented. While the women attend the workshops to claim time for themselves, their productions are usually directed to their loved ones.

While family care and wellbeing are often the motivation for a wide range of reproductive practices, as shown throughout this thesis, it is significant that these gifts are made by women's own production. The skills that craft-making imply seem to be a source of value for the women. Nobody ever stressed the importance of the laundry being done or the floors cleaned (and instead pointed out when domestic chores had *not* been done). In contrast, new creations were usually shown with a sense of pride and sometimes served as a mode of self-presentation. The first visit I made to Carmen's house, described above, is telling in this regard. Similarly, when Margarita and I popped in unannounced at Miriam's house, with the aim of talking about the past and potentially requesting an interview, craft helped us to start, in a cordial manner, a conversation that could have been rather awkward, given the length of time they had not seen each other and the political differences that had previously separated them. As I was introduced as a member of the knitting workshop, Miriam gave us a tour of elephants, an African woman with a basket on her head, a Buddha in metallic green, a fat woman in a red swimming pool, a couple of ducks and a few goblins, even before we sat at the table to talk about the motive for our visit. She told us each figure's story - when she painted them, and copies of which ones had been requested for selling. In stressing that she actually sells quite a few of her products, I suggest, she connected the use-value with the exchange-value of the craft, thus raising the value of her creations and her self-worth, as having great skills.

An important part of the handicraft of the women can fit into what Dalston (1987) believes to be 'leisure craft ideologies' of DIY in magazines or in online format. In this type of craft, she argues, "the notion that crafts could represent their own ideas, values, experiences and fantasies has no place" (p. 42). Indeed, the women usually work in a limited set of patterns, painting pre-made gypsum figures, and stick to a limited colour palette, or decorating wooden boxes with napkins, all mass-produced. For the pobladora women, however, crafts are not perceived as an expression of the individual self, and craft-making knowledge can be shared and collectively enhanced. Women discuss techniques to be used, paint techniques or colour combinations (and stick to a limited set of options), and usually, as some feminists scholars have noted (see compilation Elinor et al., 1987), the final handicraft is the result of close collaboration.

The act of giving loved ones something the women have either fully made themselves or have decorated and painted, has a special value, a personal imprint. Craft-making, in this sense, is still, as Gloria Hickey (1997) argues, perceived as a gift. An excerpt from Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay on gifts, which she analyses in her own essay, is useful here to stress this notion: "the only gift is a portion of thyself. Therefore, the poet brings his poem; the shepherd his lamb; the farmer, corn; the miner, a gem; the sailor, coral and shells; the painter, his picture; the girl a handkerchief of her own sewing" (Waldo Emerson, 1903 cit. in Hickey, 1997, p. 85). Through giving as presents their handicraft products, the women also give a part of themselves. Thus, I agree with Han (2012) in conceiving gift among intimate kin as not necessarily attached to expectations of reciprocity, in Mauss' (1970) sense, but as operating as "materialised gestures of care" (p. 49). Gifted craft artefacts are the materialisation of love through women's most valued form of labour, different from what can be bought on the market, and different from their other, invisible labours of everyday life.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have argued that the value that pobladora women endow the handicraft workshops with, handicraft as practice and handicraft as artefacts, are in different ways grounded in (and ground) their gender and generational positions. I have given a flavour of how handicraft has been symbolically constructed as a feminine, respectable activity and how this practice became the core of mothers' centres in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Chilean history and how they have shifted in their aims to produce a neoliberal individual self. As such, handicraft practices were conceived as adequate ways in which women from the popular classes could generate some income for their families and at the same time, transform women's subjectivity towards their incorporation into different political projects.

I have shown how the values of sharing and conviviality expressed in the workshop are also grounded on pobladoras' experiences as mothers and homemakers. This makes the process of crafting collectively more relevant than the handicraft itself as product. Women make handicraft at their homes, but doing so with their peers is much more interesting and entertaining, and they often meet in the summer, outside the official context of the workshops. They value the jokes, the conversations and the sharing of useful information, intimacies and problems. The workshop is a space of

leisure. I have shown how workshops are symbolically framed in opposition to the domestic space to which most women of an older generation are bound in their everyday life. Most of them continue caring for children and/or grandchildren and hold the main responsibility for the burden of domestic labour. Taking part in workshops and handicraft allows these women to have other experiences, to carve out time and space for themselves – to enjoy this valued time, always threatened in the domestic space.

In this sense, this chapter contributes to counterpoint and to provide a nuanced perspective to the values and value or importance that women attach to their reproductive labour as presented in the previous two chapters. It gives a glimpse of how the labours of endowing their families with moral-worth entail a subjective cost to the women. As seen in chapter five, the pobladora women who participated in this research experience their domestic spaces in their positions as mothers and homemakers as spaces of relative autonomy. Yet, they also experience it as their work-place. As such, even though their labour is not – at least not directly – appropriated by capital and is valued as a form of caring for their families and endowing them with value, the women still claim time for themselves which is felt as a need. As such, participation in workshops are, paraphrasing Marx (1973, p. 215) their “share of civilization that distinguishes [the worker] from the slave”, to the extent that they claim time for leisure without which their lives would be reduced to carrying out reproductive labour for their families. At the workshops, women can produce themselves as subjects with personal needs, interests and concerns autonomous from those of their families – subjects that, by existing beyond the socially devalued, invisible labours of reproduction, are further endowed with value as women.

This chapter also shows how the subjects produced through participating in handicraft workshops are legitimated within the women’s families and the neighbourhood. The fact that women can spare time and money to take part in the workshops is significant in this respect. In 1984, during the boom in research on women’s participation, Teresa Pires do Rio Caldeira (1990), underscored the ‘personal’ aspects that motivated women to take part in the urbanisation struggles in Sao Paulo’s favelas. She suggested the ‘personal’ aspects of women’s participation were overlooked by scholars, who instead emphasised women’s awareness of social

injustice or need for democracy. In her opinion, there were no grounds to underscore those dimensions “over the values that shantytown women gave to friendship, enjoyment and having some time for themselves” (Pires do Rio Caldeira, 1990, p. 59). Thus, she called for the need to differentiate between “the discourse that legitimates the practice and the ways and motives that moved the women to be part of the collective” (Ibid.). Today, most pobladora women do not rely on any discourse to legitimate their community participation, at least in relation to craft workshops. They simply do it because they want to: being a housewife and/or homemaker is no longer symbolically associated with confinement at home.

Finally, handicraft artefacts are not usually made for selling and their use-value is realised in everyday life. This is important, since it marks a difference from the organisations of the 1980s, whose products, while conveying political messages, were also intended for sale. In contemporary times, the embedded functional and aesthetic dimensions of handicraft serve to decorate and give a personal imprint to houses and bodies. Displayed as such, they enhance and make beautiful their domestic space, helping in the transformation of a house into home – without the resources that ‘dream’ housing transformations would require. Similarly, knitted clothing is valued to the extent that it ‘fits’ well, in ways that seem adequate to the gender, sexuality, age and class position of its user. Through this potential, participation in craft workshops (re)produces family relationships via the circulation of crafts among kin and intimate networks. They operate as materialised forms of love, in ways that other reproductive practices do not. Unlike cleaning or provisioning – cyclical, invisible activities – crafts are materialised and valued in different fields. The fact that artefacts can eventually acquire exchange value is expressive of their value beyond the local.

In sum, I have argued that, through participation in workshops and handicraft, women produce themselves in ways that transcend their position as responsible for the labours of reproduction of the household. In this production, they endow themselves with value.

## Conclusion

By the time I write this conclusion, a protest led by the inhabitants of a well-off residential area in the North East of Santiago has taken place against the construction of a social housing building in the neighbourhood. From the TV interviews and social media comments, I can distinguish some of the reasons that lie behind such a protest that connects both symbolic and economic value. Fears over increasing criminality in the area, fear of the devaluation of market value of properties and claims of unfairness emerging from the expansion of opportunities of living in a 'good' neighbourhood that are given to 'others' without them making the 'effort' the protesters believe should be made in order to live there. Such narratives seem to recycle old, historical legacies in which those with no access to adequate housing without the mediating efforts of the state, are ascribed as criminal, lazy, as not deserving of becoming inhabitants of the neighbourhood in question. It recalls the contemporaneity of the ways in which class is read through morality and how it becomes inscribed in the urban space by marking the space where the popular classes live.

In this thesis, I have explored ethnographically the ways in which class shapes gendered subjectivities among pobladora women by looking at pobladora women's practices of social reproduction, or, the daily and generational maintenance of people's life (Ferguson, LeBaron, Dimitrakaki, & Farris, 2016). I have examined how different practices oriented to social reproduction on a daily basis – thus excluding from the analysis biological reproduction – have been actively carried out, signified and valued by pobladora women in their positions as mothers, homemakers and/or wives, and emphasised the negotiations between envisioned subjects and concrete material conditions that make them possible (or not). Understanding the gendered organisation of social reproduction as a site of class struggle and formation, I have explored how a generation of pobladora women have experienced practices of social reproduction in their household and in the collective space of the población.

I asked *how have pobladora women produced their gendered and classed subjectivities through practices of social reproduction in their positions as mothers, homemakers and/or wives?* The main argument of this thesis is that through gendered labours of social reproduction in their households and community organisations at different historical periods that have been at the centre of pobladora women's lives, they have waged

material and symbolic struggles. Through practices of social reproduction, they have produced and positioned themselves as dignified, respectable, worthy, classed and gendered subjects.

Throughout this thesis, I have been arguing that, while the concept of social reproduction emerges from Marxism, it is a site that encompasses both material and symbolic dimensions, at the same time that it re-positions gender as central in the analysis. This is so because social reproduction is related to our existence *as human beings* and thus not only related to the process of biological reproduction that takes place in women's bodies but also embedded in historically constructed ideas about what human life looks or should look like, defined by particular interests. As noted in chapter one, some Marxist scholars (Echeverría, 1998; Lebowitz, 2003) have emphasised how the use-values through which we satisfy our needs come to exist when there is someone who can see them. This means that, ultimately, it is culture that allows us to assess whether our needs of food, shelter or rest are being adequately satisfied, according to what is historically available and in relational terms (or the ways in which others give and have given satisfaction to similar needs). When seeing social reproduction at the centre of the definition of class, issues of living conditions, lifestyle and consumption can be also explored through materialist lenses, precisely because of such a relational dimension.

My approach connects material and historical approaches to class by showing how morality shapes the same processes of class formation. Through an empirical approach to class and gender formations in Chile in relation to specific modes of social production/reproduction, I have argued in favour of the centrality of concrete forms of subjectivity not only for capitalist enterprise but for the whole project of modernity. A focus on social reproduction has also allowed showing how different living conditions have served to create ideas about people's subjectivity and how different moral values have been given to them. I have been also able to show how class - in relation to gender - becomes inscribed onto the urban space in ways that shape the specific practices of social reproduction carried out by *pobladora* women.

Through ethnography, this thesis offers a bridge between different perspectives and theoretical frameworks on class between materialist - in particular SRT - and symbolic/moral approaches to class, which have often been seen as divergent (see, for instance, Bottero, 2004; Crompton, 2006). Acknowledging the importance of both the material and cultural dimensions through which class inequality is reproduced,

Crompton (2006) opted for what she calls a 'positive pluralism', meaning the alternate use of both perspectives while renouncing bringing them together theoretically. My ethnography does not offer a theoretically unitary framework able to overcome this theoretical pluralism. Yet, it highlights sites in which the material and symbolic and economic dimensions of class are intricately linked.

In this concluding chapter, I attempt to answer the research questions that guided this thesis while bringing together the main themes, debates and the more specific contributions of this thesis. Firstly, it provides empirical grounds to demonstrate the links between capitalist organisation of social production/reproduction and modes of classed and gendered subjectivity, bringing back subjectivity into SRT. Secondly, attention to the continuities and ruptures of the values that have shaped collective struggles and the struggles of everyday life, helps to blur the boundaries between collective/public/material vs. individual/private/cultural (Bottero, 2004). By attending to the processes of negotiation that underlie social reproduction in everyday life, this thesis makes visible the conflictive ways in which material and symbolic dimensions of class are related in the production of a subject and how clear-cut moral categories of class, are only existent in the symbolic realm but not at the level of experience. Finally, this thesis contributes with feminist debates on the question of gendered labours of reproduction, by exploring why 'gender traditionalism' is more persistent among the lower classes. Attending to the experience of pobladora women allows showing how the question cannot be reduced to the mother/wife vs individual subjectivity how class makes such distinction more difficult to be made. I conclude by signalling the dimensions that could not be covered in this research and present interesting pathways for future research.

## **Social reproduction and the production of classed and gendered subjectivities**

Current understanding of the relationship between social reproduction, class and gender, shows limitations in approaching subjectivities. As seen in chapter two, Latin American scholarship concerned with wage and reproductive/care labour has shown the persistent centrality of 'traditional' gender roles, especially among those women from the popular classes (see, for instance, Alvarez et al, 2005; Murray, 2015; Raczynki & Serrano, 1985; Valdés, 1988). Engaging in wage work, they found, does not necessarily imply for women less time or responsibility over the reproductive



labour in their household. What they deemed a 'traditional' female subjectivity – that prioritises reproductive labour over wage work – is considered by this scholarship only to the extent that was deemed an obstacle for the women to become an independent autonomous 'individual'. An exploration of how classed and gendered subjectivities shape and are shaped by practices of social reproduction has remained unexplored. Latin American scholarship on strategies of reproduction or 'survival' at the level of the household aimed to unravel the activities and practices in which the members of the household engage to assure its reproduction: how income is brought in, what labours are made to expand consumption, what goods are acquired and how they are distributed. Subjectivity was not their concern, yet they tangentially approached it through arguing how social reproduction involved agency and negotiation among its members and also by pointing to the ways in which culture and its gender discourses mediate the sexual and generational division of labour.

If the labours of social reproduction often prevent women from taking other more 'public' positions, if it involves agency and negotiation, how is subjectivity involved in the labours of social reproduction? What are the values of the *pobladora* women that shape such practices in their lives? These frameworks have been shown limited to answer such question, mainly because they treated class and gender as two distinct variables, preventing them from engaging with questions of subjectivity. In order to overcome the limitations of the theoretical approaches described above, my research suggests understanding the values of such practices in terms of subjectivity by considering class and gender as mutually constitutive.

In this line, and drawing on the work of social historians, in chapter four I proposed a reading of the historical class and gender formations with a special focus on social reproduction and the attendant subjectivities they made possible. I showed how this process took place during Chilean capitalist modernisation, strongly shaped by the regulation and control of workers' social reproduction through the conversion of 'women into mothers and men into breadwinners' (Brito, 2005). The 'modern industrial family' was also encouraged by the state and capitalists – with the consent of the proletarians – as part of developmental agenda implemented in the second third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Latin American region. Such policies that regulated the gendered organisation of production/reproduction did aim, as Federici (2012, p. 94) has argued, to improve the quality of labour power and a shift in the modes of extraction of value from absolute to relative surplus value. By describing how the

popular classes of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century resisted proletarianisation, my research has shown how the quality of labour power was not only assessed in its physical power but also in terms of a particular subjectivity.

The focus on subjectivity as a dimension to be examined by this thesis, is a contribution to the historical materialist and SRT understandings of class and gender formations. As seen in chapter one, Marxist feminists have been aware that the gendered organisations of production/reproduction as historically produced in relation to the capitalist mode of production (see, for instance, Barrett, 1980; Brenner & Ramas, 1984; Federici, 2012). Macherey (2005) discusses how discipline – as what Foucault (2012) understood as a modern form of power anchored in subjectivity – was implemented on the shop floor in order to make a ‘productive subject’. My research makes explicit how the gendered organisation of social production/reproduction in processes of capitalist modernisation and, in particular, the control and regulation of practices of social reproduction, were also aimed to produce a productive subject. As such, my research provides historically grounded support to the often-forgotten argument of Dalla Costa and James (1973) in terms of the ways in which the figure of the housewife served to produce a disciplined and docile workforce. Thus, I have argued, the gendered organisation of social production/reproduction is intricately linked to the production of concrete (classed and gendered) subjects and subjectivities in both, compliance and resistance (a point that is discussed later) to concrete modes of capitalist development.

Furthermore, my research also empirically shows how the gendered organisation of production/reproduction was accompanied by the emergence of a particular morality that legitimated such modes of exploitation. In the context of state-led industrialisation in the second third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as means to ‘develop’ Latin American countries, the ‘productive subject’ became to be a valued, praised and encouraged and symbolically associated with the industrial, ‘respectable’ working-class. As informal settlements expanded the limits of Santiago, housing as a use-value that signalled modernity and citizenship, became increasingly acknowledged as a symbolic marker of the differences within the popular classes. Those who could not provide themselves with adequate housing were often assumed to be the other of the productive subject required by modernisation, the idle, the dirty, the unrespectable, the underserving poor of Chilean modernisation. While serving the interest of an emergent bourgeoisie such ideals also shaped understandings of the popular classes

themselves, made explicit by pobladores' claims of property through propriety (Murphy, 2015). Emerging from housing struggles, the poblaciones were constituted as classed urban spaces with contested meanings.

Such a process shows that moral narratives through which categories of class, gender, sexuality and race are often constructed are not 'merely cultural' but indeed are central to the capitalist project. As Skeggs argues:

Capital rarely cares who it extracts value from, but nation-states and forms of governance enable moral values to be attributed to different classes through the binary oppositions of good-bad citizen, respectable-unrespectable, deserving-underserving. Classifications are never neutral terms but emerge as the result of interest that can be consolidated in abstract explanations, not only shaped by interest groups in the conditions of its emergence, but also their citation, their performative function, and the struggles for legitimation that take place across different sites of institutionalisation such as welfare, law, education and the media. (Skeggs, 2010, p. 340)

In other words, the ways in which class and gender, among other categories, are inscribed in narratives of moral worth to bodies and places, provides the legitimate grounds on which capitalist accumulation takes place. Even further, as Paton, McCall and Mooney (2017) in the context of financial capitalism, in which land becomes a critical commodity for speculation, the ascription of negative moral values paves the way to processes of gentrification or, as seen in the recent protest in Santiago, social exclusion.

An exploration of the concrete ways in Chile that social production/reproduction has been organised around gender lines, the formations of class and gender and attendant subjectivities as well as the ways in which they have become more or less valued in concrete modes of capitalism and struggles, further allows us to theoretically connect material and symbolic readings of class. It shows in historical perspective how symbolic/cultural dimensions of class are not exclusive of the post-Fordist context as some scholars seem to argue (see, for instance, Savage, 2015) but can be traced back in history. Attention to morality allow us to explore the ways in which such a history shapes contemporary symbolic system of class and gender and to trace its continuities and ruptures. More importantly, attention to morality, I argue, enables us to start blurring the theoretical boundaries between the collective and

individualised approaches to class, and to understand the multifarious ways in which class comes to exist. In the following two sections I discuss how class struggles takes place in collective actions and everyday life through the enactment of similar values that permeates such boundaries.

## **The making of a revolutionary class**

In the *Making of the English Working Class*, Thompson (2013) argued that 19th century England's proletarians' shared experience of exploitation was central to collective organising around their shared interests. In other words, it was craftsmen's experience that made class, in ways that allowed the transit from class in itself to a class *for* itself. In this section I discuss how, through experience of organising around the production of their own livelihoods in Nueva Habana, the pobladores made class in ways that challenged the symbolic boundaries that defined the 'respectable working-class' as developed during the national-popular period. The emergence of popular movements – proletarians, pobladores and peasants – and the increasing social polarisation during the 1960s were accompanied by other ideas of what it meant to be from the popular classes. In this process, that from a classic understanding could be considered as becoming 'class for itself', gender was critical. Not only did it allow us to set the possibilities and limitations of such a project in concrete gender and class formations, but also – and here a contribution of this thesis – to show that contested moralities of class permeate both the individual and collective level.

In this thesis, I have argued that the struggles of the pobladores were informed by symbolic systems of class, consolidated during the 'developmental' model of capitalist modernisation. Pobladores struggled to include adequate housing within the range of 'necessary need' – or those needs whose satisfaction is rendered necessary by habit or custom (Lebowitz, 2003, p. 40) – which during Allende's government (1970–73) became legitimated as a social right. Housing was not merely a shelter but meant access to the goods and services of modernity and a means to citizenship and values symbolically associated with the 'respectable working class'. As Murphy's (2015) has argued, the pobladores legitimated their demands of homeownership by claiming to be respectable hard-workers with the 'right' kind of families, in line with the liberal tradition that connects property and propriety. In this sense, struggles for housing were also struggles for moral worth in a context in which

those who could not provide themselves adequate housing were ascribed negative values. I have argued that struggles for home became for the pobladores their 'route to proletarianisation'.

In chapter five I showed how the way in which the pobladores of Nueva Habana produced their own livelihoods was informed by a particular idea of classed subject that was somehow different. The revolutionary subject promoted by public discourse and encouraged by organisations was to be engaged not only with the development of the community, but also with wider political processes at the national level that would benefit the popular classes as a whole, idea synthesized in the slogan "our struggle is bigger than a house". For this, grassroots organisation explicitly attempted to drive out the 'lumpen' and therefore aimed to prevent behaviours that were deemed as obstacles to class struggle such as alcoholism, dirtiness, laziness, prostitution, robbery or unwillingness to collaborate with the community. While, as seen in chapter four, these ideas about the lumpen had inherited long, historical legacies, its rejection in Nueva Habana was nevertheless informed by other values. Discipline was sought not as means to increase surplus value but instead as one of the characteristics of the 'New Man'. In the type of subject aimed to be produced by community organisation, pobladores in Nueva Habana were making class in ways that aimed to produce another model of society.

The material and symbolic making of the revolutionary class relied to a great extent on the de-privatisation of 'home' as critical to produce the 'New Man'. Such a process relied, on the one hand, on training and regulation of women's practices of hygiene in the domestic space and childcare, in similar ways to that which state agents have done for decades. The improvement of the living conditions and the decrease in the figures of child mortality were central in the (re)production of the community. On the other hand, the community aimed at de-configuring and re-shaping existing gender relations. The prohibition of domestic violence aimed to assure the minimum conditions of respect to convert the heterosexual couple into comrades. Being women, the ones continuously present in the neighbourhood, the making of a revolutionary class required women engaged with the community - to work towards its (re)production in more stable ways. Yet there were difficulties and ambivalences in this sense. Gender was demonstrated as critical in the possibilities of realisation of this new project.

Women from the popular classes had never embodied the ideals of femininity and domesticity, and even if they wanted to, they could often not afford to given their class location. Many women engaged in wage work or other income-generating activities, took an active position and went to the tomas pursuing an adequate home of their own, often against their partners' will. In Nueva Habana, they organised to solve concrete problems, yet more stable participation and their own subjective positioning as community organisers faced obstacles. Not only their concrete circumstances and domestic responsibilities – such as caring for young children – but also because of the ideals of passivity and domesticity that in Chilean society were deemed as desirable (Mattelart & Mattelart, 1968) slowed down the incorporation of women in organisations in more stable ways. US scholar Elsa Chaney (1979) and the Chilean feminist Julieta Kirkwood (1990) pointed that the value of decency which symbolically tied women to the domestic space, prevented them from engaging more strongly in politics. Even further, Chaney argued that decency – a category that cut across class – would assess a woman's worth and how she would be seen and treated by others. A decent woman, she wrote, "will be treated as such", while one who is not "is considered fair game by man" (p. 35). Through the lenses of decency, women's participation often raised tensions and conflicts with partners who accused them of being unfaithful or uncaring with their families. Such contradictions often emerged within the women themselves in a landscape of changing gender discourses and the autonomy and pleasure they found through participating in community organisations.

Despite ambivalences, a sense of class as a public, collective dimension was experienced by pobladora women. All of those who participated in this research perceived the relevance of community rules to fight everyday life problems that threatened their families, such as alcoholism and domestic violence, as well as the increasing, positive involvement of fathers with their children. However, with exception of those women who were more closely involved with the organisations, phrases like working-class, revolution, poder popular or lumpen, to give some examples, are absent from their vocabulary and in their narration of the memories of the past. And yet they did experience a sense of community, of collectivity that worked together in order to get the most dignified life possible despite deprived living conditions and a better future. With such an aim, they were "*all the same*", they felt "*united*" through solidarity and cooperation, in the aims of (re)producing themselves and their families in the best way possible. The experiences of women in

relation to community organisations helps to nuance an understanding of the public and collective character of class.

Bottero (2004) points out that contemporary approaches to class are dichotomic, and class is perceived as either collective and public (structural class analysis) or individualised/private (cultural class analysis). Attention to the continuities and ruptures between the values that shape collective action and everyday life, is helpful to start blurring the boundaries of such a dichotomy. Class as a collective, Thompson (2013) and Calhoun (1993) have shown, has never been a monolithic process and has also been 'lived'. The blurring of boundaries of this dichotomy is made particularly visible among the pobladores, precisely because their struggles were articulated in the site of reproduction and their politics is embedded in everyday life. In line with contemporary scholarship on the pobladores who show the centrality of the value of dignity among the pobladores, I have shown how such a value serves to understand the workings of class in both, its collective dimensions – in the social organisations – and the individual and everyday life. Dignity, Murphy (2015) argues, “is an expansive category: its fulfilment includes notions of justice, respect, and fairness, in which living conditions and patterns of consumption matter intently” (p. 38). As such, it has informed pobladores' collective struggles in the past and continues to do so in the present in the realm of everyday life.

### **Struggling for categories in everyday life, negotiating dignity and respectability**

“We struggled a lot *here*”, Señora Olivia told me in an interview, when she recalled the precarious living conditions of the past. Her voice broke and tears moistened her eyes when talking about the periods of economic scarcity she lived through. Similarly, researching among urban popular households in Mexico, Selby et al (1990) noted how their research participant used the word 'struggle' to refer to all the activities they carried out in order to cope with the times of economic crisis. The word struggle emphasises hard work towards the reproduction of oneself, in a context in which even the satisfaction of what is deemed necessary needs are under threat. In the last two sections I have argued that collective struggles for housing were shaped by the symbolic system of class and gender. In this section of my concluding chapter, I bring back ethnographic material to further discuss pobladora women's negotiation between historically shaped ideals and the concrete conditions in which the social

reproduction of their families takes place, shaping practices and subjective formations. I argue that women's agency is expressed in their practices of social reproduction allowing the production of a dignified classed and gendered subject.

As seen in chapter four, respectability and decency (*decencia*) is a term that conveys moral dimensions of the process of class formation in Chilean modernisation. In nascent Latin American republics, *gente decente* (decent/respectable people) described the upper echelons of society (de Ramón, 2000) a category that was also raced, gendered and related to sexuality. Spending time with first-generation pobladora women in Nuevo Amanecer, a couple of times I heard the category *gente decente* used in this old-fashioned sense to refer to people socially positioned above themselves. Capitalist modernisation, I showed in chapter four, made respectability available to the members of popular classes through morality. Yet, and unlike those positioned at the top, for the popular classes this has been a category they constantly have to achieve and demonstrate, precisely, I argue, because they lack the material living conditions that allow respectability to be taken for granted.

My research confirms the centrality of respectability and decency as underpinning the symbolic system of class and as ways of defining classed moral boundaries, in line with Chilean literature on the morality of class. Reviewed in chapter two, such literature states that, in Chilean society, the value of decency or respectability is particularly important among those in the popular classes. Martínez and Palacios (1996) argue that the notion of decency establishes a culture that differentiates itself from that of poverty, in which the lack of values would result in dirtiness and criminality. From the perspective of Mayol et al. (2013), decency is a category transversal to Chilean society as means of categorisation of those who might live in poverty but do not let themselves go to levels close to animality through labour. Confirming the vitality of such symbolic systems, a few times I heard the phrase *gente decente* to mark a difference from the inhabitants of an area of the población considered 'bad' as a consequence of perceived concentrated drug dealing and crime. A few times I heard the word decent to refer to a thing's 'appropriate' condition, specifically in conversations about the lack of 'decent' housing or while sharing memories of having latrines that some of them deemed indignities.

The positioning of the inhabitants of the poblaciones in the symbolic systems of class (and gender), do have effects in both claiming positions and shaping practices of social reproduction. Despite struggles that contested negative values, or that there



have been decades since the poblaciones left behind the characteristics of urban marginality through a sewerage system and paved streets or the actual heterogeneity of the living conditions, the inhabitants of the poblaciones are often at risk of being ascribed the values of immorality, criminality, and dirtiness (see, also Alvarez & Cavieres 2016, Araujo, 2011; Cornejo 2012). Women of older generations are aware that, to the external eye, they might still “*stink fonola*” as Rosa sarcastically put it, in chapter four. Such awareness leads them to constantly claim to be ‘poor but clean’ in front of a middle-class researcher, or to rush to refuse ownership of a stained tablecloth in front of their peers at the handicraft workshop, making visible the moral ways in which class is understood through the categories of decency and respectability. My research contributes to Chilean scholarship on class and morality by showing how such values inform practices and are contextually negotiated in everyday life

In chapters six, seven and eight I showed how, for first-generation of pobladora women who participated in this research, a respectable appearance is a central strategy to counteract the negative values ascribed to them as inhabitants of the población. In chapter six I described how Señora Marta told me while folding clean clothing that “*good presentation can be seen in the face...people check clothing, hair and feet (shoes)...*”. Researching among young British working-class women, Skeggs (1997) argues that the ascription of negative values makes the external, real or imaginary, judgemental eye, central in the production of their classed subjectivities. The relevance of this external eye among the pobladoras is revealed by the women’s careful investments of labour (explored here, laundry and provisioning) and time in the production of a respectable appearance for themselves and their families, as the first surface about which judgement are made.

Women of older generations leave little room to negotiate labour, care and time to be invested in the production of a respectable appearance. This is particularly relevant in the laundry process. What means a respectable appearance, however, is established in relational terms attending to who is the judgmental eye they are to interact with. Using clean, not wrinkled and not visible shabby clothes seems to be enough for the everyday life in the población. I never saw anyone wearing shabby clothing of the standard that were common among some of my peers at university in my undergrad days, who insisted on wearing visibly holey jumpers and/or t-shirts. Indeed, the shorts I had made by uncaringly scissor-cutting a pair of trouser made

room to jokes among the women. Very well-preserved clothing or perhaps with a more 'elegant' style is chosen by Señora Marta when she goes to pick her grandson up from the semi-private school outside the neighbourhood he attends thanks to governmental concessions, as other women often do when they go to the doctor, to do some paperwork or to the shopping mall. Like most of the people, they would be confronted by other special occasions in which ordinary requirements of cleanliness and adequate condition would not be enough. Right after her comment on appearance, Señora Marta told me she encouraged her daughter to buy new shoes for her grandson's kindergarten graduation. A particular outfit might have use-value to be worn at the neighbourhood but not to share with the better-off parents of the grandchild's classmates, while claims of only wearing branded clothing were often interpreted as pretentious among the women of older generations in the local context of the población. While the women give little room to negotiate the labours that produce respectable clothing, what a respectable appearance means is contextually negotiated. In such negotiation, not only who is the judgemental other is important but also whose personal presentation is at stake, being the women more willing to invest in their children than they do for themselves. As such, the act of 'dressing decently' that Mayol et al. (2013) observe as central to demonstrate decency and respectability, is not an absolute term but is contextually and relationally negotiated in ways that reveal acts of classed and gendered positioning.

If class is understood as a category that emerges through struggle, to raise the question 'in whose interest' seems relevant in the light of the centrality of the judgemental other in shaping women's reproductive practices. In a lecture given at the University of Stockholm 14 years after the publication of her book, *Formations of Class & Gender: Becoming Respectable*, Skeggs (2011) re-interpreted the efforts to become respectable carried out by the young British working-class women she studied - such as attention to their personal and home appearance - as the workings of bourgeois ideology. These practices allowed them to resist being positioned in devalued categories and claim self-worth, yet such a value was produced through categories that served the interests of the middle-class. It seems relevant to briefly outline the scope and limits of such statements when applied to pobladora women in Chile and their processes of subjective production.

In the case of Chile, however, and the pobladores in particular, to reduce respectability to bourgeois ideology would overlook the concrete processes of urban

class and gender formation and how such values were both legitimated and contested. It is true that respectability – anchored in the ideals of home – was a central value in the making of the ‘productive’ working-class during state-led capitalist modernisation. Nevertheless, such ideals also shaped the pobladores’ struggles, however in ways that certainly transgressed then contemporary notions of respectability through illegally seizing land, to which many women arrived against their partners’ will. Furthermore, as seen in chapter two, the notion of decency and respectability defines a horizon of a minimum living conditions (Mayol et al., 2013, Mella, 2013) – the necessary needs – in which such a living can be possible and allowed pobladores claims to become legitimate. The pobladores have historically challenged the hegemonic understandings of the relationship between living conditions and morality. Decency and respectability, and the interest which they serve, have been reworked and re-interpreted and produce iteratively in everyday life.

I argue that the notion of dignity is more useful to convey the dynamic and negotiated ways in which classed moral worth is experienced and emphasise an understanding of class as product of struggles that are both collective and individual. The dynamic ways in which a sense of dignity is experienced among the pobladores is also perceived by Han (2012). As she states, “this ‘living with dignity’ is neither formalized nor publicly pronounced; it is neither isolatable nor pinned down as a moral code. Rather, its outlines emerge through sustained engagement with everyday life in the población” (p. 69). In other words, dignity cannot be defined and frozen to a specific set of moral norms as the codes of respectability seem to do. Dignity becomes particularly relevant in living conditions in which a sense of dignity is threatened – it is not casual that the women would mention the word dignity in its negative sense – making social reproduction central in the process of subjective classed and gendered positioning. Everyday life struggles for dignity entail a refusal to constrain social reproduction to given material conditions – something that scholars of strategies of reproduction were good at depicting – but also, I argue, to reclaim dignity and moral-worth that material conditions and symbolic systems of class often threaten.

Scholars on strategies of reproduction showed “the level and quality of family life to a great extent rest on domestic tasks carried out by the women” (Raczynski & Serrano, 1985, p. 250). In a context of economic crisis, they found how women’s

agency and negotiation between expectations and resources resulted in the diversification of provisioning practices and further wage and unwaged labour without which families would probably not have been able to survive. Minimum levels of consumption were assured by adapting shopping to available income, seeking knowledge of alternative channels of provision of goods and services, small-scale production of durable foodstuffs, creativity for making cheap meals, clothing repair, managing of timetables and conflicting interests between the members of the households (Jelin, 1991b; Jelin & Feijoó, 1980; Raczynski & Serrano, 1985; Valdés, 1988; di Barbieri 1989). Like this scholarship, in chapter seven I showed how Carmen and Rosa – two women in their early fifties – invest time, labour, knowledge and creativity in expanding the range of goods that can be consumed by the family in the contemporary context. Here it is worth remembering how they create/use their knowledge of the better deals for provisioning their families, spend time queuing to get cheaper groceries at the local shop, buy branded foodstuff only when income allows it, acquire goods and services through intimate networks, buy second hand goods and, because of these ‘savings’, they are often able to treat their children to sweets, toys or other desired goods. My research advances one step further to show how through reproductive labour, not only the household satisfy their material needs, but centrally, particular dignified classed and gendered subjects are aimed to be produced.

Acts of concealment, I argue, are critical in making visible how classed and gendered dignified subjects are produced through practices of social reproduction. Acts of concealment take place when economic scarcity and/or other obstacles force the use of goods and/or services that would otherwise not be chosen. This is the case when the women provision their families with second-hand clothes that look ‘like new’ or when close-to-waste foodstuffs are transformed into an appropriate meal to be consumed by the family. Use-values, Echeverria (1998, p. 58) reminds us, are realised when they are consumed, because they transform us, produce us in particular ways. The labour that lies in such acts of concealment subverts the original use-value of goods to be consumed erasing the marks of its ‘less respectable’ origins. A sense of dignity comes from a refusal to accept the reproduction of themselves restricted to the resources available as a consequence of their class position.

An act of concealment takes place when a stained tablecloth is turned upside-down or when, with a refusal to iron, the whole laundry process is designed to keep

clothing unwrinkled 'as if' ironed. Such acts of concealment do perform respectability to face the judgemental eye. In a society in which those who live in a población are stigmatised as such, demonstrating respectability might be central in widening their opportunities. Concealing the lack of ironing has the power to still assure a respectable appearance. Yet, it also shows a refusal to be fully subjected by such a norm by leaving the women some space to devote some time to other reproductive labour, or more important, other dimensions of their lives – family life, participation in social organisations – which are also relevant to make a dignified life. The dimensions of such production are further discussed later in this concluding chapter. Since they allow for the matching of material conditions to expectations of social reproduction, acts of concealment, I suggest, are a central strategy among women of the popular classes to (re)produce themselves and their families as dignified classed subjects. This statement can be supported by the findings of other research in the Chilean context. Recently, Anigstein (2017) has shown how desirable foodstuffs that are expensive or unreachable in times of hardship are replaced by others, which are used in ways that look 'as if' they were those expected. For instance, she refers to one working mother who, when she cannot afford minced meat, buys industrialised burgers and shreds them to make homemade food. Concerned with modes of relatedness, Clara Han (2012) shows how this sense of dignity can be also expanded to others. This takes place help is offered to those suffering from economic pressures while concealing its character: a neighbour might offer a pot of food for the children with the excuse that too much food has been cooked or provide information about a job announcement 'just in case', refusing an explicit acknowledgement of the critical circumstances of the receiver. Here, acts of concealment maintain the dignity of the receiver by masking help as 'coincidence', as an attempt of marking a clear boundary from help received through 'begging', as appeals for economic help beyond intimate networks are locally perceived. Different acts of concealment help the women bring closer their envisioned ideas of themselves and their families.

By attending to the ways in which respectability and dignity are negotiated in concrete contexts, this thesis contributes to an understanding of how class and gender are *lived* through morality. In the everyday life of the women who took part in this research, respectability and dignity are embedded and permeates the material and symbolic, collective and individualised dimensions of their class positioning. This has effects on the ways in which gender is expressed. If a 'dignified life' appears as

the motivation for the process of production of oneself, the lower than expected resources they often face, and the negative ascriptions placed upon them, I suggest, explain in part their more 'traditionalist' gendered subjectivities of the women of the popular classes, as discussed in the literature review. I argue that therein lies the value that women attach both to their position within the family and the results of their labour, even if, as shown in this thesis, they sometimes feel this labour is a burden. Freeing themselves from this responsibility might entail negative effects in their lives, might compromise the dignity of their families, at least for the first generation of pobladora women. This subject is further discussed in the next section, where reproductive labour is understood as care.

### **Reproductive labour as care**

This research has shown how pobladora women, in their positions as mothers, wives and homemakers, usually understand their practices towards the social reproduction of their household as expressions of care and love for their families. As understood by Folbre (1995), care is a labour that emerges from affect or a sense of responsibility towards other people without mediating an immediate remuneration, motivated by the perception of an unsatisfied need. Here it is worth remembering how María connected appropriate motherhood with a clean tiled floor (as did Fabiola, at the beginning of this thesis), or how Rosa and Carmen invest time and attention in provisioning their households with a wide variety of goods. Caring, then, is constructed in opposition to 'letting oneself go'. The distinction between, for instance, care labours and housework seems arbitrary (see, also Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989) and proves of little use when exploring the values and meanings that women from the popular and working classes attach to reproductive labour. After all, in order to care, all of these labours are necessary. Nevertheless, I argue that the possibility of caring through domestic labour - especially when referring to cleaning - is accentuated as a result of the material and symbolic positioning of pobladora women in which the consequences of 'not caring' become more significant.

The different resources available to carry out reproductive labour among differently positioned women are central in this understanding of 'domestic labour' as care. The symbolic and practical association of reproductive labour and femininity cuts across class lines and geographical locations (Anderson, 2000; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2010; Lan, 2006; Carrington, 1999; On the Chilean situation see Instituto Nacional de

Estadísticas INE, 2015a). As Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2010) states, “notions of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ are subject to interpellation, performance and enactment through the gendered distribution of household work”(p. 104). Nevertheless, since upper- and middle-class women can delegate part of this labour to domestic workers, they experience reproductive labour differently. Confirming the findings of other research, Lan (2006) shows how employers delegate menial work to the domestic worker and instead perform activities that “allow the maintenance of affective ties in the family” (p. 12). This distribution of domestic labour according to value hierarchies enables women employers to perform some forms of (valued) womanhood, in particular a form of motherhood that can focus on activities of care. Furthermore, these social classes tend to engage in practices more easily identifiable as ‘caring for the children’, such as sparing time to play with them or take them to different activities (see, for instance, Lareau, 2011; Perrier, 2013), which are present to a lesser degree among families of the lower classes.

The different availability of resources also informs an ‘ethics of care’ that is central to women’s practices of reproduction. Among the popular classes, caring for the family with limited resources can be realised through caring for ‘stuff’. In chapter seven As I have shown, how pobladora women’s provisioning practices are shaped by an ethics of caring – ‘caring for one’s money’ and ‘caring for one’s belongings’ – which is realised through access to informal networks, investment of time, specialised knowledge of channels of provision, and practices of concealment. Caring for one’s money expands the range of goods and services that can be provided on a daily basis. Caring for one’s belongings, such as white goods or clothing during the laundry, has been a key way for women to improve their living conditions in the long term, without mediating upward mobility in terms of income or other criteria of social stratification. This echoes the value of honesty, which includes caring for one’s and other’s things, that Martínez and Palacios (1996) conceived as part of the ‘culture of decency’. Among older generations of pobladora women, this ethics of care has allowed women to produce themselves and their families in the most dignified forms possible.

While the women experience reproductive labour as caring, this care is usually directed to others. Sacrifice seems to be taking a less prominent role in contemporary experiences of motherhood among Chilean women (Valdés et al., 1999, p. 13), for mature and elderly pobladora women, this form of caring through different activities

still seems to be present. Even Rosa, who usually has progressive ideas about women's role in society, on learning that the son of a female relative had failed his school year, said disapprovingly that, "a mother must sacrifice herself" for her children, blaming the woman in question, who had just started college. Many admitted to not caring enough for themselves, a lack of care which is commonly expressed, for instance, by not going to the doctor or missing appointments. Similar conclusions were reached by Skeggs (1997) in her ethnography of young working-class women in Britain: caring for others is usually opposed to caring for oneself (p. 64). There is, however, one activity in which the women care for themselves: craft making and participation in handicraft workshops, as developed in the following section.

### **Crafting self-care and value**

Handicrafts and participation in handicraft workshops are means by which the women carve out time and space for themselves, for leisure and enjoyment with peers. Graeber (2002) argues that values emerge out of comparison. In chapter eight, I showed how the value of the workshop emerges as it opposes some of the features of the domestic space in which, as mothers, wives and homemakers, the women are burdened with practices oriented to the reproduction of their households - which includes the reproduction of extended families, for instance by caring for grandchildren. The labours towards the social reproduction of their households, it has been argued, are valuable to the women to the extent that they allow them to produce themselves and their families as dignified subjects and have dignified lives. However, this does not mean the women are always fully content with these practices *pobladora* since some of them also experience their domestic space with boredom, tiredness, isolation and a lack of recognition, as Western and modern Latin American feminism have claimed (see, for instance, Oakley, 1976, de Beauvoir, 1956). In contrast, participation in handicraft workshops is an activity they enjoy because of the experience but also because of what they produce.

I argue that participation in handicraft workshops is, for many of the women who participated in this research, a form of self-care. Through these activities, they care for themselves: the values with which the women endow handicrafts and participation in workshops -conviviality, leisure, enjoyment, emotional support and learning - are perceived as needs towards which they labour for their satisfaction.



These are personal needs, which are neither part of nor can be satisfied at the level of the household; as they do with the needs of their families, the women find ways to invest time and resources towards meeting them. To care for themselves they are willing to lower the desirable standards of their reproductive labour towards the household – for instance of cleaning – or to postpone some of its activities, establishing their own limits for this negotiation. And this usually has no consequences in their assessments of themselves as mothers, homemakers and wives: these are activities that have become necessary for reproducing their own lives as women.

Like the care they provide for their families, handicrafts and workshop participation expand the dimensions in which the women produce themselves as subjects of value. These practices are experienced by pobladoras as spaces of self-development, in which they produce themselves not just as (unpaid domestic and care) workers in their positions as mothers and homemakers – but as subjects with time and space for leisure with a range of interests that expands beyond the direct needs of their families. As shown in chapter five and eight, pobladora women's experience of community organisations has been similar across the decades: personal growth is always at stake, a growth that is also experienced as value. What is different from the experience of participation in the past in Nueva Habana/Nuevo Amanecer – where apparently there were no feminist groups involved – is that this participation does not have the final aim of contributing to the (re) production of the community or the household but is fully oriented to expanding the dimensions of their own production. Handicrafts and workshop participation are pobladora women's 'share of civilization' (Marx, 1973, p. 215) and thus, a way of assuring a more dignified life for themselves as women. Feeling sick of the house, or 'locked up' there, does not seem a life they would like to live.

While practices of handicraft allow the women to produce themselves beyond their positions as mothers and homemakers, these practices, however, do not directly lead them to become autonomous, self-realised, independent individuals, or mean that these characteristics become values. Indeed, as has been argued, the ability to share with peers is the most important value of the workshop, implying attentiveness both to the needs of the workshop as a collective space and to the establishing of connections and intimacies with the other women. Furthermore, handicrafts produce other ways to express care and love for their families and intimate networks, besides

those expected of pobladora women as mothers. This form of love, however, does not come from a sense of duty as the labours for the reproduction of the household.

In the workshops, the women produce handicraft artefacts that are more publicly valued than the labours for the reproduction of their households. I have been arguing that pobladora women's sense of self-worth is mainly grounded in their capacity to (re)produce themselves and their families as dignified subjects, usually through reproductive labour, and in some cases also through wage labour, without which they lack means of subsistence. Indeed, the production of handicraft can never be more valuable than the labours of reproduction per se, and a woman who only devotes herself to handicrafts would certainly be judged as a bad mother and homemaker by her peers. It is worth to remember here how Señora Carmela, the eldest woman of this research, advise her daughter not to spend much time in workshops. Nevertheless, the value of the daily labours of reproduction usually remains invisible for their families and others, and is only recognised by its absence, as a moral statement. The lack of recognition they perceive in this labour is the result of its codification as a socially devalued labour which, as has been widely discussed by feminist scholarship, it is badly paid when exchanged in the market (for a discussion on the social devaluation of domestic labour see Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2010). In contrast, material handicraft artefacts are beautiful objects that in the contemporary context of the población seem to be the most common means of decorating homes and bodies, and which can gain exchange value. They become, paraphrasing Han (2012), materialised forms of care that, because they emerge from their pleasure and another way of themselves, are given other value. By producing these types of objects, the women enhance their value in ways that motherhood alone do not.

### **New openings for research and concluding remarks**

My research corresponds to a specific case study among pobladora women in Santiago de Chile. It revisits the struggles of the pobladores and community organisations during the 1970s and 1980s through an exploration of social reproduction. This is why it has focused on the generation of women who arrived as young mothers to live in the población Nueva Habana. This seemed necessary given the little attention that has been paid to symbolic struggles from the perspective of pobladora women in these historical periods. The economic, social and cultural

transformations in the last 40 years in Chile have certainly unsettled markers of class and ideas on the desirable position of women. As it has been stated in the theoretical framework, needs increase as capitalism develops (for discussion see Lebowitz, 2003) and, today, the conditions under which a dignified life seem to have changed. This research has provided a flavour of how these transformations have affected reproductive practices of younger generations of pobladora women, for instance, in terms of the relaxation of some cleaning standards or the increasing importance of branded goods. More ethnographic work could be carried out to understand how these transformations have modified notions of dignity and respectability and the ways in which they are performed by new generations, in relation to new modes of capitalist accumulation.

In this research, I have focused on the production of subjectivities and the ways in which pobladora women negotiate with their own expectations, their families and neighbours. Future research could further explore if and how the markers of dignity and respectability acquire exchange value beyond this particular context – for instance, in job opportunities – and how they relate to pathways of social mobility. This analysis could also include the effects of territorial stigma in enhancing or obscuring other criteria of social stratifications. Furthermore, and in relation to this, further studies could be conducted on the dynamics of how respectability and dignity produced at the personal/familiar level expand to inform collective actions in the contemporary. While it makes sense to understand the first generation of pobladores as class resultant out of struggles in the site of social reproduction, such understanding might not be adequate in contemporary configurations of neoliberal capitalism.

This research has shown how affects like love or shame motivate and inform many of the practices carried out by pobladora women oriented towards the social reproduction of themselves and their families. Scholars of care have emphasised how care is embedded by affects that define the care relationship and the quality of care (Pérez Orozco, 2006, p. 169). Gutierrez-Rodriguez has shown how paid domestic labour generates different affects which (re)produce racialised and gendered subjects. The circulation of affects (Ahmed, 2004) and how they become attached to classed, gendered and racialised bodies through the practice of social reproduction remain as dimensions to be further explored.

To conclude, this thesis has shown the value of combining Social Reproduction Theory with an approach to the symbolic and moral dimensions of class and ethnography to explore the relationship between women's subjectivity and reproductive labour. It has developed an ethnographic case study among pobladora women in Santiago de Chile, but its findings highlight the centrality of people's worth more generally. As seen in the literature review, black feminists have shown how black women's experiences of reproductive labour has been central to endowing the lives of black people with value in a society that excludes them. With a focus on class, my research has presented similar findings. I have argued that ensuring social reproduction through community organisations and pobladora women's labour has been central in the production of the pobladores as dignified, respectable and worthy subjects. Like black people, the pobladores also occupy a devalued position in society. Among those for whom the condition of the (re)production of themselves in ways that they perceived as dignified has been threatened, social reproduction seems to become a site in which they can claim their self-worth.

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